Newsletter late summer '10

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Walk the Dog
in association with
Hanne Grice Dog Listener

Dear friends,

Summer is always a very busy time for us at Walk the Dog with extra holiday work, and annual events. In this issue, we introduce new WTD team members Lindsay McKenzie-Ross and Bryony Maddisson. We interview Phil Naylor from the NARP, and tease our new book in the Great Reads section. There's also details about our next event; the Green House fashion show in aid of Every Chance Rescue. And, for all the latest stories, news and more, do follow us on Twitter and Facebook @walkthedoguk

Happy reading!

Hanne & the WTD team xx

Is dominance all a myth?

Recently the media have been focusing on the issue of 'how best to train your dog' with traditionalists such as Cesar Milan advocating the use of hard line training methods to show your dog who's boss; compared to modernists such as Victoria Stillwell and Jan Fennell who focus on positive reward to teach a dog what is and isn't wanted through calmness and consistency. Last year, I led a research study with 100 people (50 dog owners and 50 non dog owners) to see if there was a difference in the way owners and non-dog owners interpreted dog behaviour and actions. One question included was, *"You have to be in charge of your dog, or he'll dominate you."* Respondents were asked if they considered this to be 'True' or 'False'. Interestingly, 79 per cent of those polled answered 'Yes'. However, this isn't the case.

The idea that all dogs are dominant and want to dominate us is simply untrue. Studies show that often, when owners use dominant or aggressive behaviours towards their dogs to "show them whose boss" or to teach them that growling, mouthing, snapping is unacceptable, they are likely to cause escalation in their dog's behaviour. Thankfully, more and more research is coming out proving these forceful methods, in most cases, do not work. A recent study led by Dr Rachel Casey at the University of Bristol, involved the study of dogs freely interacting at a Dogs Trust rehoming centre over a period of six months, and re-analysing data from studies of feral dogs. Their research concluded that individual relationships between dogs are learnt through experience rather than motivated by a desire to assert "dominance". The study proved dogs aren't motivated by maintaining their place in the pecking order of their pack. As many of my behaviour clients know, what our dogs want is calmness, consistency and reassurance.

Dog expert and author, **Jan Fennell** promotes the use of positive re-enforcement in dog training, and her method achieves great results.

The idea of dominance has really become a popular over recent years, spurred on by the rise in TV dog behaviour 'experts' using and recommending confrontational methods. Some of you may know that I wasn't always a Dog Listener. I spent nearly ten years working in television as a Producer and studied animal behaviour to qualify as a canine specialist. So, I know how to make television programmes – what 'looks' good, how pull at the heartstrings of viewers and create dramatic scenes. However, what may appear impressive on TV such as, pinning down a dog to show him 'your in charge' as favoured by Cesar Milan or rattling chains or shouting at the dog, as favoured by the trainers from Dog Borstal, often make unwanted behaviours worse.

Often when I'm called in to assist a client who's dog is exhibiting unwanted behaviours, the client may have attempted to replicate what they have seen on TV in order to 'teach' the dog he's done wrong. While other owners have attended dog training classes, where owners are encouraged to shout at their dog or jerk them on the lead. However, confrontational techniques like pinning the dog down, grabbing his jowls, blasting hooters or air sprays into his face, yelling at the dog, jerking him around or using choke collars as means of control, will make a dog anxious and stressed - often about their owner, and potentially lead to an escalation of aggression. Dr Casey says, "The blanket assumption that every dog is motivated by some innate desire to control people and other dogs is frankly ridiculous. It hugely underestimates the complex communicative and learning abilities of dogs. It also leads to the use of coercive training techniques, which compromise welfare, and actually cause problem behaviours."

So, how do you get a calm and responsive dog if not by dominating him? Easy! By understanding how dogs think, what motivates them, how they learn, how dogs communicate, owners can then begin to successfully train their dog and reduce down and even stop unwanted behaviours. I use reward based training – praise, touch and food reward to get repetition of the good behaviour and teach ways of dealing with the unwanted stuff in a calm and consistent way. Many owners ask me, "What's the secret to successful dog training?" My response, it's understanding your dog, being consistent, managing your environment, and having a bucket load of patience!

