



www.bestdoggietips.com
July/August 2010 Newsletter



Dear friends,

Welcome to our July/August Newsletter from www.bestdoggietips.com.

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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 - Yummy Mince

Ingredients

500g minced beef (you can use lamb, pork or chicken too)

Water to cover

2 cups cooked vegetables (whatever your dog loves – pumpkin, carrot, beans, etc)

1 dessert spoon gravy powder

To Make

Place the raw mince in a saucepan and cover with water. Mix with a fork to incorporate the water into the mince. Add more water and continue until the mince is quite mushy and has a small amount of water on top.

Place on the stovetop and bring to the boil. Cook, uncovered, for 15 – 20 minutes until cooked through.

Add the gravy powder and stir through. Let cook for a few more minutes, then add the cooked vegetables (cut into the right size pieces for your dog).

Let cool and serve with pasta, rice, kibble or just on it's own.

By the way – our cat Bahti loves this too – just not the vegetables!

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Reggie

I received this by email and, after investigation, found out it is an urban myth. But a beautiful story anyway.

They told me the big black Lab's name was Reggie, as I looked at him lying in his pen. The shelter was clean, no-kill, and the people really friendly. I'd only been in the area for six months, but everywhere I went in the small college town, people were welcoming and open.

Everyone waves when you pass them on the street.

But something was still missing as I attempted to settle in to my new life here, and I thought a dog couldn't hurt. Give me someone to talk to. And I had just seen Reggie's advertisement on the local news. The shelter said they had received numerous calls right after, but they said the people who had come down to see him just didn't look like "Lab people," whatever that meant. They must've thought I did.

But at first, I thought the shelter had misjudged me in giving me Reggie and his things, which consisted of a dog pad, bag of toys almost all of which were brand new tennis balls, his dishes, and a sealed letter from his previous owner. See, Reggie and I didn't really hit it off when we got home. We struggled for two weeks (which is how long the shelter told me to give him to adjust to his new home). Maybe it was the fact that I was trying to adjust, too.

Maybe we were too much alike.

For some reason, his stuff (except for the tennis balls - he wouldn't go anywhere without two stuffed in his mouth) got tossed in with all of my other unpacked boxes. I guess I didn't really think he'd need all his old stuff, that I'd get him new things once he settled in. But it became pretty clear pretty soon that he wasn't going to.

I tried the normal commands the shelter told me he knew, ones like "sit" and "stay" and "come" and "heel," and he'd follow them - when he felt like it.

He never really seemed to listen when I called his name - sure, he'd look in my direction after the fourth or fifth time I said it, but then he'd just go back to doing whatever. When I'd ask again, you could almost see him sigh and then grudgingly obey.

This just wasn't going to work. He chewed a couple shoes and some unpacked boxes.

I was a little too stern with him and he resented it, I could tell. The friction got so bad that I couldn't wait for the two weeks to be up, and when it was, I was in full-on search mode for my cell phone amid all of my unpacked stuff. I remembered leaving it on the stack of boxes for the guest room, but I also mumbled, rather cynically, that the "damn dog probably hid it on me".

Finally I found it, but before I could punch up the shelter's number, I also found his pad and other toys from the shelter ... I tossed the pad in Reggie's direction and he snuffed it and wagged, some of the most enthusiasm I'd seen since bringing him home. But then I called, "Hey, Reggie, you like

that? Come here and I'll give you a treat". Instead, he sort of glanced in my direction - maybe "glared" is more accurate - and then gave a discontented sigh and flopped down with his back to me.

Well, that's not going to do it either, I thought. And I punched the shelter phone number.

But I hung up when I saw the sealed envelope. I had completely forgotten about that, too.

"Okay, Reggie", I said out loud, "let's see if your previous owner has any advice."

To Whoever Gets My Dog:

Well, I can't say that I'm happy you're reading this, a letter I told the shelter could only be opened by Reggie's new owner. I'm not even happy writing it. If you're reading this, it means I just got back from my last car ride with my Lab after dropping him off at the shelter.

