

Newsletter

Late spring'08



Dear friends,

With hopes of sunshine and barmy summer evenings seeming a long way off, here's our latest newsletter to brighten up your day.

In this edition we shed light on what our dogs are trying to tell us when they yawn or turn away, we experience a 'day in the life' of a dog walker by latest recruit Louise Brooks, and read how you can help raise money for Hearing Dogs for the Deaf and the Chiltern Dog Rescue.

Don't forget, if there's something you'd like us to include or write about, then email us at info@walk-the-dog.net

Hanne

New faces to Walk the Dog...

We'd like to give a warm welcome to our new WTD pets : Paddy, Sally & Harry, Rocky & Kasey, Teddy & Angel, Beano, Harry & George, Jess & Agatha, Stanley, Oscar, Bonnie, Sandy & Brewster, Lily & Fitz, Jack & Mieke, Hamish, Connie, Mittens, Red, Mason, Portia, Daisy, Evie, Bo, Alfie, Ruby, Pepper, Archie, Horace & Biddy Baxter, Pippin, Charlie & Chester. If your pet isn't on our picture gallery yet, please do send us their picture, so they can join our animal hall of fame. Email pictures to; info@walk-the-dog.net

Bookings, cancellations and office hours

Work, illness and family commitments can often lead to last minute bookings or cancellations. While we aim to be flexible, we ask clients to give us as much notice as possible. To make a booking or cancellation please call Hanne on 07976 743031.

We can offer weekend working for pet care and dog training, however, our contact office hours are: Monday to Friday 9am to 6pm and Saturday 9am to 12pm. We would ask clients to call within our working office hours.

Recommended reading

"The Other End of the Leash" by Patricia B. McConnell. This book shows how the slightest changes in our voices and ways we stand can help our dogs understand what we want.

Understanding your dog

There are probably times when you wish you knew what your dog was thinking. By looking at your dog's body language, watching their expressions and actions this can help you understand what they might be feeling. On average dogs have 30 calming signals. These signals are used in times of fear, to avoid confrontation and on a day to day basis. As humans we often fail to see our dogs using these signals, so much so, that some dogs may give up using them altogether. For others, they become so desperate and frustrated they can get aggressive, nervous or stressed out as a result. Below are some basic calming signals dogs use to communicate their feelings.

Yawning

Your dog may yawn when someone bends over him, when you sound angry or there's yelling, when he's at the vets, and when someone's walking or staring directly towards him. This tells you he feels uncomfortable and is trying to calm the situation down. When your dog is excited and there's anticipation such as going out for a walk, dogs will yawn to take in more oxygen, as instinctively adrenalin has kicked in to prepare them for the 'hunt'. Threatening signals (making direct eye contact, fast movements, bending over the dog etc) will often cause your dog to use a calming signal.

Licking

Licking is another calming signal - when meeting new people, dogs or in stressful situations. Licking is especially used by black/dark coloured dogs and dogs with a lot of fur around their faces as their facial expressions are harder to read. To show a dog you're not a threat, avoid making direct eye contact, yawn and lick your lips - this is a pacifying signal and helps the dog to feel less anxious.

Turning away

A dog will turn his head slightly to one side or turn completely around so his back and tail is facing whoever the dog is calming. If a person seems angry, aggressive or threatening, dogs will often turn away. When you bend over a dog to stroke him or he's taken by surprise - lookout for his head turning away. Dogs will use this signal to other dogs to prevent possible conflicts. Dogs that perceive themselves to be head of their pack will also use this body or head turn as a way of showing you where they want you to pat them. It's a case of 'who do you think you are?' when you try to stroke them over the head. To show a strange or a nervous dog you're not a threat, crouch down, don't 'invade their body space', avoid direct eye contact, let the dog sniff you, then slowly hold your hand out for them to smell you. Once the dog is calm, then stroke him gently under the chin.

Play bow

A dog bending down on his front legs is an invitation to play if he's moving his legs from side to side in a playful manner. But if the dog's standing still while bowing, this is a signal to calm someone or another dog down. However, the invitation to play is often a calming signal by itself because the dog is making a potentially dangerous situation less tense and diverts with something safe.

Sniffing the ground

You'll often see this when out walking with your dog and someone's coming towards you, in noisy situations or places where there's a lot going on or when your dog sees objects that he's not sure of and finds it intimidating. Sniffing the ground may be anything from moving the nose swiftly down toward the ground and back up again to sticking their nose to the ground and sniffing persistently for several minutes. Of course, dogs sniff a lot anyway to find out whom or what has passed along the street before them! But depending on the situation this is used as a calming signal.

Sitting down/lifting one paw

Some dogs will sit down and lift a paw towards another dog or human to calm a situation down. Dogs will also sit or lay down as another dog approaches as a way to calm that approaching dog, if they feel it's coming towards them too quickly. Dogs may also sit with their backs turned against the owner when they sound too strict, angry or the owner's speaking in a loud voice!