Learn how to deal with problem behaviours, by logging onto www.doglistener.tv

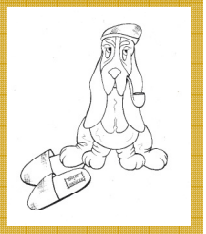
New faces to Walk the Dog

A warm welcome to our new WTD pets; **Coco, Timmy, Merlin, Jasper, Charlie, Luna, Dexter, Midnight, Bentley, Humphrey, Heidi, Betty, Dougal. Teddy, Cossy, Mitzi, Nell, Tia, Dana, Alfie, Freddie, Toby, Bullie, Pepper, Patches, Jarvis, Polly, Kizzi, Bonnie, Zee, Tilly, Ollie, Flapjack, Saucy, Teddy S, Totty, Ashya, Daisy, Rainbow, George, Tuppance and Penny.** If your pet isn't on our picture gallery yet, please send us their picture, so they can join our animal hall of fame. Email us at *info@walk-the-dog.net*

Sad farewells

We get to work with some fantastic pets and owners at Walk the Dog. We're terribly sad to say goodbye to the lovely **Seamus**, **Basil**, **Poppy** and **Molly** who have passed away. And, we say 'Bon Voyage' to **Pooh** (far right) and her family as they return back to the USA.

Great reads - 'Playing with your dog' by



Hanne Grice - the first book from our resident dog expert and WTD founder. *'Playing With Your Dog'* focuses on the importance of play, how even just ten minutes of play goes a long way in satisfying your dog. And how it can create a smarter, fitter and happier dog by positively honing his senses and natural behaviours. The book features games for all ages, testing your pet's problem solving skills, linguistic intelligence, memory and understanding. Plus there's fun tricks too, and features delightful drawings by illustrator, Ellen Tozer.

Launching in the UK and USA in time for Christmas, *'Playing With Your Dog'* will be available from Amazon, Borders, Blackwell's and also direct from WTD, in hardback, paperback and E-book format.

Special appeal – Molly and Freddy

Freddy and Molly are 5 yrs and our Norwegian cross moggie cats. Due to changes in personal circumstances, the affectionate brother and sister duo are in need of finding a forever home.

Freddy and Molly are both neutered, vaccinated, micro chipped and hold pet passports. They are two of the loveliest cats you would ever wish to meet and WTD has had the privilege of caring for them. Both cats are mild mannered and extremely loyal to each other, so need to be rehomed as a pair.

If you are able to offer a loving home for Molly and Freddy, please contact Walk the Dog via email at info@walk-the-dog.net

Annual closure notice

Remember, we are closed for from **Saturday 18th September to Sunday 3rd October**. All our services will be unavailable during this time. Please note down these dates to ensure you have cover for your pet care needs during this closure.

Special offer to WTD clients

Massage specialist and kinesiologist, Kath Griffin, is giving clients of WTD the chance to say goodbye to aches and pains, with a Special Offer **of 1hr massage for just £25**, at her therapy room based in Berkhamsted, Hertfordshire. Kath's been treating the WTD team for our aches and pains from dog walking and training for the past year and has helped us tremendously. This exclusive offer to WTD clients ends Tuesday 31st August. Contact Kath Griffin on 07903 832694 or email: kathgriffin62@yahoo.co.uk

Meet WTD's work experience

This summer we welcomed Amy from Lancashire, our work experience student. We invited Amy to share her thoughts on life as a WTD team member….

In June, I did a week's work experience with Walk the Dog. I wanted to learn more about animal behaviour and have the opportunity to care for animals, as we don't have any pets at home. I had a fantastic time shadowing on behaviour consultations with Hanne, assisting the team with pet feeds, dog walks and helping at WTD's puppy school. I also helped with WTD's Meet the Team and Walk in Ashridge event in July. I meet over 60 of WTD's clients and nearly 40 dogs attended, ranging from puppies to pensioners; and it was brilliant seeing them all play and have fun together.

I feel I learnt an awful lot during my time with the team; from how to train a dog to heel, sit 'n' stay and promote good behaviour to understanding what a dog is thinking just by watching its body language. I learnt about the importance of play for creating a happier more content pet and what positive re-enforcement is all about - praise and food reward. I also did a lot of dog walking which was great fun although tiring, as the team walk up to nearly 10 miles a day. And, I had to pick up a lot of poop! I thought all the WTD Puppies in class were adorable and wanted to take them home with me! What impressed me about the classes are that they focus on teaching owners how their dogs think, and it gives the pups a chance to meet other dogs of a similar age.

Working at WTD gives you the chance to meet lots of species of animals, and you're out doing interesting things, which is far better than being sat in an office helping with paper work getting bored! Thanks WTD for having me and it was great to meet all the clients' pets.

