Cornell University
College of Veterinary Medicine

DOG Watch

Expert information on medicine, behavior and health from a world leader in veterinary medicine

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INSIDE

IN THE NEWS ...

Study Finds Prozac Improves Mood in Separation Anxiety

The use of the animal version of Prozac in effectively treating separation anxiety in dogs has been proven, but a question remained: Does the drug also improve mood but only stop the destructive behavior?

A study by the University of Lincoln in the UK found that dogs who took the drug and underwent behavior modification became more optimistic. "As their mood improved, so did the behavior problem," the university says, adding that the same results were not seen in a control group, consisting of dogs without separation anxiety and drug treatment.

Researchers tested both groups using full and empty food bowls. The speed with which the dogs approached the bowls they'd learned would be empty was the measure of optimism.

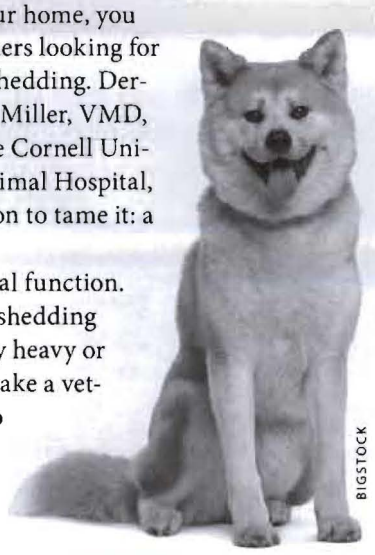
"These findings should reassure owners that their dog is not being sedated but rather is truly less anxious and therefore more optimistic that the owner will return," says behaviorist Katherine Houpt, VMD, at Cornell. ❖

When There's Hair, Hair Everywhere

Shedding is usually seasonal, but factors such as diet, genetics and even temperament can all trigger it

If clouds of dog hair don't complement you, your furniture or your home, you may be among the owners looking for solutions to excessive shedding. Dermatologist William H. Miller, VMD, Medical Director of the Cornell University Companion Animal Hospital, has a simple prescription to tame it: a brush and a vacuum.

Shedding is a normal function. However, if your dog's shedding appears to be unusually heavy or results in bald spots, make a veterinary appointment to determine if he has an underlying medical condition, Dr. Miller says. "Normal shedding does not produce bald spots."



BIGSTOCK

Akitas are among breeds that shed impressively.

These are among the many possible reasons for abundant shedding:

- High fevers
- Food or inhalant allergies
- Hypothyroidism, a disorder involving the inadequate production of the thyroid hormone, which can cause dry, brittle hair
- Cushing's disease (hyperadrenocorticism), a common endocrine disorder resulting from overproduction of adrenal cortical steroids
- Injuries, infections, even a new soap or shampoo

If your dog doesn't have a health-related problem, Dr. Miller offers an explanation of hair growth

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Is a Clinical Trial Right for Your Dog?

It depends in part on your commitment, concern about his taking placebos and the impact on his quality of life

If your dog had a life-threatening disease with no effective treatment, would you enter him in a clinical trial that might result in a helpful drug or other therapy — perhaps even a cure? Clinical studies are essential in moving medicine forward and often rely on the participation of animals with naturally occurring diseases to find answers.

Before you sign up your dog for a trial, however, it's important to do your homework. Not every trial is a good fit for pets, and not every dog is right for all studies.

Temperament is one consideration. "There are often many visits in a clinical trial, and it's very important a dog can handle the stress of multiple appointments," says nutritionist Joseph J. Wakshlag, DVM, Ph.D, Associate Chair of Research and Graduate Education at Cornell University College of Veterinary Medicine.

Avoiding Bias. The best drug studies are double-blind and placebo-controlled. That means that one group of dogs receives the drug being tested while the other group

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DOG Watch

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SHORT TAKE

Finding 'Forever Homes' at End of Their Journey

The Louisiana SPCA has found a novel solution to overpopulation at its New Orleans shelter. It sends animals to partner shelters miles away, where they can be more quickly adopted. Its service is part of a small but growing trend in U.S. shelters and rescue organizations to save animals' lives and find them "forever homes."