He knew something was different. I have packed up his pad and toys before and set them by the back door before a trip, but this time... it's like he knew something was wrong.

And something is wrong...which is why I have to try to make it right.

So let me tell you about my Lab in the hopes that it will help you bond with him and he with you.

First, he loves tennis balls. The more the merrier. Sometimes I think he's part squirrel the way he hordes them. He usually always has two in his mouth, and he tries to get a third in there. Hasn't done it yet. Doesn't matter where you throw them, he'll bound after it, so be careful - really - don't do it by any roads. I made that mistake once, and it almost cost him dearly.

Next, commands. Maybe the shelter staff already told you, but I'll go over them again: Reggie knows the obvious ones - "sit", "stay", "come", "heel".

He knows hand signals: "back" to turn around and go back when you put your hand straight up; and "over" if you put your hand out right or left. "Shake" for shaking water off, and "paw" for a high-five. He does "down" when he feels like lying down - I bet you could work on that with him some more. He knows "ball" and "food" and "bone" and "treat" like nobody's business.

I trained Reggie with small food treats. Nothing opens his ears like little pieces of hot dog.

Feeding schedule: twice a day, once about seven in the morning, and again at six in the evening. Regular store-bought stuff; the shelter has the brand.

He's up on his shots. Call the clinic on 9th Street and update his info with yours; they'll make sure to send you reminders for when he's due. Be forewarned: Reggie hates the vet. Good luck getting him in the car. I don't know how he knows when it's time to go to the vet, but he knows.

Finally, give him some time. I've never been married, so it's only been Reggie and me for his whole life. He's gone everywhere with me, so please include him on your daily car rides if you can. He sits well in the backseat, and he doesn't bark or complain. He just loves to be around people, and me

most especially. Which means that this transition is going to be hard, with him going to live with someone new.

And that's why I need to share one more bit of info with you....

His name's not Reggie. I don't know what made me do it, but when I dropped him off at the shelter, I told them his name was Reggie.

He's a smart dog, he'll get used to it and will respond to it, of that I have no doubt. But I just couldn't bear to give them his real name. For me to do that, it seemed so final, that handing him over to the shelter was as good as me admitting that I'd never see him again. And if I end up coming back, getting him, and tearing up this letter, it's me and everything's fine. But if someone else is reading it, well ... well it means that his new owner should know his real name. It'll help you bond with him. Who knows, maybe you'll even notice a change in his demeanor if he's been giving you problems.

His real name is "Tank". Because that is what I drive.

Again, if you're reading this and you're from the area, maybe my name has been on the news. I told the shelter that they couldn't make "Reggie" available for adoption until they received word from my company commander. See, my parents are gone, I have no siblings, no one I could've left Tank with ... and it was my only real request of the Army upon my deployment to Iraq, that they make one phone....call the shelter ... in the "event" ... to tell them that Tank could be put up for adoption. Luckily, my colonel is a dog guy, too, and he knew where my platoon was headed. He said he'd do it personally. And if you're reading this, then he made good on his word.

Well, this letter is getting downright depressing, even though, frankly, I'm just writing it for my dog. I couldn't imagine if I was writing it for a wife and kids and family ... but still, Tank has been my family for the last six years, almost as long as the Army has been my family.

And now I hope and pray that you make him part of your family and that he will adjust and come to love you the same way he loved me.

That unconditional love from a dog is what I take with me to Iraq as an inspiration to do something selfless, to protect innocent people from those who would do terrible things ... and to keep those terrible people from coming over here. If I have to give up Tank in order to do it, I am glad to have done so. He is my example of service and of love. I hope I honoured him by my service to my country and comrades.

All right, that's enough. I deploy this evening and have to drop this letter off at the shelter. I don't think I'll say another good-bye to Tank, though. I cried too much the first time. Maybe I'll peek in on him and see if he finally got that third tennis ball in his mouth.

Good luck with Tank. Give him a good home, and give him an extra kiss goodnight - every night - from me.

