



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

'Label the Behavior, Not the Breed' 2

The greater the prevalence of a breed, the more it's represented in dog incidents.

A Luxury ARK at JFK 2

A \$48-million airport terminal for animals in transit will make its debut next year.

Outwit Your Surfing Champ 3

Put down sticky tape and appeal to his inner hunter with treat-dispensing toys.

Ask the Experts 8

A party-loving Labrador Retriever nearly knocks over guests in his excitement.

IN THE NEWS ...

'Hypoallergenic' Breeds Have Plenty of Allergens

Researchers at Henry Ford Hospital in Detroit analyzed dust samples from 173 homes with a newborn and one dog in the home. They studied 60 breeds, with 11 of them so-called hypoallergenic dogs.

The result reported in the *American Journal of Rhinology and Allergy*: The hypoallergenic dogs — those who shed less and are thought to produce less dander and saliva — did not have lower allergen levels. Allergies develop from proteins in dogs' saliva and flakes of dead skin that disperse into the environment.

"Based on previous allergy studies conducted here at Henry Ford, exposure to a dog early in life provides protection against dog allergy development. But the idea that you can buy a certain breed of dog and think it will cause less allergy problems for a person already dog-allergic is not borne out by our study," says Christine Cole Johnson, Ph.D., MPH, chair of Public Health Sciences and senior author of the study. ♦

Special Renal Diets Can Lengthen Lives

The challenge is to recognize early signs of chronic kidney disease — increased water consumption and urination

Chronic kidney disease is common in older dogs, with up to 15 percent of them affected, according to the American Kennel Club Canine Health Foundation. The disease is incurable, involving the gradual loss of kidney function; however, owners can help slow its progression.

Studies show that therapeutic renal diets can lengthen patients' lives compared to those fed adult maintenance diets. "Nutritional management is the cornerstone of CKD treatment in dogs and cats," says Meredith Miller, DVM, AVCIM, a lecturer in small animal



Norwegian Elkhounds are among breeds believed prone to CKD.

medicine at Cornell University College of Veterinary Medicine. "Clinical trials have shown that the diets improve quality of life and at least double the survival times for dogs and cats with CKD."

Early Warnings. The challenge for owners is recognizing the warning signs of the disease — increased water consumption and urination

— early on. By the time more dramatic signs, such as vomiting, weight loss and lethargy are evident, loss of kidney function may already have begun. When indicators of

(continued on page 6)

What's Your Liability in a Dog Attack?

If you injure another dog, the issue is whether you can prove you did it to defend yourself and your dog

You're out walking your dog when you encounter an owner with his big dog on an extendable lead. He's texting and doesn't see his dog aggressively run up to yours and then snarl. You blast the dog with pepper spray, incapacitating him for several hours. As painful as those hours might be for the dog, they unfortunately are probably going to be painful for you, too.

The owner of the other dog will threaten to sue you. The animal control department will dismiss your request for a "dangerous dog hearing," focusing on the other

dog. The police department might even arrest you for animal cruelty.

You were right to protect your dog. "But the real issue is whether you can prove that you did it in self-defense and that the way you defended yourself and your dog made sense under the circumstances," says dog-bite attorney Kenneth M. Phillips of Beverly Hills, Calif.

Danger Zone. "If a dog is attacking your dog, it probably would be true to say that you were within the zone of danger and you were

(continued on page 4)

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SHORT TAKES

'Label Them Vicious Because of Behavior — not Their Breed'

Trainer Jill Kessler-Miller makes the point in the article on dog-bite liability in this issue that the greater the prevalence of a breed in a population, the more it will be represented in dog incidents.

Earlier this year the American Veterinary Medical Association's Animal Welfare Division came to the same conclusion in its report "Dog Bite Risk and Prevention: The Role of Breed." It summarized scientific literature, legislative and regulatory reviews, market conditions and "scholarly ethical assessments."

It found that breeds implicated in serious dog bites included mixes, German Shepherd Dogs, pit-bull types, Rottweilers, Jack Russell Terriers, Chow Chows, Spaniels, Collies, Saint Bernards and Labrador Retrievers. Pit-bull types were often named in cases of severe injuries and fatalities. "This may relate to the popularity of the breed in the victim's community, reporting biases, misidentification and the dog's treatment by owner (e.g., use as fighting dogs)," according to the report.

