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a **Petplan** magazine



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- + paw-pular competitive dog sports
- + getting a leg up on cruciate disease with morris animal foundation



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training to run with rover

tongue-tied

why pets lick

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the lickety fit issue 2015 no.1 issue 23



amanda jones

dog portraits nationwide

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Zoe, German Shepherd | Photographed in Los Angeles, CA

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This issue of *fetch!* is dedicated to the memory of Moody van Lanschot. He will be greatly missed, and remembered always.

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on the cover:

3-year-old miniature australian shepherd, rango, sits pretty in between jumps for joy on his favorite fitness tool, the trampoline! (photographed by peter olson)



read *fetch!* on your smart phone!



barks features

get in the game

competitive sports for your superdog



58

tandem toning

tips for getting fit with your furry friend



44



roll over regulars

- 6 welcome
- 8 letters to the editor
- 10 news + contests
- 17 tails of the unexpected
pets who took a licking + came out on top
- 33 petplanthropy news
- 36 we ♥ this...
fun finds to keep furry friends fit
- 38 paw clicks
- 64 paws for reflection



in this issue

2015 | no. 1 | issue 23 | the lickety fit issue

knee deep

diving into new therapies for ligament disease



39

wag expert advice

- 12 health tips**
a lick of sense from dr. kim smyth
- 22 training 123s**
shape up for the race with rover
- 23 ruff guide**
investigating ivdd



★ 48 ★



whittling waistlines

the skinny on fighting fat safely



itching to lick

decoding the causes of obsessive licking

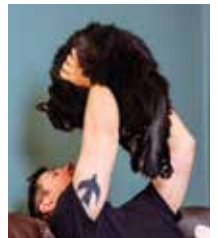
28



- 34 breed health profile**
envisioning the vizsla
- 46 ask our experts**
exercise tips and a health fix
- 56 chow down**
what to feed before and after a workout

sniff interviews & numbers

- 54 pet stats**
fetching pet facts
- 60 pet people**
"top chef" top dog nick elmi



contributors to this issue

dr. pippa elliott, bvms, mrcvs, graduated from the University of Glasgow in 1987. Over her 27-year career in companion animal practice, Dr. Elliott's patients have included four-leggers of all shapes and sizes, ranging from an obese bearded dragon and hatchling tortoises to Armed Forces sniffer dogs and Hearing Dogs for Deaf People. Dr. Elliott has a special interest in social attitudes toward animals and the role pets play in our lives, both now and throughout history. She lives near London, England, and is housekeeping staff to five cats, two guinea pigs, two sons, one bearded dragon and a husband (not listed in order of importance!).



dr. jules benson, bvsc, mrcvs, graduated from the University of Liverpool School of Veterinary Science before moving to the United States in 2004 to work in a Bucks County, PA, small animal practice. He joined Petplan in 2008, and as Chief Veterinary Medical Officer, he is regularly consulted by a broad range of media outlets to provide pet health advice to pet parents nationwide. He serves on the Board of Trustees for the Pennsylvania Veterinary Medical Association (PVMA) and

still finds time to practice veterinary medicine at home, where he is both dad and vet to one dog, four cats, three rats, one rabbit and a leopard gecko.



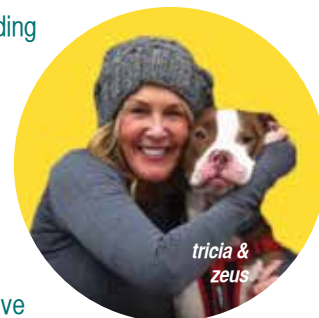
dr. kim smyth, dvm, is a 2004 graduate of the University of Georgia College of Veterinary Medicine. Dr. Smyth first began practicing veterinary medicine in a small animal clinic close to Philadelphia, PA.

Possessing a knack for giving great pet health advice, Dr. Smyth has authored hundreds of pet health essays and is a contributing expert on Petplan's Vets for Pets blog. Dr. Smyth and her husband, Matt, have two sons, Wyatt and Cooper, and two crazy cats, Joe and Charlie.

heidi jeter trained as a journalist at Northwestern University's Medill School of Journalism, and has worked as a writer and editor since 1995. An avid animal lover, she was the director of communications for Morris Animal Foundation, a nonprofit organization that funds veterinary science, for 10 years. She became a freelance writer and editor in 2013, and she continues to produce content on the foundation's behalf. She lives in Milwaukee, WI, with her husband, daughter and their sweet-natured tabby, Pandora, who at 18 years of age still runs around like a kitten.

tricia montgomery's experience shedding 130 lbs. alongside her dog, Louie (who also lost weight!), led her to develop K9 Fit Club, a nationwide program of fitness, wellness and weight loss for people and their dogs. With this online program for human/canine fitness certification, pet-loving fitness enthusiasts can begin a career to improve the wellness of pets and people alike.

Montgomery is the former executive director and public education director for the Chicago Veterinary Medical Association and shares her life with Zeus, K9 Fit Club's "poster dog!"



dr. ernie ward, dvm, is a 1992 graduate of the University of Georgia College of Veterinary Medicine. In 2005, he founded the Association for Pet Obesity Prevention (APOP) to help raise awareness on the dangers of excess weight in dogs and cats. Dr. Ward is a frequent author and lecturer on pet health and is a member of the *Veterinary Economics* Editorial Advisory Board. He has been featured on Animal Planet and has appeared on numerous other television and radio talk shows and newscasts around the country.

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LICKETY FIT (lik ə ti fit) v.: the bounce in the step of furry friends whose eyes are bright, coats are shiny and hearts are healthy

There's a popular saying that reminds us, "Fit" is not a destination, it's a way of life." Being healthy requires taking care of our bodies, our minds and our relationships — a holistic approach to living, if you will.

The same holds true for pets. The idea of caring for the whole pet is touted by top veterinarians as the means for achieving true wellness, and it is in that spirit that we created this, our "Lickety Fit" issue.

Our pets' bodies are designed to take a licking and keep on ticking — but when pets pack on pounds, their natural defenses against illness and injury are compromised. In the following pages, we give you the skinny on helping pets lose weight safely ("A Weighty Matter," page 48). We also dish tips for exercising with pets ("Getting Fit with Furry Friends," page 44), serve up an easy running plan to help you go from saunter to sprint together (Training 123s, page 22) and cook up low-calorie recipes for fueling furry friends (Chow Down, page 56).

As many active people will tell you, best friends make great workout buddies — who else is excited to go out for a walk before the sun comes up? For the overachieving Retriever, check out our overview of "pup-ular" competitive dog sports to try ("Dog Sports," page 58), and pause to read up on cutting-edge treatments helping pets get back on four feet after an athletic injury ("Stemming the Tide," page 39). Of course, not every companion is cut out for tough workouts. Before you push your furry friend to feel the burn, read what our experts say about exercising pets with special needs (Health Tips, page 12).

Turning inward to pets' minds, we tackle the who, what and why behind pets who become obsessed with licking ("The Language of Licks," page 28). We also dive into the minds of felines, exploring why some kitties seem fixed at the water dish, and how an ambitious (or brave?) cat parent can start training their furry love to walk on a leash (Ask Our Experts, page 46).

Finally, we sat down with recent *Top Chef* winner Nick Elmi — who knows a thing or two about licking the competition — to chat about being dad to his 13-year-old cat, Max, running a top-rated restaurant and helping his "pet" cause, Philadelphia Animal Welfare Society (PAWS) (Pet Person, page 60).

We hope this issue inspires you to shake a leg with your four-legged friends and that everyone in your family enjoys good food, good health and a year full of fun and fitness together!

'Til next time,

Chris, Natasha
& Montgomery



who's proud
of you?



(we are!)

