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SITS & WIGGLES

The Newsletter of the Animal Clinic of Chardon

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GRAY MUZZLES MAKE GREAT STUDENTS

My first night of dog training classes is just for the human end of the leash. I want to make sure the people are on board and ready before we introduce dogs into the equation. After a successful registration night, I was going over paperwork when I spotted something out of the ordinary.

"This dog is 11 years old?" I thought. "That has to be a typo." It wasn't.

The following week, a couple of senior citizens entered the class, with a beautiful snow-faced Golden Retriever in tow. The trio moving a little stiffly, they made it across the room and took their seats.

"This must be Molly," I approached. "She's gorgeous! I have to wonder, why are you taking her to training classes now?"

The man chuckled, "I just retired. Now that I have the time, we wanted something fun to do with our dog." I melted into a puddle right on the spot. What a wonderful sentiment!

If you're now wondering how Molly kept up with the crazy teenage hooligans who made up the rest of the class, she excelled. She easily outpaced her classmates, despite having no formal training to that point. Molly's parents had a ball.
(Continued on next page)



GRAY MUZZLES MAKE GREAT STUDENTS (CONTINUED)

Can You Teach an Old Dog New Tricks?

Absolutely, unequivocally, yes! It is never too late to train your dog. We learn new things throughout our lives, why not our canine friends?

Senior dogs boast something their puppy counterparts have yet to develop: attention spans! A typical puppy is distracted by everything that moves and some things that don't. It's best to work with them in short sessions to keep them engaged. With seniors, this is not as much of an issue. You will be able to get more repetitions of behaviors in each session, because your senior is willing to engage with you longer. As a result, you can often see faster progress than with a youngster.

There are some challenges you need to consider when training your senior dog. Foremost is health. If your elderly hound suffers from arthritis or other orthopedic issues, choose behaviors that are gentle on his bones. He may have been able to learn "sit pretty" as a pup, but that same position now could cause him pain. Always consult your veterinarian to ensure your dog is physically sound for training.

Keep in mind that when you use Fear Free training techniques, your senior dog is much more likely to be able to participate. Since Fear Free trainers do not use harsh training tools, such as prong collars or choke chains, you will not risk causing injury in the name of teaching manners.

Another consideration, especially if you are training to address a behavioral issue, is the amount of time your senior dog has been practicing that unwanted behavior. Has he barked at the mailman for 12 years? That's a strong habit by now. It will take time to teach him a new habit. One of the advantages of training young puppies is that you can stop unwanted behaviors before they grow stronger. So be patient with your senior dog if you're trying to change unwanted behavior.

A Practical Lesson

Physical considerations aside, you can teach your older dog the same things you would teach a puppy. Common basic behaviors include coming when called, sit, down, stay, walking nicely on leash, and go to place. All of these are a good place to start, but why not teach something fun and practical, too?

As dogs age, they can develop orthopedic issues that make jumping up and down extra stressful on their spines and joints. You can teach your older dog how to go up and down pet stairs to get up on a couch or a bed.

Choose steps that are sturdy enough for your pet, preferably non-skid. Firm foam ones, just a couple of steps high, are fairly easy to find. Place the stairs up against your couch. Put a treat in the middle of the lowest stair, right at the front edge, and encourage your dog to eat it. Put a treat in the middle of the second step and encourage your dog to stretch or step up to get it. Repeat for all stairs until your dog has gone up all the stairs and onto your couch.

Repeat the exercise in reverse to help teach your dog go down the stairs. Be sure to guide your dog if necessary to avoid them jumping off the stairs altogether. Note that some dogs find it scarier to go down, so this may take more time before they get comfortable.

Whatever you decide to teach your senior dog, whether it's a formal heel or a high five, it will be something fun you can do together. My sweet student Molly has since passed on, but I still grin at the memory of her snow-faced Golden smile as she left all those whippersnapper pups in her wake.

Written by Teoti Anderson



Feline Chronic Kidney Disease CARE Study

(Caregiver Assessment, Reflection on Experience)

Are you caring for a cat with chronic kidney disease? Please help us learn more about your experience as a caregiver by taking our survey!