Surprisingly — to all except perhaps owners of small dogs — behavioral assessments and owner surveys revealed small to medium-sized breeds, including Collies, toy breeds and Spaniels, were aggressive toward people.

Breed popularity can play a role in the perception of "biting breeds." After registrations of Rottweilers increased at the American Kennel Club from 1990 to 1995, they ranked at the top of the list of those causing hospitalizations from bites in the late 1990s and early 2000s. While the report says other temporarily popular breeds such as Dalmatians and Irish Setters didn't seem to rank as big biters, "Any estimate of breed-based risk must take into account the prevalence of the breed in the population at the time and place of serious biting."

Owners of pit-bull types may experience a breed stigma, but, the report says, "Controlled studies have not identified this breed group as disproportionately dangerous. The pit-bull type is particularly ambiguous as a 'breed,'

encompassing a range of pedigree breeds [and] informal types Accordingly, targeting this breed or any another as a basis for dog-bite prevention is unfounded."

The report ends by quoting the National Animal Care and Control Association: "Dangerous and/or vicious animals should be labeled as such as a result of their actions or behavior and not because of their breed."



ARK's 178,000 square feet will encompass suites with flat screen TVs and, as shown in this rendering, a bone-shaped swimming pool for dogs.

A Luxury ARK at JFK

What's billed as the world's only animal airport terminal and privately owned airport quarantine facility will open next year at JFK Airport in New York. It's intended for the import and export of pets, horses, livestock and exotic animals that are quarantined before travel to make sure they're disease-free. Cornell has been consulting on the large-animal facility at the \$48-million terminal, which is called ARK in a Biblical reference. ARK will house a 24-hour LifeCare veterinary clinic and especially for dogs, a bone-shaped swimming pool and pedicures at the Paradise 4 Paws Resort.

Correction on Shih Tzus

An article on shedding in the August 2015 issue of *DogWatch* ("When There's Hair, Hair Everywhere") mistakenly listed Shih Tzu among breeds that shed a great deal. Despite their luxurious coats, the American Shih Tzu Club says the breed, like other dogs with hair instead of fur, shed "a little every day rather than huge quantities seasonally." ♦

How to Outwit Your Surfing Champ

Clear the counters, put down sticky tape, and appeal to his inner hunter with intriguing treat-dispensing toys

In your dog's pursuit of championship status as a counter surfer, it's not size that matters as much as determination. Great Danes and Labradors can easily use their front paws to swat off your half-eaten sandwich or another food temptation, but don't discount small, spry breeds.

"There are some Jack Russell Terrier types who really like to explore and are capable of jumping very high," says Pamela Perry, DVM, Ph.D., a behavior resident at Cornell University College of Veterinary Medicine.

Some dogs are big enough to put their paws on the stove, toppling pans of hot stews and suffering second- or third-degree burns, requiring immediate veterinary treatment. Other dogs delight in sniffing items on coffee and end tables, such as a cup of coffee, bottle of beer, nuts and other snacks.

Why They Do This. Before you can curb this habit, first understand your dog's motivation. For starters, remember dogs possess a superior sense of smell compared to ours. "Dogs like to explore their environments with their mouths and noses," Dr. Perry says. "For a lot of dogs, counter surfing is fun. Young dogs may be looking for objects for play. Provide them with lots of chew toys and food puzzles. In addition, give them plenty of time to explore outdoors and exercise — for example playing fetch."

The tactics that can help stop counter-surfing:

- ◆ Invest in motion-activated canisters that emit bursts of compressed air and put them on counters your dog likes to explore. "Cans of compressed air work well because dogs dislike the sound and sudden burst of air," Dr. Perry says. "These products are

very effective because they work even when you are not around."

- ◆ Place double-sided tape on kitchen counters and shelves to make them less inviting. Some dogs hate the sticky feel on their paws.
- ◆ Tap into your dog's inner hunter. "If your dog likes to scavenge for food, introduce him to a treat-dispensing dog toy that he has to manipulate to get the pieces of food," Dr. Perry says. "Once your dog is accustomed to using these toys, feed him his daily allotment of dry kibble from them."
- ◆ Keep kitchen counters clear of temptation. "By leaving food on the counter that your dog can find, you are unintentionally reinforcing his desire to keep coming back and leaping on the counter in hopes of finding a treat," she says. Stash the kitchen trash can in the pantry or a cabinet with a childproof latch. "Some very clever dogs are capable of pawing open cupboard doors," Dr. Perry says.

