



Dear friends,

Welcome to our September Newsletter from [www.bestdoggietips.com](http://www.bestdoggietips.com).

## Contents

Recipe – Yoghurt Treat	<a href="#">Page 2</a>
More on Dog Intelligence	<a href="#">Page 3</a>
The Fine Line Between Pet & Predator	<a href="#">Page 4</a>
Sniffing Out Pollution	<a href="#">Page 6</a>
A New Treatment for Fear of Thunderstorms	<a href="#">Page 7</a>
Fun Stuff – How Many Dogs Does It Take to Change a Light bulb?	<a href="#">Page 11</a>
The Weird & The Wonderful	<a href="#">Page 12</a>

We hope you enjoy the newsletter.

"Dogs feel very strongly that they should always go with you in the car, in case the need should arise for them to bark violently at nothing right in your ear."

- Dave Barry

## Recipe - Yoghurt Treat

### *Ingredients*

- 1 small tub plain low fat yoghurt
- 2 tbsp rolled oats, uncooked
- 2 tbsp cottage cheese
- 1 tbsp flaxseed
- 1 tbsp wheat germ
- 1 hard boiled egg, chopped
- 1 cup of fruit, chopped

### *To Make*

For the fruit you can use apples, bananas, blueberries, strawberries, kiwifruit, stone fruits (such as peaches or pears), mango and / or pawpaw. Any fruit with pips (such as apples and stone fruits) must have the pips or stones removed – these are toxic to dogs. Do NOT use grapes.

Try different fruits and see which ones your dog likes.

Mix ingredients together and serve. No more than ½ cup per serving for an average sized dog. Will refrigerate for 1 to 2 days.

[Back to Contents List](#)

## More on Dog Intelligence

Following on from our story last month on How Smart is Your Dog? which featured Dr Stanley Coren (Professor of Psychology at the University of British Columbia and author of the book [The Intelligence of Dogs](#)), Coren gave a lecture at the American Psychological Association in early August.

Speaking on the topic "How dogs think" Coren said the average dog can understand about 150 words and signs and can practice intentional deceit on dogs and people. The smartest dogs can learn about 250 words, Coren said. Dogs also have some ability to do arithmetic, counting up to 5 and spotting errors in simple addition.

"We all want insight into how our furry companions think, and we want to understand the silly, quirky and apparently irrational behaviours Lassie or Rover demonstrate" Coren said. "Their stunning flashes of brilliance and creativity are reminders that they may not be Einstein's but are sure closer to humans than we thought".

Coren said dogs show three types of intelligence: instinctive, which is hard-wired; adaptive, which they learn from their environment; and working and obedience, the equivalent of school learning. He said they are as intelligent as children ages 2 to 2 ½.

Coren also announced that the newest research strategy for understanding dogs is to use tests meant for very young children.

"One of the most recent breakthroughs is that people began to use tests which were originally designed for young humans — for pre-linguistic or limited-linguistic humans — to see whether dogs had certain capacities.

"And that allows you then to do a whole bunch of things, not only to determine whether a dog has a certain thinking skill but to place him in terms of where would you be in terms of human beings, as well as in terms of other animals".

Coren, who lives in Vancouver, has written several books on dog behaviour. He also trains dogs and has two dogs — a beagle named Darby and a Nova Scotia Duck Tolling Retriever named Dancer.

[Back to Contents List](#)

## The Fine Line Between Pet & Predator

A dog pack blamed for the killings of a Georgia couple is a reminder of the fragility of mankind's pact with canines. Underlying the relationship between the species is a simple expectation: We feed them, they don't kill us.

Dogs are so much a part of our life — valued members of or even substitutes for human families — that it can be easy to forget they are still animals with teeth and the ability to use them if instinct demands it.

Add the lack of an owner and steady meals, and dogs can quickly begin to resemble their wolf ancestors, teaming up in packs for hunting and protection. They may look like pets, but behave like predators.

That is what investigators believe Sherry and Lothar Schweder encountered along a country road in Georgia a week ago. They say a pack of wild dogs killed Sherry Schweder as she took an evening walk and fatally mauled her husband when he went to look for her.

Very seldom do dogs kill people, but it is not unusual for dogs to use their teeth on people. Dogs bite about 4.5 million people in the U.S. alone each year, and nearly 900,000 of those, about half of them children, require medical care, the Centers for Disease Control says. More than 31,000 Americans needed reconstructive surgery after dogs attacked them in 2006, Center figures show.

James Serpell, director of the University of Pennsylvania's Center for the Interaction of Animals and Society in Philadelphia, said the number of dog-bite cases is remarkably low, considering how closely humans and dogs live together.

