

DOG TRACKS



May / June 2026

President's Message

The cooler autumn weather brings its own challenges with our Deep Creek Reserve receiving a regular dosage of rain. These are perfect conditions for pesky leeches and even ticks and mosquitoes. Please check your pets for signs of being bitten!

Our competitive members are now in the midst of trial season. Good luck to you all. I am sure your dedication to dog training and relentless practice of your craft will be rewarded.

A warm welcome I give to our new members who are starting their journey to having a well behaved companion dog.

A reminder that wet weather notifications cancelling training will be advised on the front page of the club website or on our club Facebook page.

Peter Coulthart

with editorial help from his English Setter Venice





Dogs in Autumn



With autumn already here, dog owners should take care to 'autumn-proof' their dogs to keep them healthy and safe throughout the season.



Enjoying the season: This doesn't usually require much effort. Using appropriate equipment and clothing (where necessary) and being aware of some potential dangers in the natural environment is generally all it takes to protect your pet. Once you've done that, you and your dog will be free to enjoy the pleasures of the season.

Darkness: As summer draws to a close, it gets dark earlier. If you go out with your dog later in the afternoon, make sure your four-legged friend is visible in the dark. Reflective [collars](#), harnesses and [leashes](#) are great for this and can help to prevent accidents (e.g. involving cyclists). Long-haired dogs may be better off with reflective vests – unlike collars and harnesses with reflective strips, they won't be covered up by long hair. And it's always worth thinking about your own clothing when you're getting ready for an evening walk – you need to be visible in the dark, too!

Cold and damp: Older dogs and those with less undercoat are especially vulnerable to the cold and damp. It affects their joints and takes some of the fun out of an autumnal walk. In such cases, suitable clothing to protect against colder temperatures is recommended. This clothing should fit well and keep your pet warm, without hindering movement. The length of the walks you take will depend on your dog. For older four-legged friends, several short walks through the autumn woods may be better than one long walk. While you are out, your dog should keep moving and not sit or lie down for any length of



Parasites:

Ticks are mostly active from September to March but the mild temperatures that come along with climate change extend the tick activity. Dogs that live in areas prone to ticks – such as around woods, water and meadows – must be protected against these blood-sucking parasites. Tick preventatives are an effective way to protect your dog. However, if you prefer not to use these, you should thoroughly examine your dog after each walk and remove any ticks.

The harmful effects of **harvest mites** on dogs should also not be underestimated. The larvae of these tiny pests can infect a dog, puncturing its skin and injecting enzymes. This results in liquefied skin cells which are drunk by the larvae. This leads to an allergic reaction that causes itchiness, so your dog will constantly scratch and lick the affected area – often the paws (between the toes), armpits, legs, ears or belly. This can result in wounds (due to the constant biting and licking), skin irritation and inflammation. To avoid this, dog walkers should keep away from the kind of environments favoured by harvest mites. These include meadows, gardens, forest edges and fields. However, if you don't want to be restricted to walking the streets during the autumn season, you should ask your vet about gentle but effective preventative measures for your dog.

Mushrooms: Fungi flourish in the moist soils of early autumn, and eating mushrooms can be lethal for our four-legged friends. To be on the safe side, don't let your dog eat any mushrooms at all –not even those that are safe for humans. Take special care when playing fetch: if you throw a stick and it lands on the forest floor or in a pile of leaves, your dog could accidentally pick up a mushroom in its mouth. Always check what your dog is eating if it has picked up something while out on a walk.



What Words Do Dogs Hear Best?

Dogs understand an average of 89 unique words and phrases, with some smart, highly trained dogs recognizing over 200 to 1,000 words. They most easily understand short, consistent words linked to routines, food, and high-reward actions, specifically responding to their name, commands like "sit" and "come," and nouns like "treat".

Top Words and Phrases Dogs Understand

Commands: Sit, Stay, Come, Down, No, OK, Leave it, Drop it, Wait

Routine/Play: Walk, Outside, Park, Fetch, Ball, Toy, Tug

Food/Rewards: Treat, Biscuit, Dinner, Breakfast, Cheese, Chicken.

Social/Emotional: Their own name, Good boy/girl, "I love you," "Kiss".

Key Points about Dog Language

Frequency and Tone: Words paired with high-pitched, emotional, or consistent tones are learned faster.

Action-Oriented: They respond to words that mean immediate action e.g., "walk" or imminent rewards e.g., "treat".

Breed Intelligence: Breeds like Border Collies, Poodles, and German Shepherds are particularly language-savvy, but most family dogs can learn a large vocabulary over time.

Context Clues: Dogs often rely on gestures and context, so "where's your ball?" may be understood more as a sequence of sounds and gestures rather than individual words.



Dog Diets and Dietary Needs Vary Throughout Their Lives.

Dog diets and dietary needs vary throughout their lives. They change very rapidly from very high levels of proteins and fats as very young puppies that are frequently fed to medium levels of proteins and fats that are fed less frequently while growing to maturity. Once 75% of adult weight has been achieved, the amount of food being fed drops off significantly. Dogs during high demand periods such as heavy work, pregnancy and lactation have much higher demands for energy and minerals. Dogs that are sitting around (and/or are desexed) in back yards have much lower energy requirements and often need to be on low fat diets.