To begin the survey, use the QR code or refer to the OSU Feline Chronic Kidney Disease Research page below.



The survey involves:

- A set of questions about your experience caring for a cat with chronic kidney disease (CKD) and any stress that you might feel as a result.
- The survey should take about 20-30 minutes to complete.
- You are able to withdraw from the questionnaire at any time up until clicking submit at the end (withdrawing is anonymous).

We hope to use the information gathered in this survey to advancing research on the care and treatment of cats with CKD, including improving support for caregivers of cats with CKD.

This survey is being conducted by Dr. Jessica Quimby DVM, PhD, DACVIM (Quimby.19@osu.edu) and Dr. Lina Lim, DVM, veterinarians at the Ohio State University, in collaboration with Dr. Sarah Caney, BVSC, PhD, DSAM (feline), MRCVS (VetProfessionals.com). All published data will be anonymous and you will not be identified in any way. The data will be held at the Ohio State University Veterinary Medical Center. By completing and submitting this questionnaire, you give permission for this data to be used for research, publication, and teaching.

Please use the QR code above or go to
<https://u.osu.edu/felinekidneyresearch/care-study/>

ALLERGIES CAN FRAY THE HUMAN-CAT BOND. SCIENCE IS WORKING ON FIXES

If you've ever had the triumph of a newly vacuumed floor disrupted by a tumbleweed of cat hair drifting around the corner, you know that a truly clean house is difficult to achieve when you live with pets. For the approximately 10 to 20 percent of adults worldwide who have allergies to cats, the consequences are more serious than simple tidiness, impacting both human health as well as the human-cat bond.

Microscopic allergens produced primarily in a cat's saliva and skin are spread on the cat via grooming and contaminate the environment through shedding. They can also be spread onto people directly through contact, such as a cat brushing up against a person or licking them. In some people, contact with feline allergens triggers fits of sneezing, itchy eyes and throat, or skin rashes. In more sensitized individuals, these allergens can cause wheezing, coughing, asthma attacks, and even anaphylaxis, leading some households with a severely allergic family member to make the painful decision to rehome or relinquish their cat to a shelter. In a 2021 review of human allergies to cats and cat ownership, allergies were listed as one of the top five reasons for relinquishment in the US-based studies and were often cited as a reason for avoiding pet ownership.

Contrary to popular belief, currently there's no such thing as a "hypoallergenic" cat because all cats produce some allergens, so solutions rely on symptomatic treatment of allergies and environmental decontamination. Nasal sprays, antihistamines, and allergen immunotherapy may give some relief, as can frequent cleaning of walls and surfaces, washing bedding and curtains, vacuuming with a HEPA filter, and steam cleaning carpet when it can't be replaced with bare floors. Other suggestions such as avoiding contact with the cat, banning the cat from the bedroom, and weekly bathing to reduce allergen shedding can be more challenging. Even using Fear Free techniques, bathing is often stressful for cats, and isolating from a beloved feline family member can cause further stress to both the cat and the cat parent.

In 2020 Purina released LiveClear, a promising over-the-counter feline food that tackles the environmental problem using a novel approach. When cats eat LiveClear, a dietary protein derived from eggs binds to and neutralizes Fel d1, the protein produced primarily in cat skin and saliva that is the main culprit for cat allergies in people. By the third week of daily feeding, cats enrolled in the trials showed a decrease of active Fel d1 that reached an average of 47 percent by 10 weeks of feeding, bringing hope to allergic cat lovers everywhere without the need for a veterinary prescription.

While no approach eliminates cat allergens completely, combining Pro Plan Live Clear with other management tools may allow for an improved quality of life for all members of the household and hopefully greater retention of cats in their home. And who knows what the future may hold? Scientists are continuing their battle against Fel d1, with work that focuses on creating hypoallergenic cats by vaccinating them against their own Fel d1 and using gene therapy to target the genes that encode the allergic protein. Written by Julie Liu, DVM



“Even the tiniest Poodle or Chihuahua is still a wolf at heart.” - Dorothy Hinshaw

ACOC Birthdays

Allie 1/24

