

Kelly Krager

From: Aidan, Positive Petzine [editor@positivepetzine.com]
Sent: Saturday, September 01, 2007 2:27 PM
To: Kelly Krager
Subject: [positivepetzine] What causes 75% of all dog behavior problems?

Hi Kelly and Sophie, when asked what is the biggest cause of dog behavior problems, most people would guess at lack of training, a 'dominance' problem, or inadequate socialisation. Some might even try to blame the dog's genetics or temperament. Whilst any of these might cause dog behavior problems, a great many dog behavior problems are caused in whole or in part by this one thing - **not enough Exercise!**

So what are your dog's exercise requirements?

That depends on age, breed and individual. Puppies shouldn't be exercised for more than 20 minutes at a time, but they can be exercised gently quite frequently. Most puppies like to play, which tires them out with or without your help. Be careful not to over-walk puppies, their bones need to mature before they can be walked for long periods. Speak to your vet, but 20 minutes of walking at a time is about right.

Different breeds have different exercise requirements. Working and herding breeds typically have very high exercise requirements. Take the German Shepherd as an example, German Shepherd Dogs are descended from herding dogs who were required to form a "living fence" for their master's flock. This was a 24 hour a day job, which included protection from predators and thieves at night.

Some breeds, whilst they may appear to have high exercise requirements, may not. A Greyhound actually has a fairly low exercise requirement, although they do love to exercise intensely for short bursts.

Other breeds were used in hunting. Breeds such as Beagles and Retrievers would work very hard, but not every day. They tend to be fairly flexible with exercise, so long as they are kept in shape and given regular outlets for their energies.

Individuals within any breed will have greater or lesser requirements for exercise than others of that breed. Sometimes the differences can be fairly extreme, although I have never known a Border Collie that didn't require a lot of exercise! Well, until they got old at least. Older dogs generally require much less exercise.

Nearly every adult dog requires at least 30 minutes walking each day. If you cannot physically provide this for your dog then alternative means for exercise should be arranged. Playing fetch, frisbee or swimming are excellent alternatives. Some dog clubs provide agility classes, which are a great way to train and to exercise your dog - regardless of breed or age.

Some individual dogs have a very high exercise requirement. Typically, trainers or obedience clubs will be presented with a dog who escapes the yard, barks all day, digs in the garden, pulls on the leash, jumps all over people or doesn't come when called. Usually in some sort of combination!

These dogs almost certainly require more exercise than they are getting.

In addition to exercise, training is essential. What's more, 5 minutes training is worth about 15 minutes exercise. [Brain work](#) will tire a dog out fairly quickly. Combine training with exercise and you have a winning combination. Sports such as Agility, Tracking, Schutzhund or Flyball are all excellent outlets for your dog's boundless energy.

Swedish studies conducted by Dr Anders Hallgren identified a very strong correlation between dogs with low activity levels and problem behaviors.

Can you over-exercise a dog? Yes. You can exercise a dog to exhaustion. If you are extremely fit, or your dog is extremely unfit, you can cause injuries, heat-stress and even cause internal organ damage by over-working your dog. If your dog is unfit, consult with your vet before starting a new exercise program with your dog. Start off gently and increase the amount of exercise each week, give your dog time to adjust. In hot weather, scale back and provide plenty of water and rest opportunities.

Please also be aware of any physical limitations your dog may have. Diseases such as Hip Dysplasia can be hard to detect in the early stages. Some dogs are remarkably adept at hiding injuries if they think the fun will stop. If you suspect your dog has an injury, please end all exercise and immediately seek veterinary help. Early treatment can save weeks of needless pain and hundreds of dollars of vet care.

I hope you've been enjoying this e-course so far, Kelly and Sophie. Until next time...

Regards,
Aidan
Editor

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