Petplan congratulates the 2015 Veterinary Awards Winners:

Practice of the Year Coral Springs Animal Hospital, Coral Springs, FL

Veterinarian of the Year Dr. Tracey Jensen, DAVBT (C/F),
Wellington Veterinary Clinic PC, Wellington, CO

Veterinary Technician of the Year Monique Feyrecilde, LVT, VTS (Behavior),
Mercer Island Veterinary Clinic, Mercer Island, WA

Practice Manager of the Year Gretchen Dillon-Sauer, CVPM,
South Carolina Veterinary Specialists and Emergency Care, Columbia, SC

Receptionist of the Year Bob Gauthier, Red Mountain Animal Hospital, Mesa, AZ

Pet Parent of the Year Lindsay Condefer, Street Tails Animal Rescue, Philadelphia, PA

Now accepting Veterinary Awards submissions for 2016 at GoPetplan.com/VetAwards





letters to the editor



word of mouth



At our cats' annual checkup, we found out several of our brood had developed periodontal disease. That following weekend, we were trying to decide who to get dentals for first when *fetch!* magazine arrived. Inside was an article on feline odontoclastic resorptive lesions. It talked about how painful they were and other helpful information. That article helped us prioritize our cats' dental issues. Thank you!

kathy n. – georgia

editors' response: *Kathy, glad the info helped you get to the root of your kitties' tooth troubles! For more salivating tips on feline health, check out page 13.*

family matters

I just wanted to say thank you for all the work you have done on Chester's and my behalf. You turn claims around so quickly. Having a 14-year-old dog is not easy, and to know I can count on Petplan has been a godsend. Thank you!

laura b. – virginia

editors' response: *We love being able to provide you and Chester peace of mind, Laura! We hope the tips on page 12 help keep Chester healthy for many years to come!*

from scratch

I would like to make the sweet potato cookies you shared ("Toy" issue) for my dog. Is there a substitute for quinoa flour? It's expensive!

kathy – via email

editors' response: *Good question, Kathy! If the quinoa flour is putting a pinch in your pup's treat budget, oat flour would be a great substitute. For more tasty treats, flip to page 56 for something yummy to eat!*



Got pet health questions, advice or comments to share?

Write to us at: petplantails@gopetplan.com

If *fetch!* prints your letter, you'll get a free \$25 Amex gift card.

fetch! tweets

@nprscottsimon @Petplan Thank you. Had a cancer tumor (& toes) removed from front paw. Has some "spots" treat topically and rear legs. Glad we're with you!

@RConnoprice According to my @Petplan calendar, today is Squirrel Appreciation Day. Monty needs no encouragement, but later I might help him mark the day.

@laviniaimiami No insurance would have been there for me and Lyla during her sarcoma surgery, radiation therapy and follow ups like @Petplan has. They ROCK



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•Source: Among veterinarian brands. Survey conducted in July 2012 of small animal veterinarians who recommended oral joint health supplements.

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news + contests

pawprints from the season's hottest pet news



life's too short?

What's your pet's New Year's resolution? If keeping the lid on the treat jar more often is on the list, a new tidbit of research may provide the motivation you need. A lifelong study of 48 Labrador Retrievers found that Labs who were fed 25% less than "normal" lived an average of two years longer than Labs who were fed a standard diet! Additionally, the calorie-restricted dogs developed fewer chronic diseases such as osteoarthritis. A longer, healthier life for your best friend is a pet parent's dream come true! If you wish to explore proper portioning and diet options for your canine, chat with your veterinarian.

from scratch

+ Love running with your four-legged friend but find yourself frequently running after him? You're in luck! Leashes by Iron Doggy™ are designed for pet parents who pound the pavement with their canine pals. The hands-free Runner's Choice leash attaches to a lightweight belt that allows you to easily adjust your dog's position with a quick tug on the bungee, while the shorter SideKick leash keeps your best friend by your side. Petplan is giving away two Runner's Choice leashes and three SideKick leashes to keep your pet in check. For your chance to win, visit GoPetplan.com/IronDoggy and tell us what your dog loves chasing. Winners will be selected on May 22, 2015, and announced in June.



ace in a hole

What do you get when a valiant vet and a daring dentist combine forces? An incredible “tail” about a cat who lives to purr another day! Two years ago, Siamese mix Darryl was waiting to be euthanized at Alachua County Humane Society because a hole in his mouth made it tough for him to eat. University of Florida veterinarian, Dr. Julie Levy, called on UF Health Shands Hospital’s dental surgeon, Dr. Fong Wong, who made a metal prosthesis for the roof of Darryl’s mouth. Hours after the ground-breaking operation to insert the prosthesis, the lucky feline began eating again. Darryl is now happy at home with Dr. Levy and three fellow feline siblings to enjoy the rest of his nine lives!



lick and a promise

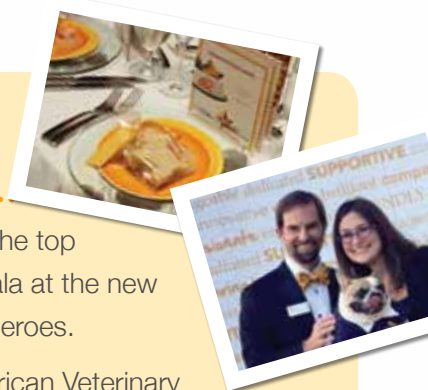
+ If your pet finds pills bitter to swallow, LICKS® Pill-Free® could be the solution! This line of fast-acting supplements can be given to your pet by mouth, in food or on their paw, and promises a 98% absorption rate compared to 10-20% with pills. LICKS for Dogs “Athlete” helps maximize energy and speed up recovery time, and LICKS for Cats “Hairball” moisturizes the skin and helps lessen the occurrence of hairballs. For your chance to win one of five cartons of “Athlete” or one of five cartons of “Hairball,” visit GoPetplan.com/Licks and tell us what your pet loves to lick! Winners will be selected on May 22, 2015, and announced in June.

putting on the dog for top vets

Put your paws together for our pets’ best friends! On January 18, Petplan gathered the top dogs from across North America’s veterinary community for a glamorous black-tie gala at the new Four Seasons Resort Orlando to honor the achievements of outstanding pet health heroes.

Petplan’s fourth annual Veterinary Awards dinner, held in concert with the North American Veterinary Community (NAVC) Conference in Orlando, FL, was emceed by *fetch!* contributor Dr. Ernie Ward and featured a heart-warming and humorous “paws for reflection” speech by Dr. Andy Roark (check out his new YouTube show, “Cone of Shame!”). Over a three-course dinner, nearly 200 guests laughed, cried and cheered for the six winners of this year’s awards.

Learn more about this year’s winners or nominate your own deserving pet health hero at GoPetplan.com/VetAwards. Then click over to Pinterest.com/Petplan to see photos from the glittering gala dinner!





health tips



If a bite of information can keep furry friends fit, we've got a whole mouthful! In this edition's Health Tips, we're wagging our tongues about exercise safety, warding off weight woes and overcoming a couple of inconvenient conditions. Learn how you can keep an indoor kitty active, come to the aid of a waterlogged best friend, take care of lickable lumps and leaky loves and train a pup to trot safely on a treadmill.

by dr. kim smyth

just in the lick of time



Splashing and swimming can be great fun for furry friends, but even expert dog-paddlers need a lifeguard on duty. Pets at play can be overwhelmed by strong currents or accidentally fall into the water, putting them in danger of drowning.

If your pet has a near-drowning experience and recovers, he may seem fine — but the danger isn't necessarily over. He can still succumb to "dry drowning," which occurs

when fluids collect in the lungs (known as pulmonary edema).

The pet breathes in just enough water to irritate the lungs, leading to coughing and breathing difficulties. The result is drowning — hours or even days after your furry friend has dried off.

If your pet has a near-drowning experience, act fast:

- 🐾 Once he's on dry land, lay him on his side, neck extended and head slightly lower than his body to help drain water from his lungs.
- 🐾 If you're safely able to, carefully pull his tongue forward and gently press his side.
- 🐾 If your pet has stopped breathing, start CPR by closing your pet's mouth and covering his nose with your mouth to blow air into his lungs.
- 🐾 Stay with your pet. Near-drowned pets are often disoriented and may risk falling back into the water.