Usher your dog into a closed bedroom with treats and toys during meal times. If you do catch him foraging for food on the kitchen counter, don't yell at him. For some dogs, even negative attention, such as being scolded, is rewarding, Dr. Perry says. "If it's not safe for him to jump off the counter, call his name in an upbeat tone to come to another room where you have a treat. Make him earn this reward by having him first sit or lie down."

Be careful if you lift him off the counter. Approach your dog slowly and calmly and position a kitchen chair to enable him to get down safely, "You don't want to bring out food aggression or resource guarding inadvertently," Dr. Perry says. "He may become aggressive when you attempt to remove him."



With his height and big paws, this happy Labrador Retriever could risk burns if he tried to reach hot cooking pots on the stove.

If surfing is a persistent problem, have your dog wear a head halter or harness with a long line attached. If he starts to jump up and does not come when called, you can use the attached leash to coax him gently away from the counter. "A better option is to block his access to the kitchen," Dr. Perry says, "but be sure to give him something to do — such as a long-lasting food treat like a peanut butter-filled bone or food-dispensing toy — to satisfy his need to explore and chew."

Mini-training sessions to teach him to come when called and consistently heed the "Drop it" and "leave it" cues can also help.

Sometimes, however, even in the home of a trained behaviorist, counter surfing can occur — in this case with a resident Labrador Retriever. "My former dog, Chamois, never counter surfed," Dr. Perry says. "One day, I baked a yellow cake for a friend who house sat for me while I attended a conference. I went outside for a moment, and when I came back into the kitchen, my dog, who was 8 months at the time, had her feet on the stove and was eating the cake." ♦

BITES ... (continued from cover)

afraid of being attacked," says Phillips, whose law practice is devoted exclusively to dog bites. He adds, however, that if you do not make it clear that you were protecting yourself as well as your dog, the authorities might take a dim view of your actions against the other dog.

"For example, if you're walking down the street and carrying a weapon and your dog is attacked and you pull out your .38, start firing and a dog or a especially a person gets hurt, you're going to face some type of criminal prosecution," Phillips says. "Have something else on you that you can use to repel a dog, such as bear spray."

Dog bites can draw blood, maim and kill. The attacks can bite people in the wallet, too. "The estimate is that between the health insurance, the liability insurers and just the poor guy on the street who's attacked by a dog, the damage in the U.S. is coming to \$2 billion per year," Phillips says.

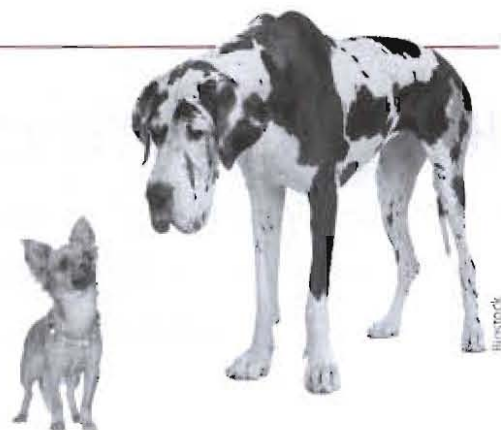
Gretchen L. Schoeffler, DVM, an emergency and critical care specialist at Cornell University College of Veterinary Medicine and Section Chief of Critical Care, has seen the effects of dogs who have bitten other dogs, cats and other species: "Bite wounds not only harm the superficial tissues — the wound seen from the outside. The crushing that takes place when the jaws clamp down also injures the underlying tissues, organs and structures. As a result of this unseen damage, it is not uncommon for bite

wounds to become infected and for wound repairs to break down."

How can you best avoid dog bites to you or your dog? These are red flags and commonsense guidelines from experts.

The Scenarios. Many dog-bite injuries occur when dogs are off leash and off their own property, says Jill Kessler-Miller of Pacific Palisades, Calif., a trainer and expert witness in dog-bite cases. Other common instances involve dogs on extendible leashes when the handler lacks control, people trying to break up dog fights and unsupervised children visiting the dog's home.