Thank you,

Paul Mallory

I folded the letter and slipped it back in the envelope. Sure I had heard of Paul Mallory, everyone in town knew him, even new people like me. Local kid, killed in Iraq a few months ago and posthumously earning the Silver Star when he gave his life to save three buddies.

Flags had been at half-mast all summer.

I leaned forward in my chair and rested my elbows on my knees, staring at the dog. "Hey, Tank", I said quietly. The dog's head whipped up, his ears cocked and his eyes bright.

"C'mere boy".

He was instantly on his feet, his nails clicking on the hardwood floor. He sat in front of me, his head tilted, searching for the name he hadn't heard in months.

"Tank", I whispered. His tail swished.

I kept whispering his name, over and over, and each time, his ears lowered, his eyes softened, and his posture relaxed as a wave of contentment just seemed to flood him. I stroked his ears, rubbed his shoulders, buried my face into his scruff and hugged him.

"It's me now, Tank, just you and me. Your old pal gave you to me". Tank reached up and licked my cheek. "So whatdaya say we play some ball?"

His ears perked again.

"Yeah? Ball? You like that? Ball?"

Tank tore from my hands and disappeared in the next room. And when he came back, he had three tennis balls in his mouth.

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Top Ten Pet Poisons

With various dangers lurking in corners and cabinets, the home can be a minefield of poisons for our pets. In 2009, the ASPCA's Animal Poison Control Center (APCC) in Urbana, IL, handled more than 140,000 cases of pets exposed to toxic substances, many of which included everyday household products. Don't leave it up to Fido or Fluffy to keep themselves safe. Below is a list of the top 10 pet poisons that affected our furry friends in 2009.

Human Medications

For several years, human medications have been number one on the ASPCA's list of common hazards, and 2009 was no exception. Last year, the ASPCA managed 45,816 calls involving prescription and over-the-counter drugs such as painkillers, cold medications, antidepressants and dietary supplements. Pets often snatch pill vials from counters and nightstands or gobble up medications accidentally dropped on the floor, so it's essential to keep meds tucked away in hard-to-reach cabinets.

Insecticides

In our effort to battle home invasions by unwelcome pests, we often unwittingly put our furry friends at risk. In 2009, our toxicologists fielded 29,020 calls related to insecticides. One of the most common incidents involved the misuse of flea and tick products—such as applying the wrong topical treatment to the wrong species. Thus, it's always important to talk to your pet's veterinarian before beginning any flea and tick control program.

People Food

People food like grapes, raisins, avocado and products containing xylitol, like gum, can seriously disable our furry friends, and accounted for more than 17,453 cases in 2009. One of the worst offenders—chocolate—contains large amounts of methylxanthines, which, if ingested in significant amounts, can cause vomiting, diarrhea, panting, excessive thirst, urination, hyperactivity, and in severe cases, abnormal heart rhythm, tremors and seizures.

Plants

Common houseplants were the subject of 7,858 calls to APCC in 2009. Varieties such as azalea, rhododendron, sago palm, lilies, kalanchoe and schefflera are often found in homes and can be harmful to pets. Lilies are especially toxic to cats, and can cause life-threatening kidney failure even in small amounts (see more info at the end of this article).

Veterinary Medications

Even though veterinary medications are intended for pets, they're often misapplied or improperly dispensed by well-meaning pet parents. In 2009, the ASPCA managed 7,680 cases involving animal-related preparations such as non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs, heartworm preventatives, dewormers, antibiotics, vaccines and nutritional supplements.

Rodenticides

Last year, the ASPCA received 6,639 calls about pets who had accidentally ingested rat and mouse poisons. Many baits used to attract rodents contain inactive ingredients that are attractive to pets as well. Depending on the type of rodenticide, ingestions can lead to potentially life-threatening problems for pets including bleeding, seizures or kidney damage.