Walking in a curve

This signal is the main reason why dogs react so strongly to meeting other dogs when they're forced to walk straight at them. Instincts tell our dog that it's wrong to approach someone like that – as humans we think differently. The dog can get anxious or defensive and this results in the dog barking and/or lunging at other dogs. When we're outside with our dogs, we're at our most human. So, if our dog barks or acts in an aggressive manner towards another dog, we then get flustered and anxious and may even shout at our dog. This creates a chaotic and stressful situation and now the dog has a negative association with other dogs. When given a chance, dogs will walk in curves around each other. Watch how your dog meets another dog when off the lead. Some dogs need large curves; others only need to walk slightly curved. Don't walk your dog directly toward a dog, instead stop and change direction. If this isn't possible give him some more leash to enable him to manoeuvre away from the dog and walk the other side of you. The more anxious your dog is, the wider the space you create between you and the other dog. Remember to take a deep breath, stay calm – keep your pulse rate steady and show your dog you're not concerned and he will soon follow your lead.

A day in the life of a dog walker...by Louise Brooks



It's Monday morning and I wake up ready for a day of walking. The most important check of the day – what's the weather going to be like? I pick the most suitable outfit to wear but carry extra supplies in the car in case of muddy falls or changeable weather!

My first dogs of the day are three French bulldogs – Evie and her puppies Aggie and Jess. As I open their crate they bundle out in excitement. We run out into the garden for some playtime. I collect up toys to play but my efforts are wasted as they've already begun entertaining themselves, jumping in plant pots and chasing Neevie the cat. We play in the garden and I make sure they have plenty of cuddles. Not before long our time is nearly up, so I feed the pups their lunch. The pups skid along the floor and bound into their crate to nosh on their food while I lock and tidy up.

Next is Stanley, the chocolate Labrador. Today we play with his tug toy; I throw this for Stanley to fetch and he comes bounding back dropping himself on me.

I don't think Stanley realizes he's not a lap dog! We play ball and practice his heel work in the garden before heading out for his walk. I work with Stanley to get him to walk to heel, but today he spots something in the distance, loses concentration, trips over a flower pot and falls into an innocent passer by - oops.

I then see Beano, an elderly black Labrador. He yawns and blinks at me when I arrive knowing he's about to go for his walk in the park. The sun is shining and Beano and I make our way along the road passing a dog that's yapping at us through a window. Beano pays him no attention as there's interesting smells to investigate around the lamppost. We take a slow paced walk around the park and by the time we get back home Beano is ready for another nap.

Finally, it's over to another chocolate Labrador, Sally. I take her down to the canal today. On route Sally sees a cat, so we're off on the chase with me in tow. Sally chases the cat up the tallest tree she can find then turns and looks at me in satisfaction with her achievement. Then Sally picks up another scent, 'not another cat' I think, but this time she dives into a bush and flushes out a pigeon!

As I finish for the day, I wonder what adventures I will have with my client dogs tomorrow.

Louise joined Walk the Dog in January and helps with daily dog walking. Louise recently completed with Distinction Level 3 'Animal Care and Management' at Oaklands Agricultural College, and volunteers at Riding for the Disabled Association in Gaddesden.

Fact or Fiction?

The Basset Hound breed can be traced back to Ancient Egypt some 4,000 years ago. Figures found on the monument of Thothmuisis III, show dogs of long, low stature – the same proportions in the Basset Hound we see today.

True or False? (See answer below)

True – Hunting dogs like Basset Hounds, Grey Hounds and Mastiffs were popular choices.

In the news...

Join us on Sunday 18th May at the Ashridge Amble, where you and your dog[s] can walk around this stunning National Trust estate then enjoy all the fun of the dog show. You can enter on the day or obtain sponsorship forms from Hanne, to help raise money for Hearing Dogs for the Deaf and Chiltern Dog Rescue. Walk the Dog is one of the sponsors of this event and we'll also have our own stall. So come along and see us!

'Just Dog wash and go'

If your pooch is in need of a good wash, head over to Diana Pulford's Self-Service Dog Wash! For as little as £8, your dog can enjoy a bath in England's first and only dog wash. Based in Luton, Diana is creating a stir in the local dog community with this innovative idea. To find out more, log onto <http://www.selfservicedogwash.co.uk/>

New website

Back in February we launched our new website specific to dog training. The address is www.doglistener.tv we'd love to get your feedback on this new site.

Recipe corner



Tuna popsicles – a cooling treat for cats

- 1 tin of tuna in spring water
- 1 ice cube tray

Instructions...

Drain the liquid from the tuna packed in spring water. Freeze the liquid in small ice cube trays (cocktail ice cube trays work nicely, as well as little square pill boxes available at most drug stores - only fill these half full).

Give no more than 2 cubes at 1 time as a treat.

Reuse your can of drained tuna by placing in it an airtight container and covering with filtered water overnight for a second batch of tuna-pop water.