Never assume your dog won't bite. Bigger dogs do more damage, but any dog can and will bite given provocation. Miller has had cases that involve breeds from Chihuahuas to Great Danes. Many are large-breed dogs such as pit bull terriers, Rottweilers, German Shepherd Dogs, Chows, Labs and Golden Retrievers; however, she says, "It doesn't matter the breed. The more of a type of dog in



Jill Kessler-Miller of Pacific Palisades, Calif., has been an expert witness in dog-bite cases involving breeds from Chihuahuas to Great Danes.

a population, the more it will be represented in dog incidents."

Canine victims of dog bites tend to be small. "Think big dog versus little dog or cat or smaller creature," Dr. Schoeffler says. "Size matters and is relative. Even a relatively small Labrador Retriever is huge compared to a Chihuahua, and a Mastiff is huge compared to that same Labrador."

Studies have shown that dogs most likely to bite typically fall into one or more of the following categories:

- ◆ They live outdoors, not in the home.
- ◆ They are not spayed or neutered.
- ◆ They lack appropriate socialization and human interaction.
- ◆ They have a history of aggression.
- ◆ They go to dog parks.

People who are bitten tend to make these mistakes:

- ◆ They go face to face with unknown dogs.
- ◆ They reach into a dogfight.
- ◆ They handle fearful dogs incorrectly. "The worst thing you could do to a fearful dog is to try to console him by stroking his head," says behaviorist Katherine Houpt, VMD, Ph.D., emeritus professor at Cornell. "That is very threatening to dogs. If the dog appears fearful, crouching down with ears down, tail tucked and whites of the eyes showing, leave him alone or try to lure him with a tasty treat. Avoid eye contact because even that can be threatening to a dog."

WHEN TO SEE THE DOCTOR

Don't dismiss a dog bite to you or your pet. If you're bitten, wash the bite area thoroughly. See a doctor, especially if your bite is on a hand or foot. Those areas become infected easily. You may need an antibiotic and tetanus shot.

If your dog or cat is bitten, take him to the veterinarian right away. "Because these are dirty wounds and the tissue is not only torn but also crushed, these wounds are much more likely to become infected," says Gretchen Schoeffler, DVM, an emergency and critical care specialist at Cornell.

Don't forget to report the bite to animal control. The dog who bit you or your dog is likely to bite again.



Children are the most common victims of dog bites and are far more likely to be severely injured, according to the American Veterinary Medical Association.



Dogs on extendable leashes with owners who lack control are a common cause of dog-bite cases.

Dog bites are preventable. Take the following steps to keep you and your dog safe

- ◆ **Walk him on a 4- to 6-foot leash** to keep him within close range and under control.
- ◆ **Don't let your dog approach other dogs or people** unless requested and you've given your dog permission. "I have worked on two cases where friendly, off-leash dogs approached senior citizens, one at a public park and one on the street, and startled them," Miller says. "They fell and broke hips. You bet they sued."
- ◆ **Pay attention.** If your earbuds are in or you're staring at your phone, you're not spending quality time with your dog and won't see or hear trouble coming toward you in the form of an off-leash dog.
- ◆ **Be wary of dog parks.** Dogs can learn inappropriate behaviors there, such as bullying and aggression, and inexperienced or inattentive dog owners may not provide adequate supervision.
- ◆ **Carry an air horn.** If an aggressive dog approaches, get your dog behind you and blast the air horn at the other dog until he runs away.
- ◆ **Take aggression seriously.** Incidents often start small and escalate as the dog becomes more comfortable and secure in his behavior.

"If your dog is displaying anything that is concerning — lunging, leash pulling, growling, not coming when called, nipping — get to a professional trainer or behavior consultant immediately," Kessler-Miller says. ♦

'I NEVER KNEW DOGS COULD INJURE PEOPLE SO BADLY'

Attorney Kenneth M. Phillips specializes in representing dog-bite victims and is a leading authority on dog-bite law, known in the media as "the Dog-Bite King." His website, www.dogbitelaw.com, contains approximately 1,000 pages of information on laws, liability, compensation and insurance. We talked to him about his career and proper response to a dog attack.



Attorney Kenneth M. Phillips, known in the media as the "Dog-Bite King," stands outside the courthouse in Salem, Va., after a winning case.

Q: How did you get started in dog-bite law?