The Louisiana Transport Program moved 779 animals to shelters last year in its truck and specially outfitted trailer. The shelter has a high intake rate and moving some of them opens up space. At the same time, many shelters in the North have more room to accept animals, says Placement Coordinator Jordan Buccola. "Also, sometimes just a change of shelter location helps get these animals adopted faster. For example, we partner with a shelter in Minnesota that adopts large dogs at a high rate, while in our area, these are guys are the ones who stay here the longest."

A transport program at the Louisiana ASPCA uses regional preferences for animals to move them to other shelters for adoption.

On the road, two drivers take turns monitoring the pets' safety via a camera in the trailer. They periodically check the air conditioner that runs on a generator. They also stop every two hours to check on the pets in person and provide fresh water. The animals, who receive veterinary exams before traveling, are kept in individual crates held in place by loading straps. There are no breaks for walks because rest stops are close to highways, and it's too risky with the possibility of animals getting loose, Buccoa says.

In the spring, the shelter sent 50 dogs and cats, including 32 from Natchez Pet Adoptions, on an 800-mile trip to Wayside Waifs, a private, no-kill shelter in Kansas City, Mo.

A variety of dogs and cats arrived, says Casey Waugh, communications manager: 15 adult dogs, 27 puppies, six adult cats and two kittens. Wayside Waifs, with a population of 300, is able to take in animals and provide foster care and medical and behavioral help because it has a staff of 70-plus and 1,500 active volunteers.

Elizabeth A. Berliner, DVM, ABVP (Canine/Feline Practice), the Janet L. Swanson Director of Shelter Medicine at Cornell, views transporting animals between sheltering organizations as a progressive approach to regional differences in companion animals.

"Without a doubt, such programs save lives," Dr. Berliner says. "However, preventive medical care, humane handling and careful adherence to state laws and public health requirements are essential to ensuring good animal welfare. Good intentions must always be followed by good practice. A veterinarian should be actively engaged at both the source and receiving organizations to guarantee healthy, humane transport protocols."

Dr. Berliner advises those interested in animal transport to see the National Federation of Humane Societies' Best Practices Guidelines for Companion Animal Transport at www.humanefederation.org/TransferBestPractice.cfm.

At the 44-acre Wayside Waifs campus, where veterinary evaluations were done on the 50 pets from Louisiana, in just 12 days all of them had found forever homes. ❖

Ticks Have Become a Year-round Threat

They're active in more areas and, when infected with a certain bacteria, can transmit Lyme disease

Ticks used to be the most active in the spring through autumn, but rising temperatures attributed to climate change have shortened their long winter naps and in some areas eliminated them entirely. The result is that tick bites have become a year-round risk. Although blacklegged deer ticks prefer mice, birds and deer, they can bite other warm-blooded mammals — including you and your dog.

When the ticks are infected with the bacteria *Borrelia burgdorferi*, they can transmit Lyme disease. It's now the most common tick-borne disease of humans in the U.S. spread by arthropods — invertebrate animals with external skeletons.

While it has been speculated that dogs could carry home loosely attached infected ticks and transfer them to human hosts and cause infection, "No such instance has been documented," according to the Baker Institute for Animal Health at Cornell University College of Veterinary Medicine.

Northeast to the Pacific. Until the mid-1900s, deer ticks mostly inhabited the islands off New York to Massachusetts. Today they're found as far west as California, south to Virginia and north into Canada. Recently, Northeastern states have been particularly hard hit. The blacklegged tick spreads the disease in the Northeastern, Mid-Atlantic, and North-Central United States, and the Western blacklegged tick *(Ixodes pacificus)* spreads the disease on the Pacific Coast.

DR. WILLIAM H. MILLER, CORNELL

Thoroughly check your dog for ticks after hiking or walking in fields with long grass. If you find an attached tick and it's flat like this one, exposure to Lyme disease is unlikely. If the tick is engorged, transmission may have occurred.