Household Cleaners

Everybody knows that household cleaning supplies can be toxic to adults and children, but few take precautions to protect their pets from common agents such as bleaches, detergents and disinfectants. Last year, the ASPCA received 4,143 calls related to household cleaners. These products, when inhaled by our furry friends, can cause serious gastrointestinal distress and irritation to the respiratory tract.

Heavy Metals

It's not too much loud music that constitutes our next pet poison offender. Instead, it's heavy metals such as lead, zinc and mercury, which accounted for 3,304 cases of pet poisonings in 2009. Lead is especially pernicious, and pets are exposed to it through many sources, including consumer products, paint chips, linoleum, and lead dust produced when surfaces in older homes are scraped or sanded.

Garden Products

It may keep your grass green, but certain types of fertilizer and garden products can cause problems for outdoor cats and dogs. Last year, the ASPCA fielded 2,329 calls related to fertilizer exposure, which can cause severe gastric upset and possibly gastrointestinal obstruction.

Chemical Hazards

In 2009, the ASPCA handled approximately 2,175 cases of pet exposure to chemical hazards. A category on the rise, chemical hazards—found in ethylene glycol antifreeze, paint thinner, drain cleaners and pool/spa chemicals—form a substantial danger to pets. Substances in this group can cause gastrointestinal upset, depression, respiratory difficulties and chemical burns.

Prevention is really key to avoiding accidental exposure, but if you suspect your pet has ingested something toxic, please contact your veterinarian

Most Dangerous Plants

Lilies

Members of the *Lilium* spp. are considered to be highly toxic to cats. While the poisonous component has not yet been identified, it is clear that with even ingestions of very small amounts of the plant, severe kidney damage could result.



Marijuana

Ingestion of *Cannabis sativa* by companion animals can result in depression of the central nervous system and incoordination, as well as vomiting, diarrhea, drooling, increased heart rate, and even seizures and coma.

Sago Palm

All parts of *Cycas Revoluta* are poisonous, but the seeds or “nuts” contain the largest amount of toxin. The ingestion of just one or two seeds can result in very serious effects, which include vomiting, diarrhea, depression, seizures and liver failure.



Tulip/Narcissus bulbs

The bulb portions of *Tulipa/Narcissus* spp. contain toxins that can cause intense gastrointestinal irritation, drooling, loss of appetite, depression of the central nervous system, convulsions and cardiac abnormalities.

Azalea/Rhododendron

Members of the *Rhododendron* spp. contain substances known as grayantoxins, which can produce vomiting, drooling, diarrhea, weakness and depression of the central nervous system in animals. Severe azalea poisoning could ultimately lead to coma and death from cardiovascular collapse.



Oleander



All parts of *Nerium oleander* are considered to be toxic, as they contain cardiac glycosides that have the potential to cause serious effects—including gastrointestinal tract irritation, abnormal heart function, hypothermia and even death.

Castor Bean

The poisonous principle in *Ricinus communis* is ricin, a highly toxic protein that can produce severe abdominal pain, drooling, vomiting, diarrhea, excessive thirst, weakness and loss of appetite. Severe cases of poisoning can result in dehydration, muscle twitching, tremors, seizures, coma and death.



Cyclamen

Cyclamen species contain cyclamine, but the highest concentration of this toxic component is typically located in the root portion of the plant. If consumed, Cyclamen can produce significant gastrointestinal irritation, including intense vomiting. Fatalities have also been reported in some cases.

Kalanchoe

This plant contains components that can produce gastrointestinal irritation, as well as those that are toxic to the heart, and can seriously affect cardiac rhythm and rate.



Yew

Taxus spp. contains a toxic component known as taxine, which causes central nervous system effects such as trembling, incoordination, and difficulty breathing. It can also cause significant gastrointestinal irritation and cardiac failure, which can result in death.

Amaryllis

Common garden plants popular around Easter, Amaryllis species contain toxins that can cause vomiting, depression, diarrhea, abdominal pain, hypersalivation, anorexia and tremors.