"Frankly it's a triumph that dogs don't bite us more often than they do," Serpell said. "Any dog will bite if you provoke it sufficiently; or if it's in pain, it will defend itself. Potentially any dog will show predatory behaviour, especially if it's very, very hungry."

Still, the statistics prove plenty of dogs bite the hand that feeds them. The CDC says adults with two or more dogs at home are five times more likely to get bitten than people with dog-free households. What gives?

Predatory behaviour — hunting for food — is just one of many reasons canines, whether wild or housedogs, may attack people, experts say.

Spaying or neutering might help some dogs in some cases, such as reducing aggression toward other dogs, but won't make much difference in predatory behaviour such as pack attacks on humans, said Dr. Wayne Hunthausen, a veterinarian and director of animal behaviour consultations at Westwood Animal Hospital in Westwood, Kan.

Dog bites also may be caused by medical problems; possessiveness over food and toys; fear aggression resulting from genetics or poor socialization; redirected aggression, such as when a dog

fighters with another dog and goes after a person who intervenes and protection of territory from a stranger.

"Just because the dog sees you as a source of food doesn't necessarily mean there's any respect there," said Hunthausen, a past president of the American Veterinary Society of Animal Behaviour.

In Georgia, a man living in the area where the Schweders were killed said he had fed the dogs and never had a problem with them. He didn't believe they had killed the couple.

Many dogs, including packs, are fine with people feeding them, but if someone strange enters their territory or stares at them, it's a different scenario.

Dogs were domesticated tens of thousands of years ago. In some ways they are far removed from wolves — principally in their willingness to cosy up to humans. In other ways, they seem surprisingly close to their ancestors.

A strong predatory instinct was key in the wild, and the more important a trait is to a species' survival, the harder it is to breed out, Hunthausen said.

In some breeds — ratter dogs such as terriers or hunting and herding dogs — the prey drive was fostered or tweaked through breeding to achieve behaviours humans wanted. That strong predatory drive is one reason some dogs chase joggers, bicyclists and even cars.

"The faster something moves, usually the more likely it is to release predatory behaviour," Hunthausen said.

Hunthausen's instructions for children who encounter strange dogs are similar to those suggested by grizzly bear experts: Stand still like a tree or curl up and stay still like a rock; don't move or make eye contact. Unlike grizzly bear-related guidance, he said if he met with a pack of wild dogs and had a chance to get up a tree or to another safe spot, he would probably take his chances and run for it.

Research shows that how many wolf-like traits a dog has is related to how little or how much a dog looks like a wolf, said Beaver, a veterinarian and professor at Texas A&M University's Department of Small Animal Medicine and Surgery.

For example, Siberian huskies and Alaskan malamutes are nearer to wolves genetically than Chihuahuas or toy poodles are, Beaver said. In general, domestic dogs are closer to wolf cubs than to adult wolves, she said. Like wolf cubs, dogs bark a lot and are dependent on a leader, Beaver said.

Interestingly, one way domesticated dogs differ from wolves is in their response to food rewards, the University of Pennsylvania's Serpell said. While humans can use food to motivate dogs to follow commands, wolves, though smart, tend not to see the point, he said.

If humans kicked dogs out en masse, some could live off the land and hunt in packs, Serpell said. "I think most of them would die, actually, if humans weren't around," Serpell said. "They just would not be able to cope."

[Back to Contents List](#)

## Sniffing Out Pollution

Sable is a German shepherd mix with a nose for sewage.

Sable's trainer, Scott Reynolds, who works for an environmental consulting firm, Tetra Tech in Lansing, Mich., said the three-and-a-half-year-old mutt is the only canine known to reliably detect raw sewage or detergents flowing into sewers from illegal or bungled pipe connections.

The dog has sniffed out illegal connections in three Michigan counties. And field tests in 2007 and 2008 showed Sable was 87 percent accurate compared with traditional laboratory water tests, Reynolds said. When the dog errs, Reynolds said, it is probably due to the presence of animal, not human, waste in the sewers.

Word of Sable's exploits are spreading. Communities in Maine and New Hampshire struggling to protect their swimming beaches and shellfish beds from bacterial pollution are considering bringing the dog to New England.

Forrest Bell of consulting firm FB Environmental, which is coordinating the Maine and New Hampshire cleanups, said Sable can save money by reducing the number of dye tests - where dye is dropped into toilets so investigators can see where it goes - and follow-up lab work.