It's difficult to tell if a pet has Lyme disease. Unlike humans, most dogs show no skin rashes or neurologic signs. "Symptoms in dogs include sudden onset lameness, mild fever, weight loss and a brief lack of appetite," says Tiva Hoshizaki, BVSc, a resident in Shelter Medicine at Cornell University College of Veterinary Medicine. The lameness may affect a single joint — usually the joint closest to the bite — or it may shift. Unlike in humans, Lyme symptoms subside and the dogs recover within a week. However, the symptoms may mysteriously recur weeks or months later.

Meryl Littman, VMD, ACVIM, professor of medicine at the University of Pennsylvania School of Veterinary Medicine, whose research interests include canine tick-borne diseases, cautions, "Lameness doesn't mean your pet has Lyme disease. Many things, including trauma, intervertebral disc disease, other tick-borne diseases and cruciate ligament issues can all cause lameness."

Multiple Carriers. The five percent of dogs who show signs of illness and test positive for an antibody could be sick with another tick-borne disease, such as *anaplasmosis* or Rocky Mountain

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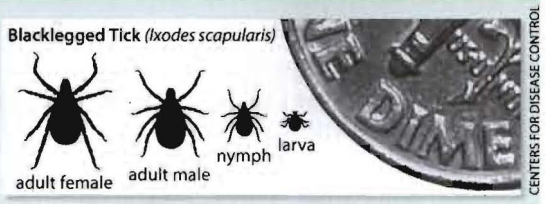
THEY'RE ALWAYS SEARCHING FOR A WELCOME HOST

Lyme bacteria live in deer ticks that feed on deer, rodents, birds and other hosts. A tick in search of a meal may lurk on a blade of grass or bush. When a promising animal passes by, it grabs hold and hitches a ride. Once aboard, it crawls along, seeking an unobtrusive patch of skin, then latches on with its front legs, cuts open the skin with its mouthparts and inserts a barbed feeding tube that makes removal challenging.



CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL

THEIR TWO-YEAR LIFECYCLE — Adult ticks are about the size of a sesame seed, while nymphal ticks are the size of a poppy seed. Both the nymph and adult stages can transmit Lyme disease.The larval tick — which transforms into nymphs — is no bigger than the period at the end of this sentence.

The tick sucks blood and after about two days of attachment, releases Lyme-infected saliva into the host's blood. When full, the tick pulls out its mouthpart and falls off. Adult deer ticks are active in the fall and lay their eggs outside, which hatch to uninfected larva about the size of a grain of salt the next summer.

A larval tick usually attaches onto a rodent or bird, drinks its host's blood for a few days and may pick up the organism from that host. It then falls off, molts and doubles in size to the nymph stage, when it has its second blood meal on a new host, usually the following spring, and it can then infect that new host. Once finished, it will again drop off, molt, become an adult and search once more for a host and mate — all within a two-year life span. The engorged adult can be up to a half-inch long — nearly 3,000 times its original size. Only nymph and adult stages can transmit Lyme disease.

RESEARCH... *(continued from cover)*
receives a placebo, a substance with no therapeutic effect. Neither the owners nor the researchers know which dogs are getting the drug or the placebo. That's what makes the study double blind. It helps to prevent bias in the results.

"In some cases, there are enough control dogs out there from other studies that it can be justified to do a study where a new drug is tried and compared to other trials that have been performed — these are easier to justify sometimes," Dr. Wakshlag says.

Some studies may offer "standard of care," the normal treatment for the condition, versus the new treatment. That's one way of determining if New Drug X enhances the standard of care treatment. You might have your dog participate in a clinical trial if he has a type of cancer or other disease with few effective treatment options.

For instance, some diseases, such as kidney failure, don't have a standard of care because other than diet, nothing else is known to help. In that kind of situation, Dr. Wakshlag says he might be a little more eager to have a dog enrolled in a trial because few other alternatives exist.

Michael P. Carroll, Cornell

"Clinical trials have brought about improved survival of animals for many conditions, often with the bonus of improving treatments for people," says Joseph J. Wakshlag, DVM, Ph.D, Associate Chair of Research and Graduate Education at Cornell.

