

DOG TRACKS



**Living with and Training
Your Dog in a
Covid 19 World**

Training Dogs to be Comfortable Around People in Face Masks

As restrictions are beginning to be relaxed, one of the things that may be problematic for your dogs, is seeing people walking around with masks. Of course, some dogs won't be phased, however, we need to be aware of the challenges that face coverings pose to dogs who have never before been exposed to them.

See life through a dog's eyes

We often talk about our dogs being primarily scent focused, however, a lot of how they engage with us is based on our faces, dogs have evolved to read our faces to determine our moods – all the better to get along with us.



Dogs read subtle muscle changes that indicate a twitch or a smile, and they read them much faster than we do. They lose all that when you're wearing a mask.

Know the difference between desensitizing and overwhelming

Just as you don't learn to swim by being tossed into the deep end of a pool, you can't expect a dog to become comfortable with a face-masked human by thrusting him into a room full of them.

Systematic desensitization is a way to make our dog become more comfortable with mask wearing humans. This simply means that you are exposing your dog to the mask slowly, always making sure the dog is relaxed and only moving to the next step when the dog is ready



Signs of discomfort vary based on the individual dog, and might include growling, backing away, trying to escape or leaning away. There can be varying levels of all these responses, indicating everything from mild concern to panic.

Accentuate the positive

The key to introducing any potential trigger is to link seeing the scary things with really good things happening (e.g. food).

For starters, you might simply put a mask next to your dog's dish during mealtime, or tape it on the wall above his food bowl, in the same horizontal position in which you would be wearing it. To demystify this new object, show your dog the mask, and let him sniff it."

Next, start *sort of* wearing the mask: Let it hang from your ear, or wear it on your forehead, or under your chin – but not blocking your mouth yet, so your dog can still decode the important non-verbal communication coming from your mouth.

After lots of repetition of these short, positive sessions, and once your dog has associated the mask with good things being showered into his life, start wearing the mask for short periods. Wear it when you feed, play and cuddle with your dog – at times when the dog is comfortable and happy. Very soon the mask will be a positive thing, and the dog will quickly conclude that the mask is a just new part of life."

Signal your satisfaction

Wearing a mask curtails communication with your dog in two ways: It muffles your words of praise and it prevents the dog from seeing you smile.

It has been suggested that we could borrow a tactic from owners of deaf dogs. Teach a hand command that sends the same message, such as raising your index and middle fingers like a peace symbol and rocking them back and forth. Just as when you introduced the mask, pairing that signal with a treat will soon teach the dog that it means "Good dog!"

When you're wearing a mask, what goes on above your nose takes on a greater impact to a dog scanning your face for clues about your mood. Dogs are especially attuned to the difference between "soft" and "hard" eyes. Try to increase your awareness of tension in your face. When you encounter a stressful situation, take a deep breath, soften your face, get your dog's attention, and praise him with both your newly taught "good dog" signal, as well as your voice.



Expand your dog's horizons

If there are other people in your household, they should interact with your dog while wearing masks, too, so the dog understands the mask is not unique to one person. Similarly, expose your dog to different colours and styles of masks, as well as over face coverings such as bandanas and ski masks.

Your dog also needs to learn that masks on strangers are normal, too. Try driving with your dog to a busy area, where people may be wearing masks, and just sit there together inside the car. Let your dog see people go in and out. Feed him treats for being calm and then go home.



Alex Surplice

Compiled from the following sources:

AKC; RSPCA; Pooch Professionals

Trick Training

Did you know that as of January 2020 Trick Dog is now a recognised discipline with competitions and titles?

There are four levels - Starter - Novice - Intermediate and Advanced.

Each level has different tricks to learn and you can select from the list which tricks you would have your dog perform. The tricks must be performed with precision and performed to the standard however you will be surprised how easy many of the tricks are and how quickly your dog will learn them, and how many of them you may already know.

There are fifteen different Starter tricks and to enter a competition you would need to choose six of them to perform.

