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“CAN I PET YOUR DOG?” HOW TO SAY NO, WITHOUT SOUNDING LIKE A JERK

BY CRYSTAL THOMPSON

The last time I heard this question I was at a pet store. I turned to see a smiling employee, looking at Maisy expectantly. *Shoot*, I thought. I really hate this question; it gets tiring to be the “mean lady” who always says no, but... this woman looked very nice. What to do, what to do?

Every dog owner has probably experienced a similar moment of indecision, or worse, not had a choice at all. I have had toddlers suddenly lay on top of my dog in order to “hug the doggy,” children sneak in and touch her butt, and even adults who have trouble understanding that not every dog is a social butterfly. This is frustrating even when your dog is stable, but for those of us with temperamentally unsound dogs, it's a nightmare. Being continually put on the spot is difficult, and no one wants to be rude. But I've seen how uncomfortable Maisy looks when being touched by strangers, so saying no is often part of the deal. So how are we to balance politeness with protection?

I have a three pronged approach that I use the vast majority of the time. Sometimes I follow these approaches sequentially, and sometimes I skip a step. No matter how it plays out, though, I have had a lot of success using these three steps:

Step 1: Management

My first line of defense is management; I always attempt to manipulate the environment so that the question never even comes up. One of the easiest ways to do this is to avoid the situation entirely. If you see someone headed your way, turn and walk away. Cross to the other side of the street. Duck into a different aisle in the pet store. Find some way to prevent the question from being asked.

If you can't leave, sometimes using nonverbals will communicate that you aren't interested. Avoiding eye contact and turning your attention elsewhere works for the socially savvy. If a verbal interaction is impossible to avoid, keep things brief. Nod politely, give the shortest response possible, and move away.

Finally, it is very important to be aware of your surroundings. Avoiding someone is no good if it means you don't see the other person behind you. You need to pay attention to what's going on around you and be ready to step in if need be, which leads me to...

Step 2: Be Direct

Can't prevent contact? Then it's time to be direct. If the person asks if they can pet your dog, say no. You don't have to explain yourself- a simple no will do- but if you want to give a reason, do it *after* you've said no so that the first thing they hear is that they can't touch your dog. A good way to phrase this is, “No, I'm sorry, but she's shy.”

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

An Interview with Marcus Hampton	Page 3
Letter from the Desk of the AWMA President	Page 4
The Happy Emotions— A Party for Two	Page 5



Body blocking in action. (Maisy looks happy because Dobby is her friend.)

Of course, this doesn't work when people don't wait to hear the answer. For this reason, I often perform a body block to prevent a person (or their dog) from approaching mine. To do this, shorten your leash and move your dog behind your back as you step forward into the approaching party's space. Most people (and dogs) will take a step back. This move not only serves to emphasize your response, but also provides a visual barrier.

I'm less polite with people who don't ask. I will augment my body blocks by holding up a hand like a traffic cop and say, "Stop!" The sheer forthrightness of my statement usually startles people into compliance. I then try to soften the blow by saying, "Sorry, but she doesn't like to be touched."

I highly recommend practicing what you will say and do before you're put in the situation. Most people have a hard time saying no to start with, and there is definitely a cultural expectation that all dogs should enjoy interacting with strangers. Have a family member or friend pretend to be a stranger, and practice different ways of saying no. Find the one that feels most natural to you.

Step 3: Redirection

I have the hardest time saying no to children, especially the polite ones who ask. If there's enough space, I'll say, "No, I'm sorry, you can't touch her. But would you like to throw her ball?" Most kids are thrilled with this offer. I always tell them the rules: no touching, no chasing, and that I will hand them the ball instead of having Maisy bring it directly to them. Then I let them play. The kids are generally satisfied with this interaction, and Maisy gets some valuable counter-conditioning. It's a win/win situation for everyone.

When I don't have the room needed, or if it's an adult that asked (they're usually less impressed with ball play), I ask if they'd like to see her do some tricks. Obviously, it's helpful if your dog knows a show-stopping trick, but in my experience, most people are impressed if your dog will sit and lay down when asked. Amp up this simple obedience by telling them your dog knows sign language, and use hand signals instead. You'll knock their socks off.