Variety of Sponsors.

Universities, manufacturers, large referral hospitals and contract research laboratories perform clinical trials. One factor in the number of clinical studies that a university conducts is the size of its surrounding population, which can limit the pets available to participate.

Scientists must reach out to veterinarians and the community at large to find animals with the diseases in question and owners willing to have them try new products and treatments. "We at Cornell don't do as many clinical studies as a lot of other places because we have a population base of only 50,000," Dr. Wakshlag says. "Often we are recruiting from the nearby areas like Binghamton, Buffalo, Rochester and Syracuse."

Successful Results.

When it comes to diseases such as bone cancer, some dogs with osteosarcoma have achieved better survival rates thanks to clinical trials evaluating new chemotherapy protocols. Studies that involve treating the tumor with radiation or surgery have helped to reduce the incidence of amputation. Other study results include medications developed to help control pain caused by the tumors and new ways to predict the success of treatments.

Equally exciting is that the knowledge gained in treating dogs with osteosarcoma may also help children with the same disease. Bone cancer is similar in children and dogs, making it a good example of what health

Some clinical trials require frequent monitoring by the dog's veterinarian or others at the institution sponsoring the study.

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A GLOSSARY: WHAT DOES A CONTROLLED STUDY MEAN?

Clinical trials have their own language:

Controlled study: The effect of a drug is compared with the effect of a placebo.

Blinded study: Participants don't know if they are receiving the drug being studied or a placebo. This helps prevent the results being affected by the power of suggestion.

Double-blinded study: Neither the participants nor the researchers know who is receiving the drug being studied or the placebo. This guards against researcher bias and the placebo effect.

Placebo: An inactive substance designed to resemble a drug.

Placebo-controlled: Participants receive either the drug being studied or a placebo.

Standard of Care: The recommended diagnostics and treatment for a particular disease.

ASK ABOUT ADVANTAGES AND DRAWBACKS

If you want to check out a potential clinical trail for your dog, these are questions to ask his veterinarian and the study's research coordinator.

QUESTIONS FOR THE VETERINARIAN:

- What is the standard of care? Your dog may already be receiving the care if he has been diagnosed with a disease for some time, but his veterinarian can outline it more explicitly for you and explain how it differs from the proposed treatment.
- Are there other treatments that can extend my dog's life or offer better quality of life?
- How will participation affect my dog's quality of life?
- Do you think this study is a worthwhile endeavor? Why or why not?

QUESTIONS FOR THE RESEARCH COORDINATOR:

- Why do researchers believe the intervention being tested might be effective? Why might it not be effective?
- Has it been tested previously?
- How often will I have to visit the hospital or clinic?
- Is there a fee to enroll my dog in the study? The expenses of conducting a clinical trial can be substantial, from $1,000 to $1,500 or more per animal. Usually, medical care is free, which is an incentive for owners.
- What are the potential side effects of this new treatment?
- If my dog receives a placebo, will he later have an opportunity to receive the investigational treatment?
- If my dog's condition is painful, will he receive pain medication during the study? Pain control should always be a component of a clinical trial.
- Can I remove my dog from the study at any time?

The answers to these questions can help you decide whether it's better for you and your dog to go with the current standard of care or to try the new treatment being studied.

CORNELL SEEKS CANDIDATES FOR ARTHRITIS STUDY

A clinical study is underway at Cornell on the effects of platelet-rich plasma therapy on dogs with osteoarthritis of the knee (stifle). Specialists will take a blood sample from a dog and concentrate the platelets into a small volume. Platelets are small blood cells that contain growth factors in their blood. These enriched platelets will be injected into the joint space of the knee to provide pain relief and help maintain remaining healthy cartilage.

Candidates should weigh at least 10 pounds and have long-standing osteoarthritis of one knee but still be able to walk capably. Dogs with acute cruciate ligament tears are excluded, but those whose repaired ligament tears are developing arthritis may be eligible.