Amy

Meet Phil Naylor, Director of The National Association of Registered Petsitters

Name: Phil Taylor
Job: Director of NARP
Born: April '84
Pets: 2 cats, 1 dog
Located: Oxford

NARP is the largest pet care organisation in the UK. It sets the standards for the Pet and House sitting industries and represents members at Local and National Government level with particular interest in all legislation which affects the Petcare Industry and Animal Welfare. WTD caught up with Phil for a chat…

Phil, how did the NARP all begin? My family owned luxury boarding kennels. Licensing bureaucracy turned it into a kennel more or less like all the rest. We realised there was a real need for an alternative to kenneling, where owners could benefit from dedicated pet carers that could offer petsitting and services to animals more comfortable in their home environment, such as cats. In 1993, we formed 'National Dogsitters'. As membership grew we recognised our role in animal welfare and the standard that we and our members were setting; we became NARP in 1997. We vet applicants, provide support for members, from helping them get started to insurance and visiting them.

What sets members of NARP like WTD, apart from the other pet carers? NARP members really care about their pet business. Anyone can set themselves up as a pet carer and don't have to have insurance. However, NARP members make the effort to apply and be vetted as a legitimate, reliable, trustworthy pet carer who takes account of their actions by being a member of NARP. This gives members credibility, giving customers the confidence to use their services.

NARP operates a code of practice which members have to adhere to. How do you ensure that carers keep to this standard? Firstly, the insurance cover that members have isn't valid if any terms and conditions or Code of Practice are broken. Secondly, as an organisation we're open to input from anybody and we have specific complaints procedures and a committee to deal with disputes. We operate a 'three strikes and your out' policy, so three registered disputes where a member is at fault, that member will be disqualified as a member and not on our register of recommended pet carers.

WTD has received the Special Merit award for the last 3 years. What are the criteria for winning this accolade? Very simple! Having consistently great feedback from your clients! What better way of demonstrating an excellent service than to have happy returning customers.

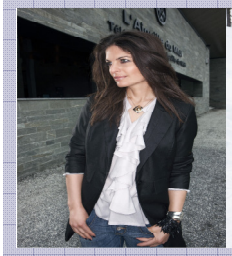
What are NARPs plans for the future? We hope to continue setting and maintaining standards for pet care, and do more on behalf of our members in terms of services and discounts and so on. Finally, we would also love to see an amendment in the Animal Boarding Establishments Act in order to recognise home boarding and cater for it accordingly!

In the news…

Green House Fashion Show – 16th Sept '10

It may seem an unlikely way to help an animal in need, but by enjoying fine food and fashion, you could give a dog a second chance in life. WTD has joined forces with Gerry Walker, independent fashion consultant, to showcase the Winter collection from Danish designers Green House, and stunning jewellery by Silpada. '**An evening of Fashion in aid of Every Chance Rescue**' takes place on Thursday 16th September at The Gatsby. Enjoy a glass of bubbly on arrival, three course meal and fashion show for £33. There's a Prize Draw with fantastic prizes including pampering facials and massages to vouchers for clothing, jewellery, artworks and even the use of a brand new, top of the range Freelander for the weekend!

Hair and makeup will be provided by the award wining salon, Ciente. To purchase tickets online go to the "Fashion Show" page on our website www.doglistener.tv then click onto the "buy now" button. Or you can pay by cheque, made payable to Walk the Dog and post to; 15 Hillside Gardens, Berkhamsted, Herts HP4 2LF.



Meet Lindsay & Bryony - WTD team members

Lindsay McKenzie-Ross – daughter of a veterinary surgeon, Lindsay grew up with animals, spending much of her time helping in her father's surgery. Lindsay assisted with pup classes and has two Miniature Schnauzers, Pippin and Ebony. Lindsay's a qualified Bright Path Ascension Meditation teacher and trained actor. *Lindsay is a member of the National Association of Registered Petsitters (NARP).*

Bryony Maddisson – graduate in Animal Care and Management from Oaklands College. Bryony combined her love of animals and travel by working for several months in Sri Lanka. Bryony worked at an elephant sanctuary, learning how to care for these creatures and bath them down. She also assisted with a local dog charity during her stay. Bryony has her own dog, Norman, a 7yrs Jack Russell. *Bryony is a member of the National Association of Registered Petsitters (NARP).*

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