Autumn Crocus

Ingestion of *Colchicum autumnale* by pets can result in oral irritation, bloody vomiting, diarrhea, shock, multi-organ damage and bone marrow suppression.

Chrysanthemum

These popular blooms are part of the Compositae family, which contain pyrethrins that may produce gastrointestinal upset, including drooling, vomiting and diarrhea, if eaten. In certain cases depression and loss of coordination may also develop if enough of any part of the plant is consumed.



English Ivy

Also called branching ivy, glacier ivy, needlepoint ivy, sweetheart ivy and California ivy, *Hedera helix* contains triterpenoid saponins that, should pets ingest, can result in vomiting, abdominal pain, hypersalivation and

diarrhea.

Peace Lily (AKA Mauna Loa Peace Lily)



Spathiphyllum contains calcium oxalate crystals that can cause oral irritation, excessive drooling, vomiting, difficulty in swallowing and intense burning and irritation of the mouth, lips and tongue in pets who ingest.



Pothos

Pothos (both Scindapsus and Epipremnum) belongs to the Araceae family. If chewed or ingested, this popular household plant can cause significant mechanical irritation and swelling of the oral tissues and other parts of the gastrointestinal tract.

Schefflera

Schefflera and Brassia actinophylla contain calcium oxalate crystals that can cause oral irritation, excessive drooling, vomiting, difficulty in swallowing and intense burning and irritation of the mouth, lips and tongue in pets who ingest.



For more information about poisons visit the ASPCA website at www.asPCA.org.

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Is It Time to Revisit Alpha Dog

[By Dr Stanley Coren as published in his blog on Psychology Today](#)

It seems like every discussion of dog obedience and dog behavioural problems eventually turns to the issue of dominance. Dog owners are told that they must be "the leader of the pack" and the "alpha dog in your own home." One reason why this issue has become so salient again has to do with the current popularity of Cesar Millan, who calls himself "The Dog Whisperer," and has popularized the use of forceful methods to exert dominance over unruly dogs.

Millan's methods are controversial among most trained dog behaviourists and researchers. To begin with, his use of the title "dog whisperer" seems odd, since it is an adaptation from the term "horse whisperer" that was first used to describe people like Willis J. Powell and Monty Roberts. They were called whisperers because they abandoned the use of force which was the common way of dealing with difficult and aggressive horses and substituted much gentler and supportive methods.

Millan's techniques have caused professionals, such as Jean Donaldson, director of the SPCA Academy for Dog Trainers in San Francisco, to comment that: "A profession that has been making steady gains in its professionalism, technical sophistication and humane standards has been greatly set back. ... To co-opt a word like 'whispering' for arcane, violent and technically unsound practice is unconscionable." She was sufficiently upset that, with the collaboration of Ian Dunbar, who is a well respected dog behaviourist and has a degree in veterinary medicine as well as a PhD in psychology, they produced a DVD titled Fighting Dominance in a Dog Whispering World, which specifically attacks the methods used by Millan in his popular TV show.

However, rather than addressing the issue of Cesar Millan and his manner of training, there is a more fundamental issue that should be looked at, namely, is the concept of canine dominance--specifically the idea of the alpha dog who is leader of the pack--valid?

The original description of the basic difference between dominance and submission in dogs comes from Konrad Lorenz in his book, "King Solomon's Ring," (1949). Lorenz, who was a Nobel Prize winning ethologist and animal behaviorist, based this idea on observations of his own dogs. If one dog appeared to be more aggressive and powerful (dominant) the other dog would acknowledge this by giving ground or rolling on its back (submission). Lorenz felt that humans also had dominance relationships with dogs, since if he struck or threatened one of his dogs they acted similarly submissively toward him.

The thinking of scientists usually reflects the culture and the beliefs of the historical era and the place that they live in. Lorenz was born in Austria in 1903. His thinking about dogs was doubtless influenced by the dog training procedures common at that time, most of which had been developed by the German military for teaching service dogs. The methods used to train dogs reflected the attitudes of the military at the time and were based upon strict discipline supported by force if necessary. Certain tools that were developed for training reflect this attitude, such as a leash that was braided and made rigid at the loop end so that it could be turned around and used as a whip if the dog failed to obey.