All candidates will receive the injection free of charge. Follow-up is required at six and 12 weeks post-injection. For more information, please contact study coordinator Erin Berthelsen at vet-research@cornell.edu.

The Food and Drug Administration is the governmental gatekeeper, ensuring standards for clinical trials and medical products before they're on the market.

care professionals call "one medicine," the integration of health research, policy and care for humans and animals.

Researchers may have very specific requirements to ensure the validity of the study. One, of course, is that the dog must have the disease in question unless researchers need healthy dogs for epidemiological studies in which they are looking at populations at risk.

Some dogs may be excluded from a clinical trial if they are taking other drugs or are eating a certain diet. "There is a lot of what we'll call exclusion criteria that have to be met before an animal is enrolled," Dr. Wakshlag says.

The criteria might include a dog being a certain weight, breed and age — either too old or too young. In addition, owners who participate must be willing to devote time to the study, administering medications, taking their dogs for checkups, whatever the protocol outlines.

"Clinical trials have brought about improved survival of animals for many conditions, often with the bonus of improving treatments for people," Dr. Wakshlag says. "If you find the right clinical trial for your dog's problem, you could contribute to a better future for him, other dogs and humans, too." ❖

SHEDDING... *(continued from cover)*

to help you understand and cope with shedding. Hair growth in nearly all species occurs in cycles throughout the year:

- In the active anagen phase, the hair is hard to pull out, or epilate.
- In the telogen phase, hair stops growing and remains in the hair follicle. "It can be epilated easily with fingers, combs, brushes, etc.," Dr. Miller says.
- In the photoperiod, or light cycle, the length of daylight triggers changes in shedding. Except for those living in very hot climates, dogs generally will not lose hair in summer, as you might expect. Instead, they'll shed in the fall to accommodate thicker hair for winter. They'll shed that thick hair in the spring.

The seasons can be a clue if you're worried that your dog's shedding is abnormal. If a dog living in the North undergoes a major shed in the summer or the dead of winter, he has a problem, Dr. Miller says. "Obviously, the influences for shedding are different in the Northeast than they are in Florida. In warm weather, the dog doesn't want a thick dense coat, whereas that type of coat is desirable in cold weather."

THE BAD NEWS: NO DOG IS HYPOALLERGENIC

Despite popular belief, non-shedding, "hypoallergenic" dogs don't exist, says dermatologist William H. Miller, VMD, at Cornell. Some breeds do have a different hair cycle than other breeds, so shedding may not be as obvious, but it still does occur.

If these "non-shedding breeds" truly didn't shed, they would grow their coats continually and their hair would drag on the floor, Dr. Miller says.

Breeds that tend to be "low-shedders" include:

- Bichon Frisé
- Border Terrier
- Greyhound
- Irish Terrier
- Maltese
- Poodle
- Portuguese Water Dog

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Despite his thick coat, the curly or wavy haired Portuguese Water Dog is known as a low-shedder.

Breeds that shed a great deal include:

- Akita
- Beagle
- Boston Terrier
- Chow Chow
- German Shepherd Dog
- Golden and Labrador Retriever
- Pug
- Shih Tzu

Dogs with double coats like the Nordic breeds can shed profusely in the spring and fall to allow new coats to grow in. The shedding, called "blowing coat," last about a month.

The challenge of some indoor dogs is that they can shed year-round, Dr. Miller says. "Many different factors influence shedding, including the lighting in the house, the intensity and duration of the ambient light outside the house, and whether the owner is a night owl and stays up late into the early morning hours."

You can take steps to reduce factors that can affect shedding:

BRUSHING IS BETTER THAN BATHING

Dogs don't need to be bathed unless there's specific reason for it, says dermatologist William H. Miller, VMD, at Cornell. "Brushing is far better for the coat. If the dog is dirty, smells or has a skin disease, then bathing is in order. Otherwise, brush."

Most dogs with medium-length or thick coats need weekly brushing. Those with long silky coats like Yorkies or those with double coats like Norwegian Elkhounds need daily care. Brushing removes loose hair and dirt, distributes natural oils and makes dogs feel more comfortable. You can book an appointment with a professional groomer if you don't have time for maintenance grooming.