Metabolic Rates

The smaller the breed, the higher the metabolic rate, this is related to surface area (think of mice and elephants!). Very small breeds need more frequent feeding and a higher digestibility in the diet. This becomes particularly important when there are demand situations such as rapid growth (puppyhood), pregnancy and lactation.

Very small puppies of toy breeds are particularly susceptible to “sugar drop”, a lack of available digestible sugars. This can cause them to collapse and “fit” from lack of sugars. Highly digestible and highly concentrated diets are needed in these situations, with increased frequency of feeding. There may be the requirement to have food available at all times during periods of acute need (very rapid growth, lactation).

The corollary to the above statement is that larger breeds and older inactive dogs have much lower metabolic rates. Desexed dogs have lower metabolic rates. This is why so many dogs are overweight, as like ourselves, we continue to feed at the higher rates of growth phases, rather than cutting down with age, and again after desexing.

Age

Puppies, especially under 12-16 weeks of age are growing very rapidly. By 16 weeks the majority of breeds have reached the 50% mark of their end adult weight, giant breeds take a little longer. The smaller the breed, (as mentioned above) the higher the protein and fat requirements will be during this stage. Medium to large breed puppies however, are often placed on puppy diets that while they are very good up to 8-12 weeks, are often too rich to send puppies home on. The average new owner tends to over feed puppies, which forces the growth and can result in a group of rapid growth associated disorders such as “bone soreness”, OCD (osteochondritis), and panoestitis, to name a few of the more commonly seen outcomes. Puppies in this midsize up group should be fed a diet that suits their end stage desired weight and size. A medium range dry food of 22-24% protein and 12-14% fat can grow puppies steadily without excessive weight gain. Having a weight for age chart of where dogs and bitches should be, at each stage of their growth for your breed is an invaluable tool to send home with puppies and new owners.



Older Dogs

As dogs age, their requirements change. Generally lower protein levels and lower fat levels are the most common changes. Decreased amounts of food across the board are usually the best idea.

Pancreatitis is very common in older, obese dogs. Here low fat levels are essential for the dog's continued existence. These dogs may be so fat sensitive that they cannot tolerate even some of the low fat dry foods. Safest diet for these dogs is cooked chicken with the fat removed combined with either cooked pumpkin or cooked rice.

Activity Levels and Temperature

Heavy work/high activity – here the opposite applies, the higher the level of activity, generally the higher the need for protein and fats, and the lower the need for carbohydrates. Sledging diets aim for very high digestibility and high frequency of feeding. Cold weather and dogs in thin coats also require higher energy levels in the diet during periods of cold weather. Some dry foods are sprayed with higher levels of fat in the winter months. Low activity/ hot weather – requirements for energy in the diet drop. Lower fat and protein levels are required in hot conditions. Over weight dogs requirements similarly drop in hot conditions.

Types of food

Most breeds can eat nearly every type of protein and fats that are readily available. Certain breeds (including German Shepherds) can be more sensitive to various types of proteins and carbohydrates and can develop allergies, the most common being to beef and wheat gluten. A few breeds are less tolerant of high levels of carbohydrates in the diet – this is more commonly seen in the arctic breeds (Alaskan Malamutes, Siberians Huskies).

Some of these breeds can have higher requirements for certain types of vitamins and minerals, the most common here would be for added zinc and for various amino acids.

Some of these needs may be related to inherited deficiencies in various breeds.

Add electrolytes to diets during hot weather. Electrolytes are technically mineral salts and like in humans, electrolytes are lost during periods of heavy work and stress, particularly in the heat. Extra electrolytes in the diets can help many dogs cope much better with the heat. This is particularly valuable to those dogs that get stressed in the hot weather.



Feeding the wrong food

Dogs can develop allergies to many foods over their life time. Allergies are uncommon under 10-12 months of age, as like in humans, allergies generally require time and exposure to develop. As mentioned above, the most common allergies are to beef and wheat, but can occur to almost every type of protein. Dietary allergies can result in several major clinical conditions the most common being general puritis or itchy skin (all over!) and occasionally, chronic diarrhoeas. Hypoallergenic diets are available and can be very useful with the very reactive dog. Alternatively one can try elimination diets which usually involve feeding one type of protein (commonly chicken or fish) together with one type of cereal (often rice) for 6 weeks. If the dog goes very well, one can add one extra type of protein after 6 weeks and again see how the dog reacts over 6 weeks. The problem here can be that the initial protein may already be a problem. Few dogs are allergic to chicken and chicken proteins but they do occur. Fish or rabbit can be good starting proteins.

Chronic gastritis can be as a result of dietary problems. Sudden changes in diet can result in diarrhoea, but this usually settles down within a few days. Others can develop into intractable gastritis. These dogs can have poor absorption of fats and proteins, and/or bacterial overgrowths due to the chronic nature of the problem.