Starter Tricks

- Go Round - Once
- Circle Handler - Once
- Circle Spin - Once
- Leg Weave - Stationary figure of 8
- Nose to Hand Touch - 2 touches held for 2 seconds
- Follow Target Stick
- Step Up - held for 5 seconds
- Paw on Hand - held for 2 seconds
- Back Up - 1 body length
- Send over Jump - from 1 m
- Take a Bow - held for 2 seconds
- Send Away - from 2 m
- Find Straddle - held for 2 seconds
- Stationary Hold - held for 2 seconds
- Sit Pretty/Paws on Arm - held for 2 seconds



So, let's learn some tricks.

Go Round - Once

You will need a cone or pole. The trick is, standing at least 0.5 m away, you send your dog out and around the cone, then your dog returns to you.



Start by standing directly in front of the cone with your dog on your left, take a treat in your left hand and lure your dog around the cone. Don't forget to mark and reward when he goes around. Repeat several times then progress to moving your left hand forward, without luring, to indicate and give the voice cue "Go Round". Slowly progress to moving back away from the cone sending your dog out and around from a distance.

Step Up

You will need a step/perch. The trick is, standing at least 1 m away, you send your dog to stand with his front feet on the perch and hold that position for 5 seconds.



Start by placing the perch on the ground, any interest your dog shows mark and reward, if he touches the perch mark and reward, lure him onto the perch, as soon as he puts two feet on the perch jackpot. Don't lift his feet yourself. Once he has learnt to step up name the action "Perch" as he progresses step further away and send him to the perch.

Back Up

Your dog will stand in front of you at least 0.5m away and back up at least one body length.



There are a number of ways to teach this trick however the secret is to mark as the dog moves backwards not after they have stopped.

With your dog standing in front of you hold a treat in both hands keeping them low otherwise the dog will sit. Gently push your hands forward and reward as soon as they move a back foot. Gradually build up distance making sure the dog backs up straight, you might like to introduce a channel to practice this maybe a wall on one side and some chairs rowed up on the other side. Introduce a voice cue "Back" but say only once. Your dog moves backwards but you remain stationary.

Take a Bow

Your dog will lower his elbows towards the ground whilst his hind quarters remain elevated and hold for 2 seconds.



This is easier to teach from the side. With the dog standing on your left hold a treat in a cupped right hand, so they can smell it but not take it. Slowly lower the treat towards the dog's chest at about a 45° angle bringing the nose back and down. Mark and reward as soon as the forelegs are lowered and before they drop completely. You can put your hand under the stomach or use your leg to act as a barrier to lowering the hind quarters. Once they understand introduce a voice cue such as "Bow" or "Curtsy" and build up duration of the movement.

Preventing Separation Anxiety in the Time of Covid

Our pets are probably the only ones who have really enjoyed our social isolation. Instead of being left alone while we go off to work, school, shopping, parties, etc there has always been someone around to keep them company, play with them and they've possibly had more walks than normal.

While dogs adapt easily to having someone around most of the time the adjustment back to their own isolation when things get back whatever the new "normal" is can be very difficult for them.



Dogs are social animals and really enjoy our interactions with them.

They also love routine, that's not to say you have to do the same thing at the same time each day, but patterns of behaviour help them understand and become more comfortable with what's happening around them, if for example when you leave your dog you always give them a Kong filled with food, or a special toy that only comes out when you're going out, then the pattern for the dog becomes when I get the yummy Kong, or toy, they go away and leave me to enjoy my Kong in peace, at some time in the future they will return, and if I'm lucky I may get a walk.... This sort of pattern gives them certainty and therefore do not have to worry if you're going to return, it's just when.

Some tips that can help with the transition:

1. Keep calm and come home: Teach your dog that your arrivals are nothing to get excited about. You being calm is key. Keep your greetings quiet and low key—this doesn't mean you can't love up your dog as much as you'd like. Just do it without lots of highly arousing expressions of joy; quiet and calm is the key here.