For management of shedding in general:

- Try various gloves, wipes, brushes and rollers that are on the market specifically for your dog's coat to remove loose hair on him and in the home.
- Vacuum floors and furniture often. And if you or other family members are allergic to dog dander, use a vacuum with a HEPA (high-efficiency particulate arresting) filter. Dander, which is the dead skin that dogs shed, is the cause of allergies, not the hair itself.

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Daily or weekly brushing depends on dogs' haircoats, whether short, thick or silky, but all benefit from feeling cleaner and more comfortable afterward.

Lower the Anxiety Level

Hyper-excitable animals tend to shed more than placid ones, Dr. Miller says. During the stress of a veterinary visit, telogen hairs that aren't anchored into the hair follicle may begin to fall out. "Think of the dog with a beautiful coat who all of a sudden starts to shed when he walks into the veterinarian's office."

Anxious dogs don't get goose bumps like we do when we experience a chill or a sudden scare, but a dog's hair follicles can straighten in a process known as piloerection. It's an erection of the hair due to contraction of the tiny muscles that elevate the hair follicles. A similar process helps form goose bumps in humans. Piloerection loosens the telogen hairs, and some fall out.

Feed a High-quality Diet

Hair is made from the protein keratin. Dogs who don't get adequate animal protein in their diet may experience unusual shedding. Excessive fat in the diet can also cause shedding, but — to confuse things — omega-3 and omega-6 fatty acids are important for healthy skin and coat. It's best to consult your dog's veterinarian or ask for a referral to a veterinary nutritionist for help in creating a balanced diet. The American College of Veterinary Nutrition has a directory of board-certified specialists at www.acvn.org.

One final factor in hair growth is a process described as asynchronous, meaning it's unsynchronized. Some hairs actively grow, while adjacent ones are in the no-growth telogen phase. This may seem an odd act of nature, but Dr. Miller says it's fortuitous. "If all hairs were in the same phase of growth, the dog or cat would go totally bald when he shed. That would make housecleaning easier, but bald dogs and cats really aren't beautiful." ❖

LYME... *(continued from page 3)*

spotted fever, she says. An individual tick can carry more than one such disease. "Testing shows only whether dogs have been exposed to Lyme but not whether or not they are sick because of Lyme disease," Dr. Littman says.

Lyme exposure can be confirmed with a serologic (blood) test called the SNAP-4DX test. "An antibody made by the white blood cells fights the antigen — a part of the bacteria made of protein," Dr. Hoshizaki says. "This SNAP test shows the presence of that antibody, indicating that there has been a past response to the Lyme bacteria antigen, although that exposure could have been long ago."

Tick prevention is the first line of defense, says Dr. Hoshizaki. When walking with your dog, avoid fields with long grass and do a through check for ticks after hiking. Several collars that repel ticks are on the market, as are some monthly topicals that kill attached ticks or prevent tick attachment.

"New as of 2014 are oral chewables for dogs that kill ticks soon after attachment before they can transmit the Lyme agent," Dr. Littman says. "NexGard protects dogs for a month, Bravecto for three months. These are useful for dogs who swim or get bathed a lot, which may wash away topicals, as well as for owners who may forget or not wish to administer topicals. ❖

THREE TIPS FOR EASY TICK REMOVAL

If a tick attaches to your dog, it's best to remove it as soon after attachment as possible. "Do not cover the tick with Vaseline, gasoline or anything else beforehand," says Meryl Littman, VMD, ACVIM, at the University of Pennsylvania. "And do not remove it with your bare hands — a squished tick's bacteria could get into your cuticles and infect you."

The steps to removal:

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- Part your dog's fur.
- Use fine-pointed straight tweezers or a tick removal tool and grasp the tick as close to the skin as possible.
- Draw it out slowly and steadily and try to remove the entire tick.

If the tick is flat, exposure to Lyme is unlikely; if engorged, transmission may have occurred. In any case, avoid panic. "The infection is common, but the disease is relatively uncommon," says Tiva Hoshizaki, BVSc, at Cornell.