These three things are what I do most of the time, but sometimes- like that day in the pet store- I get tired of saying no. If the person seems willing to follow directions, I'll let Maisy decide. I looked at the employee. I'm not sure why, but I thought I could trust her, so I replied with a maybe.

"She's a little shy, so you can pet her only if she comes up to you. Crouch down, turn sideways, and hold out your hand."

The woman did as I said, so I told Maisy, "Go say hi." Maisy walked about halfway to the woman, then stopped. She looked back at me at me, the hesitation clear in her face. I called her back and gave her a treat.

"Sorry," I said, shrugging. "I guess you can't pet her today. Thank you for asking, though."

I felt a little bad, especially since the employee was willing to follow my directions, but as I looked down at Maisy, the relieved expression on her face made it worth it. I was glad that I could respect her wishes and say no. And I didn't even have to sound like a jerk to do it.

For more information or to follow Crystal Thompson's blog
visit: <http://reactivechampion.blogspot.com>

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FROM THE EDITOR

Don't forget if you have any articles, ideas, pictures, that you'd like to submit for publication in the newsletter, please send them to Dana McMahan at schhrotts@hotmail.com





AN INTERVIEW WITH MARCUS HAMPTON

BY DANA MCMAHAN

How long have you been involved in Schutzhund? I have been involved in Schutzhund since 2000.

Do you decoy or train in any other sports (French Ring/Mondioring)? I am a decoy and trainer in the Schutzhund sport but I have also trained dogs for suit work.

What are some of your accomplishments since you've been involved in dogsport? (titles achieved with your own dogs, events selected for, etc)

Through the years I have helped many people train their dogs for titles such as club level, regional level and national level. Also I have my own dog that I am training now for Schutzhund. Since I have been in Schutzhund, I have done many club trials and attended many helper and training seminars. In 2009 I did my first big events which were the 2009 Mid-Eastern Regionals as the back half helper and the 2009 German Shepherd USA Nationals also as the back half helper. In 2010 I worked the Mid-Eastern Regionals as the back half helper and also was selected for the 2010 Working Dog Championship. In 2011, I've done 6 National events which is every event in one year. The events were the 2011 AWDF Championship as the front half helper, 2011 Working Dog Championship as the front half helper, 2011 WUSV World Qualifier as the back half helper, 2011 Mid-Eastern Regionals as the back half helper, 2011 AWMA Malinois Nationals as the back half helper and the 2011 USCA German Shepherd Nationals as the back half helper.

How did you become involved in Schutzhund Helper Work? I became involved in Schutzhund helper work when I had one of my first dogs and contacted my mentor Owen Tober. That's when I started training and was exposed to helper work.

What kind of work went into certifying as a National Level Helper? What was the hardest part of the certification? To become certified as a National level helper you have to first meet the criterion which is having a certain amount of dogs in your book and a certain amount of trials worked in your book. You also must attend a certain number of helper seminars.

You have been selected to work several large events. How would a new helper go about training to work a high level event? For a new helper to work a large event, I would suggest that he works as many club trials and attends as many helper seminars as possible until he has the experience to move up to a higher level.

What kind of physical preparation goes into preparing for a high level Schutzhund event? Do you go on any particular diet or exercise regime to prepare for an event? Helper work is a physical and mental thing. When I prepare myself for a big event I practice my routines with and without a dog and of course there is a lot of exercise involved. I do a lot of running, jump roping, speed drills, push ups, lifting weights and also I try to watch the things that I eat. But pretty much eat what I want to eat.



Photographs by 5DogsPhotography

[cont'd. on page 6]

FROM THE DESK OF THE AWMA PRESIDENT,

Welcome to another addition of the AWMA newsletter. Thanks to Dana McMahon (*formerly 'Dana Williams'*) for her effort in pulling this together, to the authors of the articles, and Shari Lipski for formatting. Along with the general interest information in this issue, here is a summary of the activities of the organization since the last newsletter.