That's goes for departures too: Keep these calm as well, don't make a fuss about leaving, be matter of fact, whether it's for it's for an hour or several hours

2. Leave the house without your dog: Leave the house every day without your dog! Whether this is for a walk, a drive around the block, or even just to sit on your porch, your dog or puppy needs to spend time away from you. Observe your normal routine for your dog when you leave the house. If your dog normally spends time in a crate or gated-off space when you leave the house, maintain that habit of your pet's daily food allowance to avoid overfeeding.

3. Spend time separated from pup: Try crating your dog in another room or leaving them in their safe area (e.g. playpen) for a period of time every day to give them some separation from you.

4. Keep routine the same: Try to maintain your normal daily routine as much as possible. Normal activities like getting ready for work, packing up book bags, picking up keys, etc. are usually good predictors for leaving the house. Let your dog see and hear these activities, even if you have to pretend, so this doesn't come as a surprise later when you really need to get out the door.

5. Leave a 'special' toy: As well as making sure that your dog has exciting things to do when you are with them, make sure you also leave your dog with a mentally stimulating toy such as a stuffed 'Kong' toy, a meat flavoured chew or a treat ball or cube. Make sure that this is a 'special' toy that they only get when you're not there. Remember to put away this toy when you return and also to take any food treats out of your pet's daily food allowance to avoid overfeeding.

6. Encourage your pet to relax during their independent time: Try to take your dog for a walk before you are due to go out so that they have the opportunity to go to the toilet and exercise. You could even do a short training session with your dog. Leaving your dog with something to eat, once they've eaten, they will be much more inclined to relax!

7. Minimise disturbances: Some dogs will bark at the sight of other people or dogs passing by their window or in response to noises outside the home. Closing the curtains to reduce what your dog can see outside, leaving them in a quieter room or leaving the radio on to muffle outside noise can prevent your dog from being disturbed and barking.

Of course, some dogs really enjoy being able to see "the world passing" and will just watch quietly, content in the fact they are still part of the social framework.

As we know dogs have different personalities and it's up to you to determine what your dog does and does not enjoy.



8. Never correct or punish your dog after the fact: On the occasion that your dog misbehaves whilst you're out, it's important that you don't react badly. Your dog will become anxious about what you will do when you return the next time you go out making the anxiety and behaviour (like chewing and barking) worse.

Dogs who have been told off may lower their head, put their ears back and put their tail between their legs. Sadly, owners think that their dog looks guilty and tell them off because they know they have done wrong, but even if you take your dog to the 'scene of the crime' they won't associate your anger with their earlier behaviour. Your dog will simply become more anxious the next time you go out. If you do come home to a mess, it's essential not to physically punish or shout at your dog. Try to avoid even letting your dog see that you are annoyed - let them outside before cleaning up.

Other things that you can give your dogs when you go out:

Always supervise your dog at all times when giving new items to ensure they cannot chew up or ingest the item. Choose appropriate items for the "Chewing" level of your dog. Avoid leaving fleece puzzle toys (e.g. snuffle mats), silicone bowls/toys or bones for your dog before going out as unsupervised they could become a choking hazard.

Cardboard boxes: (Any size from small to large) – put treats, toilet rolls, kibble or biscuits inside the box and close the box, so that the dog has to break it open.

Treat balls: Available from pet stores, begin with the easy setting until your dog has learned how to get the treats out and then make it progressively harder. You can use part of your dog's daily food ration to fill the balls.

Plastic bottles: Use the PET type and they are tough and not brittle, remove the plastic cap and ring around the top of the bottle. Put biscuits, kibble or other treats inside and hide around the yard for your dog to find.