Colonel Konrad Most summarized that Germanic philosophy of training when he wrote, "In the absence of compulsion neither human education nor canine training is feasible. Even the most soft hearted dog-owner cannot get on terms with his idolized favorite without some form of compulsion." In other words, one should use force to establish dominance and then use that dominance to control the animal's behavior.

The first research on wolf behaviors seemed to support the idea of a rigid, military-like canine social hierarchy, usually supported by physical confrontations which ultimately established a leader--the "alpha wolf"--who maintains his leadership through force and intimidation. Unfortunately, later research would show that this is an artificial and erroneous view of canine social organization.

David L. Mech, who is now a Senior Research Scientist for the U.S. Department of the Interior, was one of the first people to study wolf behavior in the wild. In his 1970 book, he was influenced by earlier ideas, including those of Lorenz, and referred to the pack leader as the "alpha wolf." Looking back 40 years later he has come to doubt the usefulness of this concept. He now maintains that the label is wrong because it implies that the wolves fought to determine dominance.

In actuality, when they mature, wolves leave their original pack to mate and produce offspring which then become the rest of their new pack. Dominance arises simply in the same way that parents naturally control the behavior of their offspring in humans, at least while they are living with the family. As in human families, the parents loosely set the rules, and the kids sort things out among themselves. Because of this state of affairs, rather than using the label "alpha" Mech prefers to refer to the "breeding" male or female in the pack or simply the mother or father wolf. The idea of the alpha only seems to be valid in artificial packs, where unrelated individuals are put together, as in captivity, or where may be multiple breeding pairs. In such "unnatural" social groupings, animals will contest for leadership and an alpha wolf will emerge.

Of course wolves are not dogs, so let's look at a recent (2010) piece of research by Roberto Bonanni of the University of Parma and his associates. They looked at free-ranging packs of dogs in Italy and found that leadership was a very fluid thing. For example, in one pack, which had 27 members, there were 6 dogs that habitually took turns leading the pack, but at least half of the adult dogs were leaders, at least some of the time. The dogs that were usually found leading the pack tended to be the older, more experienced dogs, but not necessarily the most dominant. The pack seems to allow leadership to dogs, who at particular times seem to be most likely to contribute to the welfare of the pack through knowledge that can access the resources they require.

The reason that all of this is important is that it tells us, (regardless of concerns about the amount of force used in training) that Cesar Millan's technique, and that of many other trainers who use a military-like concept of canine social hierarchy as the basis of dog training and problem solving, is based on a false premise. It is a holdover from German military service dog training at the turn of the last century, and generalization from outdated wolf research based on artificial packs of captive wolves.

Perhaps it is time to revise our dog training and obedience concepts to something along the ideas proposed by advocates of Positive Training. In that view, controlling the dog's behavior is more a matter of controlling the things that a dog needs and wants, such as food and social interaction, rather than applying force to achieve what the science suggests is an unnatural dominance over the

dog. If you manage and dispense important resources, the dog will respond to you out of self interest. So this approach to behavior modification has the same effect as forcefully imposed dominance in controlling the dog's behavior. However, instead of dominance based on physical power and threats it is more similar to establishing status. One can agree to respond to controls imposed by someone of higher status, but this is done, not out of fear, but out of respect and in anticipation of the rewards that one can expect by doing so.

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Do Cats & Dogs Really Dream?

How many pet owners have gotten a chuckle out of watching their dog sleep while its paws race frenetically in place?

Many figured that Rover was romping somewhere in dreamland, and scientists say they were right: Pets do dream while sleeping.

As dogs and cats doze, images of past events replay in their minds much the same way humans recall experiences while dreaming, said Matthew Wilson of MIT's Picower Institute for Learning and Memory in Cambridge, Mass. That's because the hippocampus, a part of the brain involved in memory, is basically wired the same way in virtually all vertebrates and mammals, he said.