One of the topics of debate for the executive board and at last year's general board was our National Championship and who should be allowed to compete. Historically, the event was open to everyone, and then the entries were gradually restricted to allow only Malinois with a registration from an FCI recognized organization. With the advent of our scorebook policy to list dogs with other registrations as Malinois as well as our working privilege listing this was revisited. Another issue was that the policy for who could enter as part of the AWMA team for AWDF was different from our championship. That led to broadening our championship to include all dogs that are designated as a Malinois in their AWDF scorebook regardless of registration with an FCI recognized organization. This past year the door was opened even wider to include all other registered Belgian Shepherd Dogs. Our policies and procedures pages has the following: *All FCI registered Belgian Shepherd Dogs with an AWDF recognized scorebook will be allowed to enter, along with any dog that has an AWMA issued AWDF scorebook that lists the dog as a Belgian Malinois, regardless of whether it is FCI registered or not. Handlers must be current and valid members of the AWMA (as approved July 20, 2011).* This reflected the organization's inclusiveness of the other breeds of Belgians in this country that have no other breed specific organization in the AWDF. After the last national meeting, the discussion moved towards once again opening the event to all breeds. To gather opinions and insights, we used our discussion forum and facebook page and messages to member clubs to pose the question. Responses were gathered and the pros and cons of maintaining the status quo vs. an open competition were tallied. Your voice was heard and the majority favored the current situation that was open to Malinois regardless of registration and the other FCI recognized registered Belgian Shepherd Dogs. Consequently, the policy in place as approved on July 20, 211 will continue.

Speaking of the national event, our tenth annual AWMA IPO Championship event will be held this fall. The host club is Motor City Working Dogs, with Mohawk John Wiitanen and Paula Daigle at the helm. More info will be coming shortly. I encourage all of you to participate as a competitor or a spectator – we should have a great time.

A number of changes in trial regulations have been put in place with the new FCI IPO rules. One of the discussions the board had was what titles we should offer as an organization. After debate and a vote, the AWMA has decided to offer all of the listed titles. This includes the protection-only titles, and there will not be a restriction of having the dog and handler also enter obedience at the same trial. This will allow clubs the opportunity to have protection tournaments and handlers the chance to bring out the 'old dogs' for a chance to compete in protection. We also felt that this would help local clubs build entries and have some fun at the same time. Note that the AWMA does not offer AD titles; the AD is a breeding suitability test for the GSDs through USCA and an AD offered at an AWMA trial would not be recognized for a GSD. All of this information can be found in the new trial regulations that were sent to all of the member clubs and posted on the website.

When this goes to press (so to speak) our team will be competing at the FMBB in Italy. Our IPO team is selected by a point system and the top four eligible competitors from our National Championship are automatically eligible. We work with the entire Belgian Shepherd community to recruit agility entries and the USMRA for mondio competitors. This year our team consists of four IPO handlers (Benny Barmapov with Master de Alphaville Bohemia, Sean Rivera with Daneskjold Iron, David Greene with Luigi Du Dantero, and Harry Wagner with Augustus Caesar Haus Wagner) and two agility handlers (Kimberly Buchanan with Sprite's Entertaining Choice "Emmy" and Shari Lipski with Amara von der Eichenquelle). We wish them all the best as they compete against 26 countries with 88 IPO handler/dog teams and 19 countries with 104 agility handler/dog teams. We did not have any mondio participants this year but you can follow the 57 handler/dog teams from 11 countries. Once again, our group is being led by Shari Lipski. The amount of effort Shari puts into all of the details that lead to the participation of our teams is amazing. She receives the declarations, leads efforts to select the teams, corresponds with the competitors and organizes transportation and accommodations, coordinates the uniforms, ensures that entries are received by the FMBB, hand-delivers our dues to the FMBB, attends the meetings as our representative, and handles all of the problems people encounter while at the event. Thank you Shari for everything you do!