Getting these dogs onto very bland diets (cooked chicken or lamb and rice) can help. Add cornflour (the very fine particles help line the gut), it cooks as it goes through and helps to thicken the faeces. Also needed are replacement of gut bacteria which are lost with the chronic diarrhoea. Acidophilus bacteria or 'Protexin' are very good gut bacteria replacers. Some dogs may require short or long term treatment with antibiotics in order to stabilise the condition.

Once the motions are stable, the diet can be slowly returned to a more normal mix of dry food and meat. Some dogs may require staying on a very bland diet for long periods of time.

Conclusion

Metabolic rates can determine much of the energy requirements of a breed. The smaller the breed, the higher the metabolic rate and the energy requirements. Weather and coat cover can affect energy requirements, especially in cold conditions. Owners and breeders should look at their dogs and feed according to need and desired end weight ranges.

Activity levels of individual dogs can increase and decrease over time.

Over weight dogs, like humans, are very common. Like humans, being over weight creates a whole new set of problems. One should aim to keep your dogs, no matter their age, within a reasonable weight range in order to give your dog the best chance of a healthy, long life. Allergies, chronic skin conditions, chronic gastritis are all quite common as well. These conditions need considerable care, careful feeding and time in order to be sorted out correctly.



Why Tennis Balls are Bad for Dogs



Dental Damage: The fuzzy exterior of a tennis ball isn't soft in the way we perceive it. When a dog repeatedly chews on it, the felt acts as an abrasive. When combined with outdoor dirt and sand acting as a grinding agent, it can wear a dog's teeth flat, exposing the pulp and leading to costly dental procedures.

Choking and Airway Obstruction: Many dogs can fit an entire tennis ball into their mouths. If the ball compresses and slips to the back of the throat, it can block the airway and cause suffocation in seconds.

Intestinal Blockages: Dogs frequently tear tennis balls into smaller pieces. The swallowed rubber, industrial adhesives, and felt fibers are indigestible and can get lodged in the digestive tract, resulting in bowel obstruction.

Trauma and Chemical Exposure: Tennis balls are designed for sports, not canine mouths. The manufacturing materials, glues, and dyes can be toxic when ingested over time. Additionally, chasing a tennis ball incorrectly thrown into the path of another dog or at high speeds can result in blunt eye trauma

So Throw Away the Tennis Balls

Replace with Quality Rubber Balls Made for Dogs



Sardine Training Treats



Ingredients

- 1 x Can of Sardines (save the oil or liquid)
- 60g x Flour (be aware that some flours make the consistency drier than others, this is where you can use the liquid from the sardines).

Instructions:

Preheat the oven to 180C / 160C Fan
Drain the sardines from the liquid (put liquid to the side and use later if needed)
Mash sardines into a paste with a fork
Mix in the flour (add in liquid if needed) make to the desired consistency.
Add 1 egg if you'd like softer treats
Spread dough onto a lined baking
Bake for 30/45 minutes
Once ready cut the cooked dough into bite-size training treats. A pizza wheel works well



A Bit Fishy but Your Dog will Love Them !

Raffle Donations Wanted!



We're seeking donations of new items for the raffle at our club's upcoming annual Agility & Jumping Trial on Saturday August 1st.



Donations can include dog food, treats, beds, toys, accessories etc, and goodies and products for humans too!



All raffle proceeds will help fund seminars, events and experiences open to club members.



Please pass donations to Ren Astono or Kimberley Cormack, or leave clearly labelled items in the agility gorilla cart in the club shed by 25th July.



Thank you for your support!

Gut First Nutrition

Meals designed to support your dog's gut health.

Because when a dog's gut is supported, everything improves, from energy and behaviour to skin health and mobility.

What makes our food different?

#1: EpiCor®



A human-grade postbiotic made from *Saccharomyces cerevisiae*, EpiCor® supports a healthy microbiome, aids digestion, manages everyday stress & helps freshen breath when fed regularly.

#2: Collagen and Omega 3/EPA + DHA



Formulated with Omega-3s (EPA & DHA) and biogenically available collagen hydrolysates to support joint health, mobility, and cartilage strength. EPA may also help reduce inflammation linked to skin issues such as redness or itching.

#3: Made with Real Australian Meat



All of our products are made from real Australian meat that has been gently broken down — much like a slow-cooked broth — to support natural digestion and promote overall health and well-being.

#4: Simple



A nutrient dense diet animal that support a healthy gut microbiome. Because when dogs absorb nutrients better, their immunity improves — and so does their overall health.

Our Approach



1

Feed a lower volume of nutrient dense kibble



2

Shake the topper to evenly distribute functional ingredients



3

Pour 1 tablespoon of topper liquid for every cup of dry food onto your dog's meal once daily



4

Tasty: The most palatable nutrient dense diet that supports a healthy gut microbiome and overall health

NEW Meal Topper & Dry Dog Food



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Aids digestions, manages everyday stress & helps freshen breath.

Collagen

Helps joint disorders.



Omega 3/EPA + DHA

Helps maintain joint health & mobility.

Real Australian Meat

Supports natural digestion & promotes overall health.



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BE BRAVE

no matter what your size

GIVE THANKS

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WAG more Bark less

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Editor Wendy Jones

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