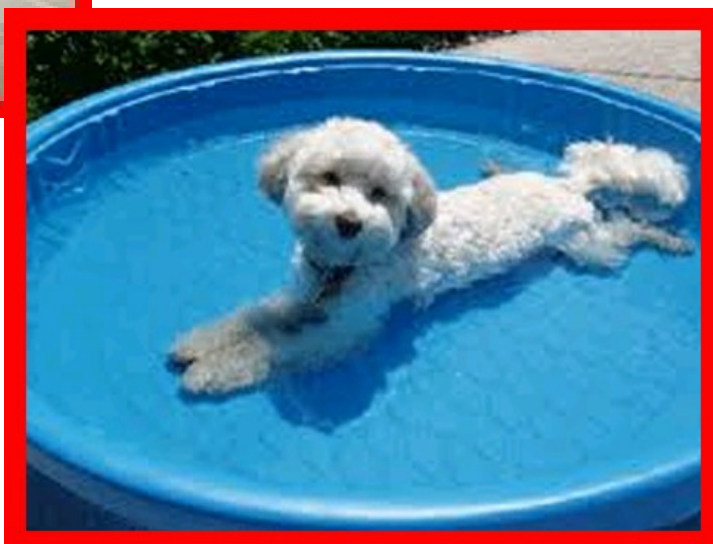
Toys: Squeaky toys, plush toys, balls from tennis ball to soccer ball size, rope toys. Build up your supply so you can rotate 2-3 times a week and give anywhere between 3-5 toys at a time. If your dog destroys plush toys then stick to the harder toys, the black Kong products are almost indestructible.

Dried meats: Kangaroo, beef, chicken or duck jerky, bully sticks, pigs or lamb ears, etc these can provide hours of chewing and can also be hidden in boxes around the yard.

Ice blocks: In summer you can keep your dog busy with an ice blocks. Freeze in kongs or ice cream containers – the larger they are the longer they'll last. Put left over meat, pan juices, carrot, apple, dog biscuits, etc fill with either water or stock and then freeze

Digging pit/sand pit: Some dogs love to dig for fun, for others it's a way of relieving stress. Provide an area where the dog is allowed to dig, or get a kids' clam shell pool, fill with river sand, and then hide things in it, e.g. toys, biscuits, kibble etc. Get an extra clam shell to make a lid to keep the sand pit safe overnight.

Wading pool: Just as some dogs love to dig, others love to paddle, get the clam shell and fill with water, you can then hide things in there, e.g. carrot, apple, they'll float and encourage the dog to play.



What is Separation Anxiety in Dogs?

Often referred to as separation anxiety, separation related behaviour (SRB) is behaviour that only occurs when the dog is separated from their owner and in many cases is because they are feeling distressed. Tell-tale indicators include destructive behaviour, unwanted toileting or reports of howling/barking.

Other signs may not always be obvious (you won't be there to hear whining or see pacing). Taking the time to check for these signs by filming your dog when home alone will help you reveal any potential issues (even if you don't believe there to be any).

In fact, research suggests that 8 out of 10 of dogs will find it hard to cope when left alone, but half of these won't show any obvious signs, so it can be very easy for owners to miss. The good news though is that SRB is preventable.

Signs and symptoms of separation anxiety in dogs:

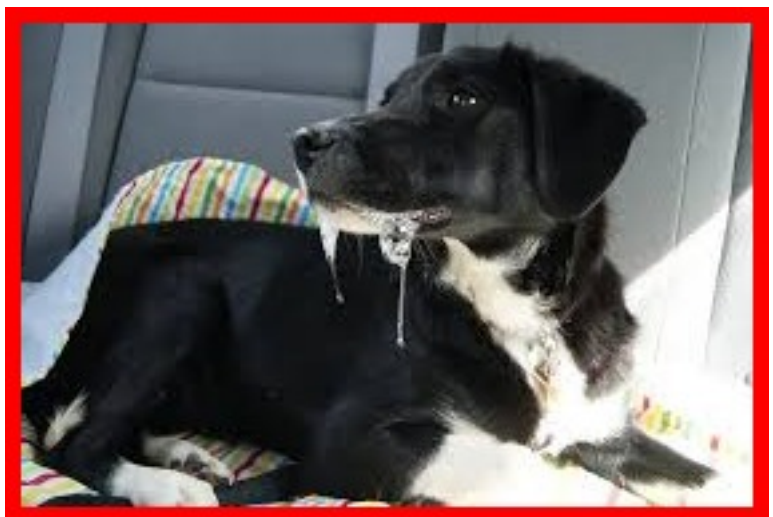
You may know the obvious signs of separation anxiety in dogs, such as destroying furniture or barking, but did you know that there are other signs that you may be missing? Returning to a dog who is really happy to see you doesn't mean that he or she hasn't been suffering silently while you've been out...