Even if your furry friend seems fine, err on the side of caution and contact your vet or an emergency animal hospital immediately. Monitoring can help ensure your pet emerges from his aquatic adventure unscathed!



fit 'n' frisky felines

Many pet parents have witnessed their kittens effortlessly climbing, pouncing and chasing — it can be hard to get them to sit still! But the more time passes, the more likely it is that naps in the window replace toy hunts.

Less active cats (especially indoor-only cats) are more likely to gain weight, develop health problems or become destructive out of boredom. So how do you light a spark in your sedentary friend? By providing stimulating toys and activities in the safety of your home:

food fun: Kibble-dispensing toys appeal to your cat's hunting instincts more than simply grazing from a bowl. Create your own by cutting holes in a cardboard paper towel roll just large enough to dispense treats or kibble. Seal the ends with tape and let the fun begin!

jump start: Encourage your cat to tone up through climbing and jumping by providing plenty of perches at different heights around your home. A laser pointer could encourage him to take the leap! Provide scratching posts and varied-texture surfaces (cardboard,

wood or rope) so she can flex her muscles and condition her claws.

breath of fresh air: Screened porches and outdoor enclosures allow cats to safely explore the great outdoors while staying safely within sight. Some cats are also surprisingly tolerant of a harness and leash, especially if introduced to them in kittenhood!

With a little paws-on creativity and investment, your indoor cat can stay light on her paws well into her golden years.



licking the lumps

Every once in a while, you might wake up to find that your four-legged friend's been licking a wet patch of fur all night long. The skin looks red and irritated, and then you notice a lump. What on earth could that be?

There are a variety of itchy skin masses that can plague furry friends, but one of the more common types is

a histiocytoma, a fast-growing type of benign lump that can show up literally overnight on a dog's ear flaps, neck, legs or trunk. They are rare in cats, and tend to occur in dogs less than 2 years of age, particularly Great Danes,



Boxers, Labradors and Dachshunds. They can also be very itchy and irritating — hence the constant licking.

At the first sign of a problem, bring your pet to the vet, who will take your pet's age, breed, the mass's location and other factors into consideration. Most histiocytomas resolve on their own, but if the mass doesn't go away or your vet suspects something more sinister like a mast cell tumor or lymphoma, a small needle biopsy may be necessary for diagnosis. Your vet will be able to offer recommendations to help your pet lick his lump for good!

comfortably numb

Paralysis can be a devastating diagnosis for pet parents to hear — but there is good news. While these injuries can be challenging, advances in veterinary care mean they don't have to lessen your pet's quality of life.

Whole-body or partial paralysis can occur for a number of reasons, including spinal damage (which can be caused by trauma or injury), intervertebral disc disease (IVDD), tumors, bone infection or inflammation, blood clots or degenerative myelopathy. Many pets with paralysis have spinal cord damage between the front and rear legs, which affects their back legs. The damage can be temporary or permanent.

Depending on your pet's prognosis, a variety of therapies may be used to keep his quality of life in tip-top condition, including massage, hydrotherapy, cold laser therapy and acupuncture. Many pets are able to enjoy nearly the same freedom as they did before, thanks to pet wheelchairs or carts. (Turn to page 21 to meet one paw-fect example!)

It's easy for pet parents to feel overwhelmed by their pets' condition and unsure of how to care for them. Here are some tips to get started.

taking care of business: Bladder incontinence often accompanies hind-limb paralysis, but you (and your rugs) can rest easy with a little forethought:

🐾 **plan ahead:** Keep your pet on easy-to-clean surfaces. Laying puppy training pads on his bed and other pup-ular nap surfaces will make clean-up a snap.

🐾 **baby me:** Keep unscented baby wipes on hand to prevent skin and urinary tract infections (not to mention unpleasant smells!).

🐾 **diaper duty:** (You read that right!) Like those for two-leggers, doggie diapers allow for easy clean-up and more dignity for your furry friends. They're also ideal for pets in carts, wheelchairs or slings.

pampered pooch: Because of the extra leakage (and possibly a limited ability to clean themselves), some extra grooming will likely be in order.

🐾 **change it up:** Check and change diapers frequently to avoid rashes or skin infections caused by bacteria.

🐾 **rinse, repeat:** Frequent bathing can lead to dry skin, so use moisturizing shampoos and conditioners.

🐾 **blow dry:** When it's too chilly to air-dry, towel your pet off gently, then set a hair dryer on low while you brush through his coat.

There are some other issues that paralyzed pets can face, including urinary tract infections and pressure sores from lying still too long. But most can be prevented with frequent monitoring and good hygiene. Talk to your veterinarian about what to expect and schedule a visit if you notice any signs that something might be wrong.

Caring for a paralyzed pet may take some adjustments — but with a little extra love, time and attention, your furry friend can still enjoy life as part of the family.



tread lightly

When the weather outside is frightful, we tend to hunker down inside where temperatures are more delightful. This can translate to expanding canine waistlines during those cold winter months. But did you know that you can exercise your dog indoors? That old treadmill — yes, the one collecting dust in the corner — could be the answer!

Treadmill training offers several benefits to four-legged friends — obviously, losing weight and staying fit are the two biggies. Additionally, exercise (especially in the face of winter cabin fever) will help your dog's mental fitness, staving off boredom and spending energy that might otherwise be used for destructive or anxiety-driven behaviors.

But how do you get your dog started on the treadmill? Begin by checking in with your veterinarian to make sure your pup is fit for exercise. Many dogs naturally love to run, but doing so on a machine may take some getting used to. Slow and steady is the key:

gearing up: Always use a collar and flat leash for treadmill sessions, so you can have control in case your dog decides to jump off. Most treadmill belts are a good size for small and medium breeds, but larger pets may need a special dog treadmill with a longer belt. Your vet can advise you on proper proportions.

paw-sitive association: If at any point in the lessons your dog becomes scared, stop the training and go back to the last lesson that was comfortable.

Forcing your pet to walk on the treadmill before she is ready can cause a lifelong fear, thwarting winter exercise plans. To avoid accidental injury, never tie your

dog to the treadmill or leave her unattended, no matter what her level of fitness is.

slow and steady: Start by asking your dog to hop up onto the machine while it is off, offering a yummy treat and praise when she does. Then have her hop off — that's it for the first lesson! Once she's comfortable with that, have her stand with you next to the treadmill while you turn it on. Let her see and hear what the machine does before you ask her to walk on it.

away we go: When your dog is ready, have her stand on the machine and then start it at a slow walking pace. Stand beside the treadmill holding the leash, just as you would on a walk outside, or squat in front of it first to encourage her to walk. Treats help too! After about 30 seconds, slowly decelerate and turn off the machine. Have your pup "stay" on the treadmill until it has completely stopped, then jump off.

full speed ahead: Start with 30-second to one-minute sessions and gradually work your way up in time, speed and even incline (within reason!). Walking or jogging sessions that are 10 to 15 minutes are perfect for most dogs, though seasoned athletes could enjoy extended workouts.

With these handy tips, you can help your dog keep the spring in her step without either of you having to brave any adverse weather!





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tails of the **unexpected**

Four stories of furry friends who almost got licked by hard times — but came out on top with a helping paw from Petplan.

words: keith guse • photographs: amanda jones

From health cat-astrophes to tricky knees, health conditions can crop up and surprise otherwise fit furry friends. Luckily, good vet care can turn everything around! On the following pages, you'll meet a litter of kittens on the road to good health, a Samoyed whose sipping hinted at a chronic condition, a Havanese with two very expensive knees and a French Bulldog who's learning to "roll with it."



nikki
9-year-old
samoyed

pet parent
leo stringer

unexpected tail
\$2,970 for treatment of diabetes mellitus

lives in
cedar grove, nj



In Leo's family, 9-year-old Samoyed Nikki is just one of the kids. Born one month apart from the family's youngest daughter, she was raised alongside her human siblings like a furry child. Unfortunately, even the leader of the pack can fall prey to illnesses, which is exactly what happened in April 2014 when Nikki was diagnosed with diabetes.