The price for trainer and dog to travel and work for a week would range between \$5,000 and \$10,000, but using other specialized tests - say, genetic fingerprinting to help investigators distinguish between animal and human faecal bacteria - would cost more than \$100,000, Bell said. "We think that Sable is going to be a good, cost-effective and accurate way to try to do some of these detections," he said.

Sue Kubic, senior engineer with Michigan's Genesee County Drain Commission, which has employed Sable, said the dog provides quick results. "Instead of sending a sample to a lab and finding out two weeks or two months later and having to go back and take three or four or five more samples, you can narrow it down and eliminate some of the tests you have to take," she said.

Sniffing sewage, Sable tracks the scent to where it originates upstream, obviating the need for additional rounds of lab testing downstream. "We can take it from 200 houses to maybe we only need to do dyed-water testing for 10," Reynolds said.

Said Kubic: "Sending that crew out day after day, going and spending an hour or two at each house, doing dye testing to find out if the sanitary is hooked up to the storm system - if you start adding up the people time and travel time, that's where the real money is."

And there is a lot of money being spent as cities whose storm sewers date to the early 20th century have struggled to clean up discharges into waterways from underground networks of pipes that have often never been mapped.

When Tetra Tech hatched the idea of training a canine to sniff out sewage, it turned to Reynolds, a former narcotics-dog trainer, to do the job.

Reynolds, 38, found Sable at a shelter and was impressed by the focus the dog showed in chasing tennis balls.

So Reynolds took Sable home and started him on a scent-tracking program in the spring of 2007, rewarding the dog for pursuing scents related to raw sewage and detergents. He then moved Sable to off-leash searching in difficult terrain and with false targets planted to help him differentiate between scents he would likely encounter in drainage areas.

By July 2007, Sable was working on field trials at a known illicit sewer connection; by August, he was a full-fledged member of the company's field crew.

Reynolds is now training two more sewage sniffers and has started his own company, Environmental Canine Services LLC. He offers detection services, as well as training for agencies that want their own scent-trained dogs.

The point, Reynolds said, is to make the service affordable for small communities and nonprofit organizations.

But does Sable, who lives with Reynolds and his family, think his job stinks?

Not at all.

"He loves it!" Reynolds exclaimed. "Every day, when I get ready for work, he runs and jumps on the counter, looking at his harness and hoping that he gets to work that day."

[Back to Contents List](#)

## A New Treatment for Fear of Thunderstorms

Dog owners who spend many a stormy night struggling to get some sleep while a panting, drooling, trembling pet climbs around on top of them know that the fear of thunder can be a tricky problem to solve.



Dogs with the condition often look to their owners for comfort, yet are in such a state of panic, they are inconsolable. And it can be hard to know how to soothe an upset dog without unwittingly reinforcing its anxiety.

Potential remedies include medication, desensitising the dog to thunder and training it to retreat to a safe place when a storm hits.

(AT LEFT - Baxter, an Australian shepherd who is afraid of thunder, shown with some of the remedies his owner is using to calm him during thunderstorms.)

There also is canine "thunderwear" such as earmuffs, head halters and swaddling attire, including a snug leotard for animals called a sheep suit that can help calm dogs.

(In the photo at right Baxter (on the left) is wearing a sheep suit, a snug unitard that soothes him when it thunders.)

But there seems to be no single cause for the fear of thunder, and there also isn't any one guaranteed treatment, veterinarians who specialize in canine behaviour say. And a method that works during one storm may not in another.

"Many dogs can be helped. But me, personally, I've never known of a dog that was cured of this problem," said Dr. Elizabeth Shull, a veterinary behaviourist and neurologist in Louisville and Southfield, Mich.



While some breeds have more of a reputation for fear of loud sounds such as thunder, "it certainly is not limited to any breed, any age, or any sex of dog," Shull said. Researchers have yet to figure out exactly what's behind thunderphobia.

Among the theories: Some dogs may be genetically disposed to the problem; others may have learned to be afraid of storms after having a bad experience or seeing a person or dog in the household become anxious during a storm. Some may be anxious in other situations, such as when they are left alone; some may extend their fear of thunder to other aspects of a storm, such as rain and whistling winds; some may be acutely sensitive to any sudden, loud noise; some may fear thunder and no other sound.

Dogs' problems with thunder often do not become apparent until they are 4 or 5, said Dr. Victoria Lea Voith, a professor of animal behaviour at the Western University of Health Sciences veterinary school in Pomona, Calif.

"So in the beginning, owners don't notice a real phobia, until the dog is older," said Voith, adding that it's unclear whether owners fail to notice a small amount of anxiety building over time, or whether the phobia didn't actually start until the dog was several years old.