"If you compared a hippocampus in a rat to a dog; in a cat to a human, they contain all of the same pieces," said Wilson, an associate professor of brain and cognitive sciences.

Like people, pets go through multiple stages of sleep, from periods of slow wave sleep to REM (rapid eye movement), where most dreaming occurs.

"From the minute your head hits the pillow and you're out, the dreaming process begins," he said.

Non-REM dreams consist of quick snapshots of things usually done that day. During the deeper sleep state of REM, dreams last much longer and tap into a vast pool of past experiences drawn from weeks, months, even years in the past.

REM occurs approximately every 90 minutes in people, and every 25 minutes in cats.

In dogs, research shows the frequency and length of dreams is linked to their physical size, said psychologist Stanley Coren, author of several books, including "How Dogs Think: Understanding the Canine Mind."

For example, he said, mastiffs and Great Danes might dream every 45 minutes for about five minutes, compared to their smaller canine cousins that enter a dream state every 10 minutes with episodes lasting less than 60 seconds.

Owners can tell if their dozing dog or feline is dreaming by looking for these clues: whisker twitching, paw tremors, irregular breathing and — in dogs — occasional high-pitched yips.

But what do our pets dream about? Researchers believe they know the answer. Older studies, done decades ago in cats, involved temporarily releasing the suppression of motor activity that happens during REM sleep so they'd act out their dreams.

What researchers witnessed is sleepwalking cats doing things they'd normally do while awake — walking, swatting their forepaws, even pouncing on imaginary prey.

Similar research showed the same held true for dogs.

"Pointers point at dream birds, and Dobermans growl at dream burglars," Coren said.

Those experiments were not a demonstration of actual dreaming, said MIT's Wilson, but do suggest that in REM sleep the brain is functioning the same way it behaves during normal wakefulness. As early as 2001, he decided to find out if animals did in fact dream by eavesdropping on the sleeping brain.

Wilson used electrodes to record the brain activity of rats as they ran a circular track and later as they slept. He discovered, by examining more than 40 REM episodes recorded while the rats slept, that the sleeping rodents often appeared to replay images of navigating the track in real time. About 50% of the episodes repeated the unique signature of brain activity created as the animal ran. In fact, because records of the neural signals in both the sleep and waking states were so similar, Wilson said he could reconstruct where the dreaming rats were on the track and whether they were standing still or running.

This human-like ability to dream about actual experiences almost certainly applies to pets, he said.

"My guess is — unless there is something special about rats and humans — that cats and dogs are doing exactly the same thing," he said.

In the scientific community, animals are often thought of as reflex machines, operating by instinct alone. But this view is slowly starting to change, noted Wilson, as new information about dreaming in animals is unearthed.

Coren, the psychologist, agreed. He said that one of his heroes, Charles Darwin, "basically claimed if you can prove that an animal dreams, then, in effect, you can prove that's consciousness. Because after all, what is a dream other than a conscious image?"

Wilson's current work goes beyond analyzing dream content and relates to what's going on inside the brain during wakefulness. Using lab-built devices with an array of electrodes, he's found that rats appear to replay memories while doing normal, everyday activities like nibbling on food or sitting quietly. In other words, he said, they're thinking about the past, and possibly contemplating the future.

"The idea that rats may actually be thinking — just as humans think when they're sitting, appearing not to be doing anything — suggests the full range of cognitive abilities that we have," he said.

Wilson believes his work extends beyond using animal models to explore human memory and cognition. "It really is using animal models to study animal cognition," he said. "Understanding the differences will give us a better understanding of where we stand in the hierarchy of organisms on the planet."

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Fun Stuff - Jesus is Watching You

Late one night, a burglar broke into a house that he thought was empty. He tiptoed through the living room but suddenly froze in his tracks when he heard a loud voice say, "Jesus is watching you."

Silence returned to the house, so the burglar crept forward again. "Jesus is watching you", the voice boomed again.