"She was drinking a lot of water, which led us to the vet," recalls Leo, now tasked with giving Nikki insulin twice a day at home. For a pup that likes to play on her own terms (fetch? yeah right!), Leo was impressed with Nikki's poise — "she stays calm when it's time for her shots," Leo says — and how well her Petplan coverage has paid off. "Having just the one deductible to meet for all her diabetes treatments has been a huge help."

To keep their best friend in top form and her diabetes under control, the family laid off high-calorie treats in favor of lighter fare, and switched Nikki to a metabolic food diet. Since the change, she's lost 25 lbs. — and the wags just keep coming. "She doesn't think she's a dog," smiles Leo. "She thinks she's a kid. And to us, she always will be."



Soft kitties. Warm kitties. Little balls of fur.

There are few joys more precious than cuddling a little “lion” on your lap — just ask the pet parents of any kittens like these two, who leapt and lounged their way through our photo shoot. But as irresistible as they are, our feline friends can encounter the same health cat-astrophes as any other four-legged family member.

Domestic Shorthair cats (which tend to be mixed breeds) like these kittens, who were adopted through the Philadelphia Animal Welfare Society (PAWS), generally have fewer hereditary health issues than their purebred cousins — but they can still get their paws into unexpected trouble. Injuries (meowch!), accidents (even if they *were* the dog’s fault) and illnesses common among kitties such as heart conditions, diabetes and kidney disease are just a few of the bumps that can occur on a kitten’s road through a long, healthy life.

So while these kittens’ new parents can’t guess what lies ahead in their health, they can protect them with Petplan; that way, they’ll be purr-pared for whatever surprises the cats drag in.



sprout + doodle

6-week-old
domestic shorthairs

unexpected tails

\$10,000+ if these kitties develop
(not uncommon) chronic issues
such as diabetes or heart disease





spike

4-year-old
havanese

pet parents
evan and jeanine caplan

unexpected tail
\$5,679 for surgery and treatment of
bilateral cruciate ligaments

lives in
philadelphia, pa



Like many Havanese pups, Spike loves to play the family comedian. But when this peppy pup's tricky knees went wacky, his family had to press pause on the clowning around.

"Spike's normally very active and loves being the center of attention," says his mom, Jeanine. But after having surgery to repair a ruptured cruciate, "it was hard to restrict him," she admits. "We had to set up baby gates and keep him relaxed." To make matters worse, Spike blew out his other knee just a few months later.

Those back-to-back (er, knee-to-knee!) surgeries not only took a toll on Spike and his family, but also their budget, with each cruciate costing several thousand dollars to repair.

Thankfully, Spike's pet insurance was there to lend a paw — allowing his family to pursue hydrotherapy and laser therapy in hopes of an easier recovery.

"It was amazing how quickly he began to heal once we started the laser therapy," beams Jeanine, who is all smiles now that her best friend is back on his paws. "Petplan allowed Spike to heal in a way that wouldn't be possible otherwise.

I'm not sure we could have done all we did without them."



Falling down is part of life; learning to get back up is part of living.

During a visit to Virginia, Connie tried to leap into John's minivan and fell on her back. She seemed to bounce back to all four paws, until a few weeks later, when John noticed she was losing function in her hind legs. A trip to the vet revealed Connie was suffering from intervertebral disc disease (IVDD) — a common spinal problem in French Bulldogs. By the time surgery occurred, Connie's chances of walking again had diminished to less than 50%.

Connie, however, is used to licking life's challenges. "She adapted within hours of surgery," recalls John, who had a more difficult time with his first pet's fortuity. "The hardest part was accepting she might never walk again. Now, it's about giving her the best life possible, including fighting off her recurring urinary tract infections (UTIs). Without insurance, that wouldn't be possible."

If it weren't for her mobility cart, you'd never know this sassy, spunky girl had ever taken a tumble. And thanks to Petplan, her stumble wasn't the end of her journey.

"Walking down the street, you can see people's attitude change — from feeling sorry to admiring what she's capable of doing,"

John says. "She sees no limitation in her situation — it's inspirational."



connie
3-year-old
french bulldog

pet parent
john howells

unexpected tail
\$15,781 for IVDD,
physical therapy and UTIs

lives in
new york, ny



TRAINING

Couch-to-Canine-5K Plan

CPDT Nicole Larocco-Skeehan's tips to prep pups for fun runs



Dogs can be great running buddies, but like pet parents, not all can jump straight from the couch to a lengthy jog without danger of injury. Even if your dog is not among the estimated 40% of U.S. pets who are considered overweight, it can take time and training to get him ready to paw-ticipate in his first 5K. Here's a plan to do it safely:

1 BEFORE LACING UP

Before your canine companion takes his first jog, head to the vet. You want to rule out any conditions that exercise may exacerbate and outline which activities are safe for your dog. Your vet will also take your dog's breed and age into consideration. While dogs of herding, hound or sporting lineage may be able to build up to a multi-mile run, snub-nosed breeds (think Bulldogs, Pugs and Pekingese), young puppies or senior dogs could face challenges or potential health hazards. Your vet will help you set guidelines and limits for your particular pup, and



advise if he's more suited to moderate exercise.

2 ONE PAW AT A TIME

You've got the all-clear to put paw to pavement, but what if your dog isn't used to more than a short stroll?

The key to kicking off your dog's workout routine is considering the variables of fitness: **frequency, intensity, time and type.** Increase only one variable at a time until you notice that your dog is eager to continue. For example, if you add brief intervals of jogging to boost your daily walk, don't change anything else, like the length of time you walk or how many walks you take that day. Or start by increasing the duration of your daily walk by 20 minutes, but keep the pace the same as you always do.



3 TIME TO GET FIT!



Using the fitness variables, gradually move up to three or four walking/jogging sessions of 25 to 30 minutes per week, alternating exercise days with days of rest. If you find that your dog is lagging behind on longer sessions or is not enthusiastic about starting sessions, don't push him. It might be time to scale back or find a different activity (see below for ideas!). Want to run for a good cause? Turn to page 38 to see how!

If your dog isn't as enthusiastic about clocking miles as you are, don't fret!

Here are ideas if you have a

5-YEAR-OLD BEAGLE WHO BEGS TO FETCH:

Agility is great for healthy, energetic adult dogs who want to take it to the next level, as it challenges their minds and bodies to move quickly through an obstacle course. *Bonus:* There's a lot of running, so you may drop a few pounds, too!

2-YEAR-OLD FRENCHIE WHO LOVES TREATS:

Tricks training is perfect for dogs who don't have the stamina for loads of physical exercise. Try tricks that double as strengthening exercises, including "sit up and beg" (core strength) and tugging/dropping games (interval training). (Learn to teach your dog how at [YouTube.com/GoPetplan!](https://www.youtube.com/GoPetplan/)) Use low-calorie rewards like small chunks of apples or carrots to keep pounds off.

11-YEAR-OLD LAB WHO LOVES TO LOUNGE:

Swimming is perfect for senior dogs who want to play like a puppy because it is completely non-impact, so it's easy on sensitive joints. Young or large-breed puppies can also burn energy in the water, since it's easier on developing bones. Look for a doggy day care center nearby with an indoor pet-friendly pool and dive in!

RUFF GUIDE

intervertebral disc disease (IVDD): the back-on-your-feet edition



by dr. kim smyth





IVDD: touching a nerve

There are few things more “aww”-inspiring than the look of joy on the face of a carefree, frolicking furry friend. But if you notice your pet pressing pause on playtime, it could be more than a mood swing; it could be due to IVDD. While very rare in feline friends, IVDD is most commonly seen in chondrodystrophic dogs — those with long bodies on short, stocky legs (think Dachshunds, Corgis and Basset Hounds).

Let's first review basic anatomy. The spinal bones (vertebrae) are small and short to allow the spine to be flexible. In between each of the vertebrae are soft cushions called intervertebral discs. Picture the disc as a jelly doughnut: there's an inner gelatinous part called the *nucleus pulposus*, and a tougher outer fibrous ring. This makes the disc flexible yet rigid, which helps to absorb the shock from paw-steps and pounces.