The most common behavioural signs of separation anxiety in dogs are:

- Destructive behaviour (targeted at the door you left the house from), chewing and destroying furniture
- Various types of vocalisation (howling and barking)
- Toileting (weeing or pooing)

Other less frequent signs (that can be more easily missed) include:

- Trembling, whining or pacing
- Excessive salivation
- Self-mutilation
- Repetitive behaviour
- Vomiting



How to tell that your dog is suffering from separation anxiety and not another issue.....

One of the main differentiating features between separation-related behaviour and other behavioural disorders with similar signs is that the behaviour is in response to the owner leaving and is displayed soon after their departure. Normally starting within 30 minutes, and often, within the first few minutes.

Even if you think your dog is happy left alone, every once in a while, check for 'hidden' signs that your dog may be distressed by filming your pet whilst you're out.

Alex Surplice

Compiled from the following sources:

Patricia McConnell – Other end of the leash; RSPCA; PPG Australia; Pooch Professionals



Healthy Hound Biscuits

For a shiny coat and all round well being



2	x	Cups of Wholemeal Flour
1/2	x	Cup of Rolled Oats
1/2	x	Cup of Wheat Germ
2	x	Tablespoons of Sunflower Seeds
2	x	Tablespoons of Flax Seeds
1	x	Teaspoon Ground Cinnamon
1/3	x	Cup of Peanut Butter
1/4	x	Cup of Coconut Oil
1/4	x	Cup of Virgin Olive Oil
4	x	Good Quality Fish Oil Capsules
1	x	Tablespoon of Honey
1/2	x	Cup Water

Preheat oven to 175°

Combine all dry ingredients together in a mixing bowl. Add all the remaining ingredients, except the water, squeezing the oil out of the capsules. Stir the mixture until it resembles coarse sand then slowly add the water. Knead the dough which should be thick but not sticky, add more water if necessary.

Roll out dough on a floured surface and cut out shapes with a cookie cutter.

Place on lined baking tray and bake for about 40 minutes.

When cool store in an airtight container

As if Lockdown Could Stop Frisbee !!!!!

Hey Frisbee Lovers

Hopefully the Covid-19 lockdown hasn't sent you all crazy!

Many of the Thursday night training crew have entered an online, International Updog Backyard Video competition where we set up, film and then submit our runs for scoring.

There are over 50 clubs entered with over 700 teams playing around the world. These are a special set of brand new games designed just for people during the lockdown periods around the world, and as such we have found ourselves teaching new skills to our dogs and practicing with them (which has been beneficial for all concerned).



Once we resume our training again I think I might incorporate some of the skills from these games into our regular training sessions just for fun. As far as I'm aware there are three clubs in Australia competing in this online competition and out of the Australian clubs we are the leaders so far. And currently about mid-field on the leader board internationally.



One of our teams newest players has won her division every week so far! Congratulations to Rachael and Zari.



For the next couple of games left in the competition we will work on accuracy in our throws and also some tricks that need to be worked into our game. Good luck for all of you that are training hard and submitting your scores We look forward to hearing how you went with the games and also look forward to when we can get back to normal training again. Stay safe everyone.

Ange



Still Flying High !!!!!



Warmest wishes from the President, the Committee and all our wonderful instructors.

We miss you all and can't wait until Dogs NSW tells us that we can resume classes.

In the meantime keep safe, keep smiling and

KEEP TRAINING !!!!!!!