A: One bite at a time. A friend of a friend had her nose bitten off at a Christmas party. That was my first dog-bite case. And while I was handling that one, I got a pit bull case. Between those two cases, I said to myself, "What on earth is going on here?" I never knew that dogs could injure people so badly. When I dug into the law, I realized that dog-bite law is a separate breed of personal-injury law. No attorney had come into the field and organized it.

I've handled some of the most horrendous cases involving dog attacks in the country. And I've handled cases against all kinds of defendants you normally would not think of, like school districts, animal control departments, police — of course, they have police dogs — movie studios, landlords.

Q: How significant is the problem? Are there any statistics or do you go by CDC figures?

A: The Centers for Disease Control studied dog bites in the early '90s, right about the time I was getting into it. We're still looking at that early CDC data: 4.7 million people bitten every year in the U.S. That has certainly gone up but would probably be considered a safe baseline.

Q: Have you found that any particular breeds predominate?

A: The breeds causing the problems are, in very general terms, the mid-size to large dogs because they can inflict more damage. In my law practice, the ones I have seen the most in 25 years are pit bull, Akita, Chow Chow and Bullmastiff.

Q: Is there a typical scenario for a dog attack, whether it's on a person or another dog?

A: Here are the situations where I have found a lot of attacks.

- ◆ **No. 1:** When a dog is in his own yard and there's no owner present and a kid comes into the yard. That's an accident waiting to happen.
- ◆ **No. 2:** Pack mentality. When you have more than one dog, they become bolder to the point where if you have six or seven dogs who are even known to be mild dogs, they are prone to attack.
- ◆ **No. 3:** Dogs who are tethered. Tie a dog to a tree, you're asking for trouble.
- ◆ **No. 4:** Newness. Meaning that the dog is new in the house or you have a new person who's been introduced to the house. The dog can get confused and frightened real fast, and there are lots and lots of accidents with that.

KIDNEY... (continued from cover)

CKD appear in urine tests, 66 percent of kidney function is already gone. When indicators appear in the kidneys, about 75 percent of function is gone.

"The goal for owners is to change the dog's diet when you first see signs of kidney disease," says nutritionist Joseph Wakshlag, DVM, Ph.D., at Cornell. "Whenever your dog is drinking and urinating more, see the veterinarian for blood work and a diagnosis."

Two important caveats: Commercial senior diets are not the same as therapeutic diets and do not help manage CKD, says Dr. Wakshlag, president-elect of the American College of Veterinary Nutrition. And eating a renal diet will not prevent CKD. "There is no reason to start feeding a kidney diet just because a dog is older," he says.

Therapeutic renal diets generally contain less protein, phosphorous and sodium than adult maintenance food. They are also more calorie-dense and contain more potassium, alkalizing agents, B-vitamins and omega-3 fatty acids. Some of the essential ingredients and their roles include:

- ◆ **Lowered protein** at 26 percent or so reduces stress on the kidneys and



Supplying fresh water with additional bowls and fountains can help increase the intake of fluids to help impaired kidneys.

limits the breakdown of protein into toxins in bloodstream that make dogs feel sick and lose appetite. The reduction requires a delicate balance, Dr. Wakshlag says. Inadequate protein can lead to skin and coat problems, muscle loss, impaired wound-healing and immune functions.

- ◆ **Lowered phosphorus** in the food directly correlates to length of life. High phosphorus concentration in the blood, coupled with calcium loss, increases the release of the parathyroid hormone that contributes to calcium and phosphorus leaching from bones. Excess phosphorus and calcium also

collect in tissue causing mineralization of the kidneys and other organs, with toxic effects.

- ◆ **Additional potassium.** "Potassium is an electrolyte that helps cells function properly," Dr. Wakshlag says.
- ◆ **Reduced dietary sodium** helps prevent hypertension (high blood pressure).
- ◆ **Alkalizing agents** avoid a buildup of acid in the body and taxing the kidneys, which maintain the acid-alkaline balance.
- ◆ **Omega-3 fatty acids** and B vitamins help maintain heart health.