As pets age, their intervertebral discs degenerate, making them more prone to herniate or rupture. When this occurs, the disc enters the spinal canal and crowds the spinal cord and surrounding nerves.

There are two scenarios for disc disease: extrusions (ruptures) or protrusions (bulges).



- ❗ Chondrodystrophic dogs are at high risk for extrusion because their discs undergo early degeneration. Whereas other dogs' discs degenerate with age, the discs in chondrodystrophic dogs undergo degeneration much faster — generally within the first two years of life. This doesn't mean that disc herniation occurs then, but the stage is set for discs to rupture at any time. Signs tend to be rare before 2 years of age, and most chondrodystrophic dogs who develop IVDD show clinical signs between 3 and 7 years old.
- ❗ Protruding discs are more common in large-breed dogs, particularly Labradors, German Shepherds, Rottweilers and Dalmatians, and tend to occur slowly over time. Clinical signs of this kind of IVDD are commonly seen in dogs upwards of 6 years old.



signs + symptoms

Clinical signs vary depending on the severity of disease, but the overwhelming common symptom of any kind of IVDD is pain. Remember, the spine runs from the base of the skull all the way down to the pelvis, so pain is often “referred,” meaning the dog may hold up a paw because the nerve pain makes his leg hurt. As such, signs can be very confusing and may not obviously point to back pain.

Signs of neck pain in pets may show up as reluctance to climb stairs or move their heads and may be mistaken for inappetence if a pet is reluctant to raise or lower her head to her food bowl. Back pain may present as general restlessness or a reluctance to walk or jump. Back pain is often mistaken for belly pain, as smaller pets may vocalize in pain when picked up.



case study



**7-year-old male
smooth coat dachshund**

condition:
intervertebral disc disease (IVDD)

treatment:
neurological testing, MRI, surgery

amount reimbursed: \$5,969.48

petplan protected:
since october 2010

Janet was concerned that her happy, jumpy dog, Bo, was feeling a bit down. She noticed him shaking and having trouble walking, only managing a few steps before coming to a stop. "When I took him to the emergency hospital, they told me he had lost feeling in his back legs," she says. Following an MRI to pinpoint the problem, Bo went into surgery to repair a ruptured disc — on his birthday, no less! Janet got creative to help Bo stay comfortable during recovery: "He isn't crate-trained, so we kept him in a pen so he didn't feel trapped," explains Janet. "I stuffed his toys with treats to keep him occupied, and little by little he got better." Today, Bo is pain-free — and back on all four paws.



signs + symptoms (cont'd)

The first thing pet parents may notice is their pet suddenly not using his back legs; as the disc herniates into the spinal cord, paralysis of the back end can occur. This is an emergency situation with urgent referral to a specialist required for the dog to stand his best chance of recovering nerve function to the back end. Severe spinal cord compression can result in paralysis and loss of bladder function.

Clinical signs can be sudden, as is typically the case in disc rupture or extrusion, or they can occur gradually over time, as with bulging discs in older pets.



diagnosis

In mild cases of IVDD, the results of a thorough physical and neurologic exam will be combined with a patient's breed and symptoms to come up with a diagnosis. X-rays are sometimes taken to rule out other causes for clinical signs, like spinal tumors or fractures.

Advanced diagnostics are preferred for a definitive diagnosis of IVDD. The protocol for diagnosis is usually X-rays to rule out fractures, arthritis, etc., and if further investigation is needed, referral for an MRI scan (it helps to have pet insurance!) or myelography. Myelography is a type of radiology in which X-rays are taken after a contrast dye has been injected into the epidural space around the spinal cord. This type of test shows exactly where discs are compressing the spinal cord.

CT scans are also excellent ways to diagnose IVDD, but are less readily available in non-specialist veterinary clinics. In general, pursuing advanced diagnostics is only important when planning for surgery. There is little to be gained from pursuing these types of diagnostics if surgery is not a realistic option for the patient.



treatment

The goal of treatment for any form of IVDD is to return the patient to mobility and a pain-free life. Mild cases can be managed medically with anti-inflammatories, pain medications, muscle relaxers and alternative therapies like acupuncture. Crate rest is generally required, and it is likely that your veterinarian will recommend using a harness rather than a neck collar.

More severe cases of IVDD will require surgery to decompress the spinal cord, which is usually done by a veterinary neurologist or specialty surgeon.



prognosis

Pets with mild signs have a good prognosis, but owners should be vigilant about monitoring symptoms for the rest of the pet's life. For pets who require surgery, post-operative recovery can be difficult. Pet parents can increase their pet's chance of a successful — and speedy! — recovery by heeding follow-up care instructions closely.

Unfortunately, IVDD can result in permanent paralysis; the likelihood of the patient walking again is poor if severe symptoms have been present longer than 24 hours. A pet that is "down in the rear" (paralyzed in the hind end) requires quick thinking and rapid intervention, so if you suspect your pet's movement is compromised, call your vet immediately.

One final note about paralysis and quality of life: thanks to advancements in veterinary medicine and some very clever engineers, paralysis does NOT have to mean a poor quality of life. Our pets, be they large or small, have options for enjoying life to the fullest despite being unable to control their hind ends. From slings to carts to custom wheelchairs, there are many ways to extend a hand to our four-legged friends so they can frolic once again.

TRIFEXIS®

(spinosad + milbemycin oxime)

Cheewable Tablets

Before using TRIFEXIS chewable tablets, please consult the product insert, a summary of which follows:

Caution: Federal (USA) law restricts this drug to use by or on the order of a licensed veterinarian.

Indications:

TRIFEXIS is indicated for the prevention of heartworm disease (*Dirofilaria immitis*), TRIFEXIS kills fleas and is indicated for the prevention and treatment of flea infestations (*Ctenocephalides felis*), and the treatment and control of adult hookworm (*Ancylostoma caninum*), adult roundworm (*Toxocara canis* and *Toxascaris leonina*) and adult whipworm (*Trichuris vulpis*) infections in dogs and puppies 8 weeks of age or older and 5 pounds of body weight or greater.

Contraindications:

There are no known contraindications to the use of TRIFEXIS Chewable Tablets.

Warnings:

Not for human use. Keep this and all drugs out of the reach of children. Serious adverse reactions have been reported following concomitant extra-label use of ivermectin with spinosad alone, one of the components of TRIFEXIS Chewable Tablets (see ADVERSE REACTIONS).

Precautions:

Treatment with fewer than 3 monthly doses after the last exposure to mosquitoes may not provide complete heartworm prevention (see EFFECTIVENESS).

Prior to administration of TRIFEXIS, dogs should be tested for existing heartworm infection. At the discretion of the veterinarian, infected dogs should be treated with an adulticide to remove adult heartworms. TRIFEXIS is not effective against adult *Dirofilaria immitis*. While the number of circulating microfilariae may decrease following treatment, TRIFEXIS is not indicated for microfilariae clearance. Mild, transient hypersensitivity reactions manifested as labored respiration, vomiting, salivation and lethargy, have been noted in some dogs treated with milbemycin oxime carrying a high number of circulating microfilariae. These reactions are presumably caused by release of protein from dead or dying microfilariae.

Use with caution in breeding females. The safe use of TRIFEXIS in breeding males has not been evaluated. Use with caution in dogs with pre-existing epilepsy. Puppies less than 14 weeks of age may experience a higher rate of vomiting.

Adverse Reactions:

In a well-controlled US field study, which included a total of 352 dogs (176 treated with TRIFEXIS chewable tablets and 176 treated with an active control), no serious adverse reactions were attributed to administration of TRIFEXIS chewable tablets. All reactions were regarded as mild.

In some cases, dogs vomited after receiving TRIFEXIS. To ensure heartworm prevention observe your dog for one hour after administration. If vomiting occurs within an hour of administration, redose with another full dose.

