

Dog Training Articles By Beth Bradley

Enjoying the Weather; You and Your Dog

I think it is safe to say that winter is over; bring on the sun, the fun, the picnics, barbeques and hiking with your dog. You think you had “cabin fever” this winter, your dog had it worse than you did. Now, you have to decide what to do for your dog that will give him exercise, challenge him mentally and yet be fun for the both of you.

Dog Parks:

Many dogs playing in public dog runs lack proper social skills. They play too rough and too aggressively. Dog owners must also learn the difference between a group of dogs acting like a pack and picking or chasing one and dogs just playing and chasing each other for the enjoyment of dog play. If a dog looks frightened or is being chased and his tail is tucked, that is NOT fun.

You will never see one of my own dogs in a public dog run. My dogs only socialize with dogs that I know, dogs that have manners and training and dogs that know when and how to play and not to play aggressively. You spend a lot of money on your dog to keep him happy and healthy; training, veterinarian visits, vitamins, good food, why let him or her play with dogs that may not be taken care of as well as yours.

Swimming:

Swimming is great exercise for a dog and it is non-impact; meaning, it is safe for an older dog or a dog that has hip or joint problems. Of course, not all dogs swim, some deep chested dogs will sink ‘like a rock’ so make sure you are dressed to go in with your dog and maybe keep him on leash and hold the leash so you can help guide him when needed. Also, I highly recommend purchasing a life jacket for your dog. This way, even if your dog is a great swimmer, if he gets tired, he has some help to stay afloat. Just be careful that your dog is not drinking more than eating, he can get a bad case of diarrhea from swimming water.

And, even if your dog doesn’t like to swim, you can keep him in the shallow end and play Frisbee or ball. By playing fetch in the water, your dog is staying cool because his feet are wet yet still burning energy by chasing his favorite toy.

Fetch:

Does your dog love to fetch? Great, play ball or Frisbee at the park but before letting him go out into a full run, walk him first to stretch his muscles. Or if you are just playing in your yard, go for a walk around the block first just so your dog can stretch

before running. Dogs love one on one interaction with their owners, it is a great bonding tool just to go outside and play a game of fetch with your dog.

Hiking and Walks:

But the best form of exercise for your dog is a walk. The walk is so important on many levels. First, the walk teaches the dog that you are Alpha. When you are walking a puppy, most lag behind, so you are teaching them by your body language that they are not Alpha and that they should be walking behind you. As they get older, they are used to this being their position so this is easily taught by using the command 'heel'. Second, the walk stimulates a dog's mind. The dog is taking in so many scents and sights that not only will the walk physically tire your dog but he will also be mentally tired from thinking about the smells and sights he took in on the walk. Third, the walk is a way to socialize your dog with people and other dogs.

The walk socializes them. The walk teaches the dog that there are other people out there in the universe and that they have to adjust to new people all of the time. The dog has to adjust to and accept the new faces of both people and dogs that they are meeting on this walk.

Many dogs are frustrated when on the leash because they can't do what they want to do and see whom they want to see so they become aggressive; this is called leash frustration. If the dog is walked infrequently, everything is exciting and new, and if you do not let him investigate, he becomes frustrated. But a dog that is walked often usually doesn't have this frustration because it is not novel. Dogs that are walked often are not frazzled by new people, new dogs, loud sounds or chaos on the streets.

Once your dog is walking nicely, you can always add bicycling, roller blading and skate boarding to your dog's exercise program. If both you and your dog have a need for speed, this will take your exercise program to a new and exciting level!

Conclusion:

Exercise goes hand in hand with discipline in rearing a well-mannered dog. But, like any new exercise program, start out slowly. If your dog is older, have your Veterinarian do a complete check up before you attempt any strenuous exercise program. Dogs need to warm up just like us humans, so a walk before chasing the ball may be a great idea for your dog. And don't forget two important things: #1: doggie clean up bags: exercise gets everything moving; even your dog's bowels! Even if he went at home before you left, the excitement is going to bring on another bowel movement so be sure to have a couple of bags on hand. And the second important thing to bring with you on a walk: Water. Both you and your dog are going to get thirsty, so be sure to have plenty of water for both of you. Bring a backpack with you to carry a bowel and water bottles or buy a backpack for your

dog so he can carry his own water and bowl. Sometimes, even hiking in the woods, water is not an easy find and since your dog can't sweat, he is going to need water to keep him cool.