HOW THE DISEASE GOT ITS NAME

Thanks to ticks, the city of Lyme, Conn., has the disease named after it, and an entomologist named Willy Burgdorfer had the Lyme bacteria *(Borrelia burgdorferi)* named after him. In 1982, Burgdorfer discovered the bacteria in deer ticks, also called black-legged ticks. When blood serum from infected sick people was mixed with the Lyme bacteria, their antibodies swarmed it — a suspicious sign that these bacteria had caused the disease.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

For more information on Lyme disease, please see http://bakerinstitute.vet.cornell.edu/animalhealth/page.php?id=1101.

Katherine A. Houpt, VMD, Ph.D.,here with her West Highland White Terrier, Yuki, provided the answer on this page. Dr. Houpt is a diplomate of the American College of Veterinary Behaviorists and emeritus professor at Cornell University College of Veterinary Medicine.

Please Share Your Questions
We welcome questions of general interest on health, medicine and behavior. We regret however, that we cannot comment on specific products and prior diagnoses. Please send correspondence to:

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COMING UP ...

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A Havanese Barks at Children to Warn, 'Stay Away From Me'

Q I have a 4-year-old Havanese mix I got from a rescue group when she was about 18 months old. Bella had been abused and was underweight, afraid of men and, of all things, children. With gradual exposure, she became trustful of men, but kids, especially in noisy groups, still frighten her.

Do you have any idea what might have caused this and, more important, advice on how can she can get over it? She barks at kids at bus stops and walking on the sidewalk and growls at those approaching on bikes. I have to keep her on leash when visiting relatives with children. I'd be very grateful for your counsel.

A You were very compassionate to take on a dog like Bella. I hope you will be able to modify her attitude toward children. She may or may not have been abused by children. Dogs, especially those who were not exposed to children during the sensitive period for socialization between 7 and 14 weeks, are often afraid of them.

Children are natural agitators. They are noisy and move erratically. They look like adults but don't behave like adults. This reaction to children is magnified in little dogs like Bella because even a child is much bigger than she is. Small dogs often have a reputation for being "snappy" when their underlying motivation is not aggression but fear. She barks and growls, both communications meaning, "Move away from me."

What can you do? You can essentially repeat the process you applied to her fear of men but add rewards. Use obedience commands to prove to her the world is not scary place; it is predictable. If she sits when you say "Sit," a treat will appear in her mouth most of the time. If she is not already trained, you can start at home or at an obedience class as long as it does not use forceful methods.

Hold a treat over her nose and move your hand up and back between her ears. Her nose should follow the treat up, and as her nose goes up, her rump will go down. Say "Sit" just as she sits and give her the treat. Repeat.

When she knows one command, you can proceed. Identify a tiny treat she really likes and use it only for I Love Kids' lessons. Approach the school bus stop, but stop before she will reach her threshold for barking. Ask her to sit and give her the treats as long as she sits calmly. If she barks or growls, lead her a little farther away and try again.

The goal is to make her think children mean good things. You should be able to move closer to the children over a period of weeks. When she can sit within 10 feet of the children and quietly take treats, you can move on to other situations. You can use the process with bikes by having her sit whenever you see one approaching. Now both children and bikes should make her salivate. If you have a cooperative neighbor child, you can ask him or her to ride past very slowly. You can gradually bring Bella closer and closer to the bike path.

We can use a different approach with your pint-sized relatives. Purchase the "Blue Dog Parent Guide and CD" from the American Veterinary Medical Association ($8, www.avma.org/KB/K12/Pages/AVMA-Products-The-Blue-Dog.aspx) and give it to the parents. This program illustrates without the use of words how to judge a dog's emotions and the situations in which he may become aggressive.

See the late Dr. Sophia Yin's book "How to Behave so Your Dog Behaves" for valuable information on improving dog behavior. For more insight into the reasons for aggression, see "Decoding Your Dog," written by members of the American College of Veterinary Behaviorists. Good luck! ❖

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