Reactions that occurred at an incidence >2% (average monthly rate) within any of the 6 months of observation are presented in the following table:

Average Monthly Rate (%) of Dogs With Adverse Reactions

Adverse Reaction	TRIFEXIS Chewable Tablets ^a	Active Control Tablets ^a
Vomiting	6.13	3.08
Pruritus	4.00	4.91
Lethargy	2.63	1.54
Diarrhea	2.25	1.54

^an=176 dogs

In the US field study, one dog administered TRIFEXIS experienced a single mild seizure 2½ hours after receiving the second monthly dose. The dog remained enrolled and received four additional monthly doses after the event and completed the study without further incident.

Following concomitant extra-label use of ivermectin with spinosad alone, a component of TRIFEXIS, some dogs have experienced the following clinical signs: trembling/twitching, salivation/drooling, seizures, ataxia, mydriasis, blindness and disorientation. Spinosad alone has been shown to be safe when administered concurrently with heartworm preventatives at label directions.

In US and European field studies, no dogs experienced seizures when dosed with spinosad alone at the therapeutic dose range of 13.5-27.3 mg/lb (30-60 mg/kg), including 4 dogs with pre-existing epilepsy. Four epileptic dogs that received higher than the maximum recommended dose of 27.3 mg/lb (60 mg/kg) experienced at least one seizure within the week following the second dose of spinosad, but no seizures following the first and third doses. The cause of the seizures observed in the field studies could not be determined.

For technical assistance or to report an adverse drug reaction, call 1-888-545-5973. Additional information can be found at www.TRIFEXIS.com.

Post-Approval Experience (March 2012):

The following adverse reactions are based on post-approval adverse drug event reporting. The adverse reactions are listed in decreasing order of frequency: vomiting, depression/lethargy, pruritus, anorexia, diarrhea, trembling/shaking, ataxia, seizures, hypersalivation, and skin reddening.

Effectiveness:

Heartworm Prevention:

In a well-controlled laboratory study, TRIFEXIS was 100% effective against induced heartworm infections when administered for 3 consecutive monthly doses. Two consecutive monthly doses did not provide 100% effectiveness against heartworm infection. In another well-controlled laboratory study, a single dose of TRIFEXIS was 100% effective against induced heartworm infections. In a well-controlled six-month US field study conducted with TRIFEXIS, no dogs were positive for heartworm infection as determined by heartworm antigen testing performed at the end of the study and again three months later.

Flea Treatment and Prevention:

In a well-controlled laboratory study, TRIFEXIS demonstrated 100% effectiveness on the first day following treatment and 100% effectiveness on Day 30. In a well-controlled laboratory study, spinosad, a component of TRIFEXIS, began to kill fleas 30 minutes after administration and demonstrated 100% effectiveness within 4 hours. In field studies conducted in households with existing flea infestations of varying severity, flea reductions of 98.0% to 99.8% were observed over the course of 3 monthly treatments with spinosad alone. Dogs with signs of flea allergy dermatitis showed improvement in erythema, papules, scaling, alopecia, dermatitis/pyodermitis and pruritus as a direct result of eliminating the fleas.

Treatment and Control of Intestinal Nematode Infections:

In well-controlled laboratory studies, TRIFEXIS was ≥ 90% effective in removing naturally and experimentally induced adult roundworm, whipworm and hookworm infections.

NADA #141-321. Approved by the FDA

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Trifexis
(spinosad+milbemycin oxime)



you PROTECT each other
COME
RAIN or SHINE





When you share a bond that's thicker than water,
you wouldn't trade it for the world. So protect your dog with Trifexis® (spinosad + milbemycin oxime). It's the monthly, beef-flavored tablet that kills fleas and prevents flea infestations, prevents heartworm disease and treats and controls hookworm, roundworm and whipworm infections. Available by prescription from your veterinarian.

SAVE \$25 on a year's supply when you visit Trifexis.com/rebate

IMPORTANT SAFETY INFORMATION: Serious adverse reactions have been reported following concomitant extra-label use of ivermectin with spinosad, one of the components of Trifexis. Treatment with fewer than three monthly doses after the last exposure to mosquitoes may not provide complete heartworm prevention. Prior to administration of Trifexis, dogs should be tested for existing heartworm infection. Use with caution in dogs with pre-existing epilepsy. The most common adverse reactions reported are vomiting, depression, and itching. To ensure heartworm prevention, observe your dog for one hour after administration. If vomiting occurs within an hour, redose with another full dose. Puppies less than 14 weeks of age may experience a higher rate of vomiting. For product information, see previous page.

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 Available through your veterinarian

 To learn more visit trifexis.com

Elanco

ALLERGIES

SUBORDINANCE

DIGESTIVE
DISTURBANCES

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DIETARY
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SKIN
IRRITATION

GROOMING

SORE
JOINT

UTI

LIVER
DISEASE

AFFECTION

STRESS

CRAVINGS



THE LANGUAGE OF LICKS

BY DR. PIPPA ELLIOTT

deciphering licking behavior in furry friends

Love 'em or hate 'em, for some pet parents there's no avoiding those sly, slobbery slurps from a four-legged friend. But have you ever wondered what that lick means? Is it a kiss, or is that merely your wishful thinking?

The truth is, your pet may well show affection with his tongue (either that or there's a tasty smell on your skin!) but the language of licks can also say a whole lot more, whether the object of attention is themselves, other pets or other things.

So if your pet's licking behavior leaves you feeling loved, concerned or just plain tongue-tied, read on to get the truth about what your pet's tongue is telling you.



MY PAW
IS SORE.

LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION

Did you know that feline friends spend roughly half their waking hours grooming? It's easy to understand why, considering that licking triggers the brain to release feel-good chemicals such as serotonin and endorphins into the blood stream. Both dogs and cats can get hooked on the feeling, which causes them to become obsessive lickers.

But what if your pet is paying particular attention to one area? Where your pet licks — and for how long — speaks volumes about his health:

PAWS-ITIVELY ITCHY: Excessively licking paws and legs may be a sign of skin irritation, particularly seasonal or food-related allergies. Unfortunately, some dogs get so hooked on licking (their way of scratching) that they damage the skin, creating a vicious cycle — the licking causes tingling, which draws attention back to the area and leads to further licking. This can cause a permanent open sore called a “lick granuloma,” which can be difficult to cure due to its recurring nature. If your dog is over-keen on cleaning his paws, talk to your vet about allergy testing or behavioral therapy to break this tricky licky cycle.

TUMMY TROUBLE: Feline friends who lick their bellies bald may be suffering from skin irritation caused by parasites or an allergy. However, it's

often a behavioral tic that your cat's indulging to relieve stress. Trying to find the cause of the stress is the first step: Have you been away from home, or has her routine changed recently? Pheromone therapy is one drug-free treatment that can calm her, but it's also worth scheduling a vet visit to rule out any physical ailments.

PURR-SONAL PROBLEMS: If your pet suddenly starts obsessively licking his nether regions, this could be a warning sign of urinary problems, such as a bladder or urinary tract infection that must not be ignored. This is of special concern in male cats because they can develop urinary blockages, which require emergency treatment. (Other signs of this include repeated squatting and crying when trying to pass urine.)

OUT OF JOINT: Your canine companion may pay special attention to a sore joint by licking it in an attempt to ease the discomfort. If your dog can't seem to leave that one joint alone — especially if you spot him limping on that leg — have him checked by a vet.

SPIT-AND-POLISH: Lack of licking can tell pet parents something as well. Grooming is not just part of your pet's personal hygiene — it makes furry friends feel good in more ways than one. In warm weather, licking helps pets stay cool thanks to the evaporation of saliva from their fur. If you notice your pet neglecting her grooming (especially in hard-to-reach places), watch to see if a tubby tummy might be getting in the way. Likewise, a pet suffering from arthritis may be less flexible. If your cat or dog is developing a dull, dusty or greasy coat, it's time for a check-up with your veterinarian.

! WATCH THIS! For cats in particular, licking is a common displacement activity. What better way of pretending it was her intention to fall off the sofa all along than to stop for a casual wash?