We are also quickly approaching the 2012 AWDF National Championships. I plan to be at the event through Sunday, so do find me if you want to talk about anything related to AWMA. The AWDF annual meeting is scheduled for Thursday with elections taking place for president, two directors at large, and treasurer. As of today I do not know the total number of AWMA entries, but I am sure that we will be well represented. If you have entered, you have directly or indirectly been in contact with Donna McGinnis, our new secretary. Donna has done a tremendous job to make sure that people have submitted all the information needed so they have a valid entry. Every year we have folks who are late, send checks made out to the wrong organization, don't sign their declarations etc. – Donna has gone above and beyond to deal with these problems. If you have received a phone call or email from her asking for your assistance to ensure that your entry goes in, please take the time to thank her for her diligence.



Arine with Bazouka ("Zouka")
van de Trinekesdreef, IPO 3

[cont'd. on page 6]





THE HAPPY EMOTIONS—A PARTY FOR TWO

BY DENISE FENSI

There is a school of thought that suggests dog training is a purely scientific endeavor that relies 100% on a trainer's mechanical skills – a good trainer should be able to take any random dog and create behaviors, whether or not they have any real relationship with that dog. Within this school of thought, emotional or verbal interactions from the trainer are perceived as distractions. A verbal “yeah!” is frowned upon. Celebration? Downright unprofessional. Good training is sterile.

Somehow, that sterility has been called a “benefit” because it leads to the faster acquisition of behaviors. True enough; taking the time to genuinely interact with your dog will interfere with the flow of training. It's even possible that it might distract the dog from their task, thereby losing some of your forward momentum.

The fact is, this clinical method of dog training works quite well to GET behaviors – indeed, I think it is the fastest way to obtain them. But dog training is not a race. The dog who acquires behaviors slowly because of joyful personal interactions during training has a real long term advantage over the dog who acquires behaviors quickly, but sees the trainer as a food dispenser rather than an engaging partner.

If you're reading this blog, then you're probably interested in not only getting behaviors, but also in maintaining them. You want reliability under conditions where the dog has figured out that no food and toys will be forthcoming. Dogs can be tricked into believing that the reward is coming during a trial for awhile, but one day, your dog WILL figure out that the traditional rewards simply do not happen in the ring. The question then becomes....what's left?

If you plan to compete at the higher levels of obedience, you might want to think about how you train your dog NOW so that she stays in the game when the food and the toys do not materialize later. That's when your emotions – your genuine and enthusiastic interactions with your dog – can get you through... but only if you've trained that way. Whipping out the party in the ring will only confuse your dog if you haven't conditioned that as a normal reward in practice.

If you're having fun (and I certainly hope you are, though at times I've watched others training and wondered), then why not share that joy with another being, a being who is genetically hardwired to pay attention to your emotions? Yes, dogs read our emotions....very well, in fact. The more externally you

express your happy emotions, the more your dog will learn to look for them. If you can get your dog addicted to your happy emotions, then your dog will work to elicit them. Teach your dog to work you, not just for food and toys, but for your emotional reactions.

The more expressive you are as a person, the easier this will be. But if you're a person who internalizes feelings, that's okay, because what your dog will notice is a change in your overall emotional state. Dogs get used to you however you are; you don't have to imitate my style to show joy to your dog, but you do need to change where you are on your personal register. The very external and exuberant person will need to go higher than an internal person.

Now we'll try it.

Get your dog and start a training session. Identify a point when you'd normally toss out a cookie, but before you give it, show a true expression of joy or a play-based behavior to your dog. Remember, for some of you, that will just be a genuine smile. For others, it will be a full out whooping, leaping, free for all. The cookie is now rewarding your interaction rather than the behavior that precedes it.

Now refine it a little; think in terms of “degrees.” Small accomplishments will elicit a reaction, but not the same reaction as a major breakthrough would. If a smile is good, a smile and a pat are better. A smile, pat and hug are better still. And then there are the moments where you'll practically break out into song...running around and cheering

and offering your best play-based behaviors.