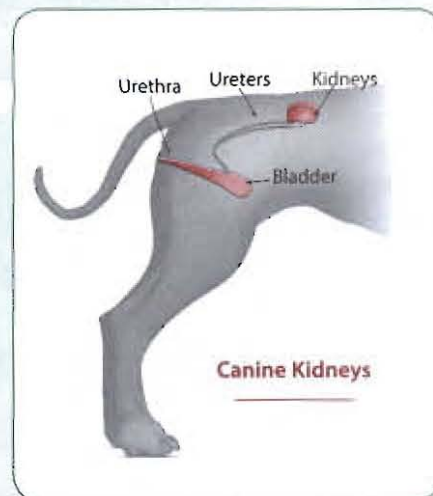
Dogs on a renal diet must eat adequate amounts to get the benefits of each nutrient, Dr. Wakshlag says. "Most animals will eat what they have available to eat," he says. "Early kidney disease does not usually affect appetite, but it does later on." He recommends that owners discuss increasing their dog's appetite with a nutritionist through homemade diets or making food more palatable by warming or adding flavorings.

Appetite-enhancing drugs include Capromorelin — expected to receive FDA approval soon specifically for dogs — and Mirtazapine, which has been shown to increase weight in cats with CKD in a study at Colorado State University.

THE KIDNEYS' VITAL FUNCTIONS

The kidneys accomplish many crucial tasks, even when one or both are failing. They can:

- ◆ Filter toxins created by the breakdown of proteins, which are excreted in urine. The waste products include urea produced by the liver and creatinine converted by the muscles. When the kidneys malfunction, the toxins circulate in the bloodstream.
- ◆ Filter and regulate blood and recycle nutrients. They constantly regulate the balance between water and electrolytes (sodium, calcium, potassium and phosphorus).
- ◆ Regulate acidity and blood pressure.
- ◆ Produce the hormone erythropoietin that helps create new red blood cells, which is why anemia often accompanies advanced kidney disease.





Michael P. Carroll, Cornell

Because older dogs frequently develop chronic kidney disease and other problems, the American Animal Hospital Association advises that dogs 8 years of age and older have twice-yearly veterinary exams that include blood and urine testing.

Veterinarians diagnose CKD with blood tests and urinalysis. The tests can reveal elevated phosphorus, high levels of creatinine, a by-product of muscle metabolism excreted by the kidneys, and the amount of blood urea nitrogen that comes from the waste product urea in urine.

They assess CKD's severity using staging guidelines, ranging from mild stage one when dogs may not show signs to severe stage four when 90 percent of kidney function is lost.

"The stage of disease gives the most information about prognosis," says Dr. Miller. "The higher the stage, the shorter the survival time. I see severe CKD as a cause of death in both cats and dogs, but dogs generally progress more rapidly than cats do, once diagnosed. Most dogs I've diagnosed have survived months to one to two years depending on the severity of their disease."

Treatment can be complicated by common co-diseases, including anemia, hypertension and heart disease, and underlying problems such as urinary infections.

CKD is managed with supportive care, including potassium supplements, anti-nausea drugs, acid reducers, fluid therapy and feeding tubes. Increasing fluids offsets dehydration and helps impaired kidneys concentrate urine. Subcutaneous fluid injections

THE SIGNS AS THE DISEASE WORSENS

The early signs of chronic kidney disease — excessive thirst and frequent, excessive urination — can be subtle. As the disease progresses, the signs can include any or several of these:

- ◆ Vomiting
- ◆ Decreased appetite and weight loss
- ◆ Dehydration
- ◆ Diarrhea and/or constipation
- ◆ Blood in the urine
- ◆ Depression and lethargy
- ◆ Seizures and/or coma
- ◆ Ammonia-smelling breath and mouth ulcers

tions help, as do feeding canned food, supplying fresh water, adding water bowls or fountains and flavoring water with low-or no-salt broth.

Some veterinary hospitals offer hemodialysis, but they're uncommon for canine CKD because of the cost and the limited number of centers. Kidney transplants are rare in dogs.

In part because older dogs frequently develop CKD, the American Animal Hospital Association advises that dogs 8 years of age and older have twice-yearly veterinary exams, including blood and urine testing.

Diligent follow-up can help identify emerging complications of kidney disease. Dr. Miller says she can't stress enough the importance of scheduling routine follow-up exams — every four to six months for dogs with mild CKD and every two to three months for severe cases.