HE LICKED ME, FAIR AND SQUARE

When your handsome hound gives you a big lick, is it pure puppy love — or is he just saying you need a bath? Let's try deciphering why pets lick us, or more bizarrely, lick things like carpet or plastic.

SKIN STAMP: When your canine companion greets you with his tongue out, he may be checking your identity by sampling the taste of your skin. Like us, our pets have taste buds that can be seen on a biopsy of their tongues. So, when a dog licks you, he picks up a unique taste blend that helps him know who you are.

LICK LOVE: While a lick may not be the same as a kiss in doggy terms, it is a sign of affection. Dogs mutually groom one another as a sign of acceptance and companionship. A dog may lick her pet parent to acknowledge a member of the family, or from instinctual maternal affection.

CAR-PET LICKING: Some pets lick bizarre objects like carpets or furniture, which can become a nuisance. Actually, this odd behavior may be a sign your four-legged friend has a health issue or dietary deficiency. It is thought that dogs with Addison's disease lick to seek salt, while those with digestive disturbances lick to replace vitamins. Indeed, liver disease does strange things to a dog's appetite, which can lead him to lick to satisfy cravings. If your dog's licking tastes have recently changed, get him to your vet.

PUSS IN BAGS: A bizarre habit almost exclusive to cats is that of licking plastic bags. No one is certain why they do this, but one theory involves the ingredients of the plastic. Biodegradable carrier bags are often rendered with animal fats such as tallow, lanolin or gelatin, which makes them lick-tastic for cats. Just be sure that licking doesn't turn to swallowing or choking: keep plastic bags stowed safely.

LICKETY-SIGNS AND SIGNALS

In the subtle world of canine communication, a simple lick sends out a powerful message — a well-timed one can even stop the fur from flying. The placatory lick from one dog to another can signal acceptance of the top dog's status and defuse a tense stand-off. So why do pets lick one another?

SLURPING SIGNALS: If a subordinate dog licks a dominant dog as a sign of acceptance, then the dominant dog may lick the subordinate — because he can! The difference is all in the body language as one dog approaches another: tail down could signal hostility or tension, while tail up signals friendship.



🚫 WHAT NOT TO LICK

A few things can cause serious health issues if your pet licks them, so keep these well away from feline and canine tongues:

🧴 Topical parasite preventives:

If ingested, the active ingredients in flea and tick preventives can lead to excessive drooling, head shaking or stomach upset in dogs. Always apply where the pet can't reach, such as the back of the neck, and don't allow pet pals to lick each other after application. (And never use dog-specific products on cats — they can be toxic to Fluffy!)

🗑️ **Tin cans:** Finding an open can in the trash may seem like doggy heaven, but your pooch is likely to end up with a cut tongue. Always dispose of aluminum, glass and other sharp waste in a lidded bin out of paws' reach.

🩹 **Surgical incisions:** Yes, our pets' saliva has some disinfectant properties, but the abrasive action of licking does more harm than good to sensitive scars. Your pet is far more likely to damage healing tissue than keep it clean, so the dreaded "cone of shame" may be needed to avoid post-operative licking.

💧 **Ear drops:** While mutual grooming may be nice, it's a no-no if one pet is receiving medication via ear drops. The licking pal could wash away the medication before it can work, and ingest potentially harmful ingredients.

THE GENDER GAP: When it comes to mutual licking, there is a gender gap. Behaviorists studying cats have shown that females will groom cats of both sexes, but in groups that are exclusively female, they refuse to groom one another — probably because the hierarchy gets too complicated! Male cats will never lick other males — it's simply not done!

PUPPY LOVE: A mother licks her puppy or kitten for several reasons. Not only does it help mother and baby bond, but she stimulates the newborn to breathe. Instinct also tells the mother to keep the nest clean, so she licks her offspring to encourage them to toilet — and if you're not quick with clean-up, she will do the same to remove the evidence!

Who would have thought the language of licks could say so much without words? With one flick of the tongue, a pet can potentially defuse a fight, recognize his pet parents or comfort himself. He can also inadvertently reveal information about his health, from skin ailments to joint pain or internal issues — so keep a close eye on where your pet puts his tongue. 🐾



petplanthropy news



petplanthropy
pawing it forward

Petplanthropy: For all the joy pets bring to our lives, they deserve the very best in return. That's why Petplan created a charitable paw: Petplanthropy! From sniffing out organizations (often local) that improve animals' lives to rallying our two-legged team to lend paws-on support, Petplanthropy is all about pawing it forward. Peruse this page (and dog-ear it in future issues!) to learn more and get involved!



Preparing for MuckFest 2015! After the Petplan Mucky Mutts had such a blast romping through the mud for multiple sclerosis (MS) in 2014, there was no way we'd miss out on a repeat performance! With three months to go, the Petplan planning committee is sniffing out fundraising plans, employee participation options and ways to involve service dogs in the 2015 Philadelphia MuckFest

MS Mud Run, scheduled for May. The run benefits the National Multiple Sclerosis Society, which reports that more than 2.3 million people worldwide are currently living with the disease. At Petplan, we believe that our fundraising efforts to provide trained service dogs to those with MS offer them a new leash on life, and a chance to manage an often unpredictable disease. For information on how you can help, visit nationalmssociety.org.



The numbers are in!

See what a difference a few paws can make?



♥ 3

Months left before the 2015 Philadelphia MuckFest MS Mud Run.

♥ \$1, \$5, \$10

Amounts new policyholders can choose to donate to The Petplan Fund.

♥ \$6,000

Amount donated by Petplan to animal welfare organizations through the 2015 Petplan Veterinary Awards.

Share your inspiring "tails" of pawing it forward on [Facebook.com/Petplan](https://www.facebook.com/Petplan).

Every click counts! Want an easy way to give back to pets? When purchasing a policy online, new Petplan policyholders can donate \$1, \$5 or \$10 to The Petplan Fund (part of The Philadelphia Foundation, a 501(c)(3) organization that administers over 750 charitable funds). These donations, which Petplan has pledged to match, will be used for a broad range of animal welfare causes, like funding research and providing disaster relief for pets and pet parents. All donations are tax deductible, and all proceeds support these causes. Spread the word: pet parents can make a difference while keeping four-legged family members protected — with the click of a mouse!



Rescue mission: kittens! One cold November night, a Petplan pack member spotted five tiny kittens roaming her Philadelphia neighborhood. She recruited a fellow Petplan helper — experienced in rescuing stray and feral cats — and pounced quickly to bring the kittens inside. The mission was successful, and the 5-week-old kittens found themselves in a foster home with food, warmth and plenty of cuddling. The best part? One month later, four of the kittens had found their fur-ever homes — and one's adoption was in progress. Since most were adopted by Petplan employees, they'll be visiting the office often! (If you spot pets outside in the cold, call your vet or local rescue groups about ways to lend a paw.)



NAME

Breed Health Profile

Vizsla

The compact and muscular Vizsla originated in Hungary, where he was used as a hunting dog for rabbits and waterfowl. Like many European breeds, the Vizsla nearly reached extinction by the end of World War II, but was imported into the United States in 1950 and quickly gained favor for his natural hunting abilities. The Vizsla stands about two feet tall at the shoulder, weighs in at around 45-65 lbs. and has a short-haired coat that requires little to no grooming. Vizslas are gentle and affectionate, and form close bonds with both adults and children — in fact, they're often referred to as the "Velcro Vizsla" because they stick close to their pet parent's side.

Because they were originally bred for sport, Vizslas need daily exercise such as running, chasing a ball, swimming or taking vigorous walks to stay stimulated. Because of their superior scenting skills, Vizslas have been successful guide dogs, drug-detection dogs, therapy dogs and search-and-rescue dogs.

The Petplan Healthometer measures how healthy a particular breed is in relation to other breeds.