This approach to training isn't hard, but you will need to give yourself permission to show on the outside what you're already feeling on the inside. Once you get the hang of it, you'll love it. It feels good to play with your dog and soon, your dog will start to smile right back at you! Then it's almost impossible to stop training because you'll get addicted to that happy feeling.

It astonishes me to hear well regarded trainers say that dogs require a paycheck to perform, and then imply that food is the only paycheck that really matters. Yes, the dog requires a paycheck, but don't assume food is the only currency.

A high percentage of dogs will work to play and interact, but



only if you build and maintain that interest. If you train as if you have no more value than a food dispenser, then you will remove your dog's love of interaction, but when you celebrate with your dog, you take advantage of a unique and powerful aspect of dogs: they CARE what you think about them. When you talk to your dog, they wag their tails because they like to hear your sincere and enthusiastic praise. When you run around and act silly with your dog, they will join you, especially if you start when they are young and you work to build and maintain that interest.

If you show genuine expressions of joyful emotion, you'll be surprised how much you can reduce your food and toy rewards. If you've been shoveling out food for years then you'll struggle with this concept, because now it's a matter of food deprivation rather than attractive alternatives. But if you've naturally blended the existence of classic rewards (food and toy) with interactive rewards (play and praise) then the issue of deprivation does not arise. It's simply varied reinforcement.

Surely you feel joy and excitement when your dog accomplishes some goals? Why restrict yourself to a private party when you can invite your dog? This is a party that deserves a guest, so make it a party of two!



For more information or to follow Denise's blog, visit: DeniseFenzi.com



[cont'd. from page 3—Message from the AWMA President]

I'd like to remind everyone that you do have the option of having your IPO titles listed on your dog's AKC pedigree. The information on how to accomplish this is on our website. This was a collaborative effort between the AWMA and the American Belgian Malinois Club. We recently extended this collaboration to the Belgian Sheepdog Club of America after they contacted us and we are awaiting confirmation from the AKC before launching.

One thing you may notice is that the AWMA is remarkably free of political problems and issues. I attribute this to our intent to be open, cooperative, and supportive of our members and dog sports in general. If you have comments, questions or concerns about the organization (good or bad) we welcome your input and encourage you to contact anyone on the board.

All the best for your training and trialing during the spring and summer months.

Anne Camper



[cont'd. from page 3—Marcus Hampton Interview]

Who are some of the people who have been influential in helping you get to where you are in the sport? First of all I have to thank God for making me who I am. I thank my mentor and friend Owen Tober, Mark Scarberry for his support and all the people that trust in me and let me work their dogs through the years.

You have worked a number of big trials ... which dogs have been the most impressive to work and why? Every trial I have been in no matter if it is a Malinois trial or a German Shepherd trial I find that there are impressive dogs in both. What I like about the Malinois is that they can be very fast coming down the field with no hesitation. Also I can say the same about the German Shepherd. To me it just depends on the dog because every dog is not the same. It is a thrill for me to work every dog in every event.





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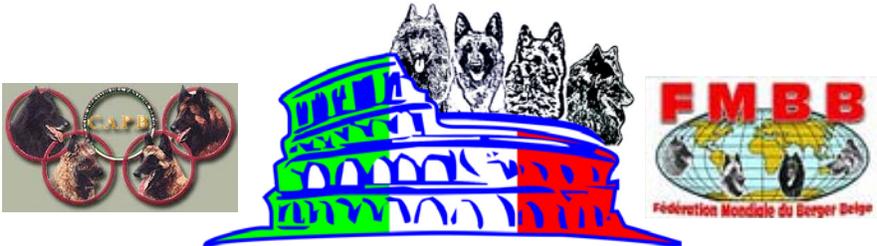
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Congratulations to the 2012 AWMA IPO Team Members
 Benny Barmapov with Master de Alphaville Bohemia
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Congratulations to the 2012 AWMA Agility Team Members
 Kimberly Buchanan with Sprite's Entertaining Choice "Emmy"
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May 3rd —6th

AWDF Championship
& Team Challenge
Indianapolis, Indiana
May 9th — 13th

AWMA National Championship
Bowling Green, Kentucky
dates to be announced soon!