The burglar stopped dead again. He was frightened. Frantically, he looked all around. In a dark corner, he spotted a bird cage and in the cage was a parrot. He asked the parrot, "Was that you who said Jesus is watching me?"

"Yes", said the parrot.

The burglar breathed a sigh of relief, then he asked the parrot, "What's your name?"

"Clarence", said the bird.

"That's a dumb name for a parrot", sneered the burglar. "What idiot named you Clarence?"

The parrot said, "The same idiot who named the Rottweiler Jesus."

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The Weird & the Wonderful

After missing for 13 years, Simba the dog returns to S.C. family



Terry and Blaine Horne had to go to a church meeting 13 years ago this summer on a beautiful hot evening.

"It was still daylight, and we could hear Simba out in the back, running and howling like Husky dogs howl", Terry said. "Huskies, they don't bark. It is more like a howl."

Simba was their beautiful, less than a year old, red-coated Siberian Husky with the ice-blue eyes.

Blaine paid \$100 for Simba when the dog was just a pup.

That night, the Hornes left their Richburg home in rural Chester County and went to church.

They came home, and Simba, with a tag around his neck that identified him as having shots at a certain place, with an ID number, was gone.

"Vanished", said Blaine Horne.

Heartbroken, the Hornes looked all over for Simba. They checked with neighbours, to no avail. Days, weeks, they looked.

"Just gone", said Terry's son, Chip. "I had a husky once that was stolen, so we figured somebody grabbed him."

Blaine said his wife was inconsolable and never gave up hope.

"She kept thinking somebody would find him", Blaine said.

Terry said sometimes, late at night, she would think to herself, "Keep looking. Simba will turn up."

About a year ago, the Hornes got another dog, a little Shi-Tzu named Bebe. Every morning, Bebe had to go outside to do what dogs do outside.

About three weeks ago, on a Tuesday morning, Blaine let Bebe out on the way to work at his auto body shop behind his home. A few minutes later, Terry called Bebe to come in.

She looked outside, and there in the grass, rolling in the morning dew, was the skinniest, sorriest looking excuse for a dog that might have once been red anybody ever saw.

Terry's throat constricted.

"The dog was limping, and hungry and thirsty, so I gave it water and called Blaine to ask if I should feed it, and I asked him, 'Do you think it could be Simba?'" Terry recalled.

Blaine said he almost dropped the phone and came rushing out to see for himself.

This dog, clearly old, back leg limping, close to skin and bones and covered with fleas, walked right up on the deck and sat in its old spot. "Just like Simba used to", Blaine said.

The dog then walked to the carport, circled a few times, and lay down. "Just like Simba used to", Terry said.

"It made me think he was penned up all these years, somewhere, and just couldn't get home. Then he got loose, or somebody let him loose, and he just came home like nothing happened."

The Hornes took the dog to a veterinarian, who said it was possible that the dog was Simba. It was about the same age, but there was no identification. The dog was given shots and wormed, and it came back to the Horne house.

The dog immediately took a shine to Sunni, the Horne's granddaughter, who lives next door. The two have been inseparable ever since. "I think it is Simba", said Sunni. "I play with him and pet on him. It is like he knows me."

Even though Sunni wasn't even born when Simba vanished 13 years ago.

Blaine Horne says it sure could be Simba, but Terry Horne says there is no doubt. Their daughter, a fourth-grade teacher at Westminster Catawba Christian School in Rock Hill, polled her class. Each kid said it was Simba.

"A miracle", Terry Horne said. "Like the movies. 'Homeward Bound,' think it was. The dog comes home."

So now most afternoons Simba waits for Sunni to get home from school. He sits in a dirt patch and on the deck and in the carport, just like the old days. Then Simba follows Sunni everywhere she goes. When it rains, Simba rolls in the grass like Simba did 13 years ago. Is it the same dog that vanished 13 years ago? "If you believe it, it is Simba", said 10-year-old Sunni. "I say so. I believe. This is Simba."

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