



HAPPY TAILS TIPS

Time, training can solve dogs' behavior problems

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One of the major reasons pets are given up each year is because of behavioral problems. Many are euthanized because they are dangerous or severely aggressive. Many are euthanized for problems that could have been avoided or easily treated.

When we receive calls on animals with behavioral issues, very few callers are willing to put in the time or expense to help their pet. In many cases the owners are the ones who have caused the inappropriate behavior in the first place.

People end up adopting the wrong type of animal for their lifestyle, they underestimate the exercise needs of the animal, they have no time for their pet and have ignored it or just left it in the yard. These pets become anxious, fearful, unsocialized and untrusting. They have been taught nothing and have received no training from the family.

Many of the dogs we have taken over the years have been kept in crates most of their lives because of an unwilling owner who wouldn't take the time to train and educate the pet. Then the family is shocked when the dog jumps on people, exhibits submissive urination, digs holes in the yard, isn't housebroken, barks incessantly or snaps at a child. The owner assumes that the dog is supposed to be aware of acceptable behavior without ever being taught what is right or wrong.

Most of the time, dogs act out because some need is not being met. If we can educate an owner on how to alleviate bad behavior then it's a win-win situation for everyone. We visit with callers about various training methods and techniques they can use to help the pet.

Many times unruly behavior is a cry for attention, which means you must look at your lifestyle and see how *you* can change to help your companion overcome this unacceptable conduct. There are many trails and dog parks in Columbia where you both can go for exercise and some bonding time. Go to the library and check out some books on dog training. There are many different techniques, so find the one that works for you and your dog.

If your dog shows severe aggressiveness, talk to your vet for advice. Having a dog with aggression issues is very serious, so make sure you get help from a professional.

Many times it's the wrong dog for the family. A terrier is not necessarily the right breed for a family with small children. Terriers are usually feisty, bold, independent and will not tolerate disrespectful children. Don't get a border collie if you live in an apartment, are gone most of the time or don't lead an active lifestyle. It's a safe bet that you'll come home to find your house destroyed.

The best way to avoid behavioral issues before they begin is to start training your dog immediately. Research the needs of the animal you have or are about to get. You will reap the rewards of having a trained and happy dog if you invest in the proper training right away.

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