### Severity of fear

The severity of a fearful dog's reaction also can vary. Some are mildly anxious. Some pant, quake, drool or become almost catatonic. In the most severe cases, dogs become frantic and hurt themselves breaking through windows, clawing through panelling or running into traffic if left alone during a thunderstorm.

"It's a sound that is coming from around and above and everywhere. It's a terrifying experience for a lot of animals who have a more sensitive temperament," said Dr. Michael Fox of Minneapolis, a veterinarian who writes the syndicated newspaper column "Animal Doctor."

Fox suggests trying to desensitise the dog to thunder by playing a tape or CD with storm sounds: Switch it on for a few minutes and let the dog "freak out" for about a minute, then switch it off. Let the dog settle down. A few minutes later, switch it on again for another 30 to 60 seconds. Repeat it about five times at intervals of 10 minutes for four or five days, then repeat it a week or two later, he said, adding that the timing can be flexible.

More than just the noise of the storm may be at work. Fox and others theorize that other aspects of a thunderstorm, such as static electricity and changes in barometric pressure, may also disturb dogs.

That may explain why some dogs seem to detect storms before humans can, and why some dogs who panic when it thunders at home are just fine in the car, or retreat to the bathtub or shower when a storm hits, said Dr. Nicholas Dodman, a veterinarian and head of the animal behaviour program at the Tufts University veterinary school in North Grafton, Mass.

"They're like a barometer. Some people think it's barometric pressure. I think it might be static electricity," Dodman said. "Dogs get charged with static electricity and seek places where they won't get a charge."

Dodman experimented with two capes on dogs: one with an antistatic lining, the other without. Owners reported that both capes helped their dogs, though the cape with the lining seemed to help more, he said, adding that too few dogs were in the study to achieve statistical significance.

### Treatment tips for scared dogs

Dodman suggests finding a safe place for the dog and training it to go there during storms, "almost like a bunker in a nuclear war." It could be a spot in the basement with the curtains drawn and lights on to mask lightning, a kennel with an open door and a comfortable dog bed in it, or a makeshift den in a closet with no windows.

The owner should initially stay with the dog and offer treats and training to reinforce the idea that it's a pleasant, safe place, Dodman said.

Swaddling a dog can also help, calming it like a baby wrapped in a blanket. It can be as simple as wrapping the dog in a light blanket or towel. For a snuggler fit, an animal leotard called a sheep suit - typically used on show animals to keep the coat tidy before competition - is an inexpensive option. Shull and Fox recommended an item called an Anxiety Wrap that comes in standard and custom-made versions.

Other things to try include anti-anxiety medications, either alone or in combination. It's becoming increasingly common for veterinarians to prescribe the generic version of drugs such as Xanax or Prozac for anxious dogs.

The natural herb valerian - the herbal form of Valium - can also be effective, Fox said.

"The trouble is that it takes a good 20 minutes before it has effect, so you're going to be doping your animal before the big storm comes," Fox added.

Other tips:

- 🔊 Turn up the television or stereo to try to mute the sound of thunder.
- 🔊 It may help the dog to be around calm dogs in the household.
- 🔊 Don't scold the dog or discipline it when it's anxious.
- 🔊 Let the dog stay close to you, but don't coddle it.
- 🔊 Try to distract the dog with a fun activity and/or tasty treat, perhaps starting in overcast weather and gradually moving on to mild storms and then more severe storms, to get the dog to associate the weather with something good.

[Back to Contents List](#)



## The Weird & the Wonderful

### Dog defends injured owner from cougars for two days

An 89-year-old man spent two days in the woods after crashing his four wheeler, hurt and alone in the woods with only his dog.

His survival is amazing enough, but the man says he was also threatened by cougars.

Sue Schofield's uncle Raymond Orr was riding on his property earlier this week when he hit a log and crashed. The accident left him with several broken bones, stranded in the cold and rain for two days before being found by family members.

"He had some sticks in his hands and he was trying to pull himself along," said Orr's niece Sue Schofield.

It gets worse. Orr told rescuers his black Labrador retriever, Jake, had to save him from cougars.

"He did tell the paramedics the cougars had appeared and he had seen them out of the corner of his eyes and basically the dog fended them off," Schofield said.



Hard to believe until paramedics took a look around. "One of the firefighters who is actually a pretty avid hunter said he saw quite a bit of cougar tracks in the area, right around the location of the patient," said Schofield.

The family is thankful Jake was there to save Orr, but they're also impressed with the 89 year old's determination to survive.

"He's a tough man - he's gone through a lot; he was in the war, he was a ranger way back in the wartime, and he knows how to survive. That's all I can say," explained Schofield.

[Back to Contents List](#)