"Developing a strong partnership with your dog's veterinarian can help you make the best decisions to keep your dog feeling well with CKD for as long as possible," Dr. Miller says. ♦

THE VULNERABLE BREEDS

While chronic kidney disease is common among older dogs, it's estimated that one-half to 1.5 percent of the general canine population also develops CKD. Male and female dogs seem to be equally susceptible and young dogs can also be affected, usually from a congenital problem — one present at birth.

On the other hand, genetic factors — heredity — may play a role, in these breeds who seem to be prone to CKD:

- | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------|
| ◆ Bull Terrier | ◆ Lhasa Apso |
| ◆ Cairn Terrier | ◆ Norwegian Elkhound |
| ◆ Cocker Spaniel | ◆ Shih Tzu |
| ◆ German Shepherd Dog | ◆ Soft-coated Wheaten Terrier |
| ◆ Golden Retriever | |

The causes of chronic kidney disease have not been determined, but kidney health can be damaged by infections and blockages, and underlying problems such as other organ diseases, advanced dental disease and some cancers, particularly in senior dogs.



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 ...

MEDICAL
EMERGENCIES



GLAUCOMA



RETHINKING
HOLIDAY
COSTUMES



VESTIBULAR
SYNDROME

How Can They Calm Their Rambunctious Party Boy?

Q We have a delightful black Lab, 2½ years old, who's a big guy at 100 pounds. We take Dirk on walks and rides, and he's very social — perhaps too much when it comes to company. We have a lot of family gatherings, and he nearly knocks people over in his enthusiasm. We crate him in a bedroom when we have guests, but that doesn't seem fair to deprive him of the socializing he so enjoys. How do we teach him good manners?

A Dirk sounds like a happy, healthy rambunctious Labrador. I bet he knocks the hors d'oeuvres off the coffee table with his Labrador tail. You are right he needs to learn good manners. He has no respect for humans and could easily knock over a small child or an old lady — like me — and break her hip.

The first step is to gain control in a positive way.

From now on, he gets no attention unless he obeys a command. If he is sitting or lying, he can't be jumping on guests. You probably don't ask him to do anything when you are alone with him because he is quiet then, but you pet him. You walk him. You play with him. You feed him. What you want to teach him is to sit for anything he wants.

Ask him to sit and look at you before receiving meals, treats, petting, playing, going outside or getting into the car. Anytime Dirk wants something you control, he will be motivated to respond to "Sit" and "Stay." He has to learn "Nothing in life is free!"

Every family member and guest should follow the same household rules. Dogs get confused if one person says "Sit" and the other says "Please sit." He will also be confused if you say "Down" for stop jumping. "Off" is better, but best of all is "Sit" and "Stay" before he has a chance to jump. Practice these. When he is perfect, ask him to "Sit" and "Stay" when you return home after an absence of an hour or

more. He probably is excited then but not as excited as when company comes.

Reward good behavior! Catch Dirk behaving correctly, and reinforce him. Give attention and praise and, whenever possible, tiny food treats when he is calm. Ignore inappropriate behavior, such as pawing, leaning, nudging, barking, whining and jumping up. If he is threatening to jump, do not look at him, speak to him or touch him. Look away, walk away or leave the room if necessary.

Be a quiet, confident leader. Use a soft voice when directing Dirk. Now you can ask him to sit and stay when the door is opened. You should practice as you move farther from him as you answer the door. Have one family member act as the guest while another tosses him a treat if he remains seated. Do this several times a day.

Meanwhile, have a hook with a leash attached so you can go to the door without him when real guests come. Give commands in a happy voice and tiny but delicious rewards as soon as he sits and after he has waited

for the correct amount of time. Also, have a cup outside the door with a note saying, "Toss (do not hand) these to Dirk." A high-tech and inexpensive way to deal with this problem is the remote-controlled treat dispenser MannersMinder available online.

You could send Dirk to his room as you have been doing to be separated from frail or otherwise vulnerable company. Make the separation a treat by giving him something he really loves that takes a long time to consume, such as a made-in-the-USA rawhide if he can tolerate those or a toy stuffed with frozen peanut butter or cheese melted into popcorn. He should get this treat only when isolated in his room.

Finally, take him for a long walk or game of fetch before company comes. I know it is hard to squeeze that into party preparations, but you will be much more appreciated as hosts if your dog is as polite as his owners.

Enjoy Dirk. I am sure you can help him become a model citizen. ❖



Dirk, a shiny black Labrador Retriever, pauses in a quiet moment.

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