1 = healthiest
10 = least healthy



For more details on these and other hereditary conditions, visit gopetplan.com/condition-check

Corneal Dystrophy

Corneal dystrophy is weakness in the layers of the cornea. Severely affected dogs are prone to painful corneal erosions and ulcers. Some types of corneal dystrophy result in lipid or cholesterol deposits on the cornea, which are generally painless and do not interfere with vision. Treatment varies depending on the severity of the lesions.

Costs are variable depending on severity of disease: **up to \$5,000**



Entropion

Entropion describes the inward rolling of the eyelid, often causing the eyelashes to come into contact with the eyeball, leading to irritation and often ulceration. Many affected dogs will require surgical correction and severe cases may require multiple surgeries.

Medical and surgical treatment: \$700 to \$4,000

Sebaceous Adenitis

Sebaceous adenitis describes inflammation of the glands in the skin, which results in a dull, brittle, patchy hair coat and scaling or crusting of the skin. Skin infections often occur concurrently with sebaceous adenitis. Treatment of this condition consists of lifelong management through oral and topical medications.

Diagnosis and lifelong treatment: \$500 to \$20,000+

Hemophilia A

Hemophilia A is an inherited disorder that prevents the body from producing normal blood coagulation, which leads to spontaneous hemorrhage that can result in hematomas, lameness and swelling. The condition can sometimes be fatal when bleeding occurs in the chest or abdominal cavity. Dogs with Hemophilia A may experience few or no clinical signs but may require periodic treatment.

Costs are variable depending on severity of disease: can easily reach \$5,000

Hip Dysplasia

Canine hip dysplasia (CHD) is an inherited condition in which the ball and socket of the hip joint do not fit well together, resulting in a hip with increased laxity. This laxity can lead to degenerative changes and depending on the severity, may require surgical correction.

Cost of treatment: \$3,000 to \$5,000 for surgery per hip (in uncomplicated cases)



roll over regular



fit bits

energy-boosting L-carnitine makes these 2-calorie chicken treats fit for felines watching their figures

Get Naked Weight Management Crunchy Treats for Cats, \$3.99, chewy.com

H2Go

refresh rover on his athletic adventures with this handy flip-dish water bottle

Gulpy® Pet Water Dispenser, \$11.99, thedogoutdoors.com

we ♥ this.

We like anything that helps keep your pet healthy. But these things we love.



cold turkey (and beef and chicken!)

offer your fit fido a creamy cool-off as a well-deserved post-workout treat

Arrf Scarf Ice Cream for Dogs, \$3.50, arrfscarf.com

balancing act

this bone-shaped stability ball helps develop strength and features sensory bumps for neural stimulation

K9 FITBone™, \$69.50, funtimedogshop.com



twist and snout

a brain game that also tickles the tummy, this disc keeps noses nudging and pooches moving

Dog Twister Interactive Toy, \$41.99, target.com



fast food

this colorful feeder can collapse in a snap, making mealtime easy when you're on the road

Double Elevated Feeder, \$19.99, store.dexas.com



climbing the walls

pine wood and snuggly sheepskin make this jungle-gym-like stack a purr-fect perch

Colorful Catissa Modular Cat House, \$426.52, etsy.com

pawclicks



leave a trail:
pawesome apps
to keep your pet's
health on track!

Lick 2015 into shape with health and fitness apps to keep track of vet appointments, fitness goals and even your Petplan claims! They're like having a pocket-sized paw-sonal assistant!



Pet Phone

Paging all on-the-go pet parents!

Pet Phone is here to help you organize your four-legged friend's busy life with ease. The app lets you add your pet's vet appointments, include notes so health info is always at your paw-tips, track your fur ball's weight to ensure he's not getting too "fluffy" and quickly locate a neighborhood vet using GPS in case of emergency! Plus, you can sync the app to your device's calendar to make sure you're always up to date.

\$2.99, iTunes only



ResQwalk

Have a competitive streak? Fuel it with ResQwalk! The ResQwalk app tracks your steps to be converted into cash for your chosen animal rescue. And thanks to the app's leaderboard, you can check to see if you're top dog! Plus, ResQwalk throws down special Weekly Rescue Challenges that let groups earn bonus money — perfect for those who want to win paws-down! And did we mention you receive fur-bulous rewards, such as coupons, after every walk?

FREE, iTunes or Google Play



Petplan Claims App

Pet parents can say goodbye to signing forms and pawing through paperwork; Petplan's just-launched Claims App takes the leash off the claims process. Policyholders simply log in, upload photos of documentation and hit submit. That's it! The app omits the need for forms and lets you start a paperless claim from your smartphone wherever you are (even at the vet's office). When you're caring for an ailing pet, our Claims App provides extra peace of mind! Available for iOS devices.

FREE, iTunes only



STEMMING THE TIDE

a new study explores stem cell therapy to treat canine knee injuries

BY HEIDI JETER

Bodie was just shy of his second birthday when his mom, Tracy Lechman, began noticing subtle changes in the energetic yellow Lab's movements.

"He was still running around, but when he stood, he was lame on the left side," Lechman explains, adding that the problem appeared more pronounced after he'd spent the day playing hard at doggie day care.

Concerned, she took Bodie to his veterinarian. Though the vet initially thought the problem was in the dog's hips, she soon realized Bodie's lameness stemmed from his left knee. She referred Lechman to specialists at Colorado State University's Veterinary Teaching Hospital, where the team diagnosed a partial tear in Bodie's cranial cruciate ligament (CCL).

WEAK IN THE KNEES

The CCL stabilizes the dog's knee joint (the middle joint in the hind leg), similar to the anterior cruciate ligament (ACL) in humans. The big difference between these ligaments is that in humans, an ACL rupture is usually caused by an acute injury — for example, a fall on the ski slopes. In dogs, the problem is much more complex and most often results from slow degeneration of the ligament rather than a traumatic injury.

Complicated as they are, CCL ruptures are the most common orthopedic injury that veterinary surgeons treat, by far.

According to the American College of Veterinary Surgeons, CCL rupture in dogs is thought to be caused by a combination of factors, including obesity and poor physical condition, as well as a dog's conformation, breed and age. Large breeds have a higher risk than smaller dogs, but any dog can develop a CCL injury.

Complicated as they are, CCL ruptures are the most common orthopedic injury that veterinary surgeons treat, by far, says Clara Goh, BVSc, MS, DACVS, a veterinary surgeon at Colorado State University. They are also one of the most common reasons for hind-limb lameness and pain, and can result in significant long-term knee arthritis.

MENDING THE TEAR

The good news, Dr. Goh says, is that CCL injuries are highly treatable with surgery, as well as conservative options, which are widely available.

"The main benefit of surgery is that all options carry good prognosis for getting the dog back to comfortable function," Dr. Goh says. "Typically, more than four out of five dogs will return to 80% to 90% of their original function."

The main drawbacks to surgery are the associated costs, recovery time and minor risk of complications that come with it. Moreover, there isn't a single procedure that fits every dog, which can make it difficult for owners and veterinarians to decide which method is best for their pet.

Not only is CCL rupture a common problem, but up to 60% of dogs who develop a tear on one side will also tear their opposite knee within two years — an unnerving



statistic for any pet parent! With surgical treatment of one CCL rupture ranging from \$1,500 to \$4,000, depending upon the type of procedure used, two surgeries within two years can really break the bank.

HOPE ON THE HORIZON

Despite the high cost, Lechman knew that surgery was the best option for Bodie. But while she was at Colorado State, she learned about a clinical trial led by Dr. Goh aimed at evaluating the use of stem cells in treating CCL rupture.

“We’re interested in stem cells for orthopedic disease because they can develop into ligaments, bones and cartilage, which don’t typically heal well,” Dr. Goh says.

Stem cells are present in most of the tissues and organs in the body. In veterinary medicine, they are commonly collected and grown from bone marrow or fat. The beauty of stem cells is that no matter where they come from, they have the ability to develop into many different tissue types.



In previous research, scientists at the Colorado State Orthopedic Research Center treated horses with stem cell therapy, 70% of whom returned to normal athletic function within two years. With funding from Morris Animal Foundation (MAF), a nonprofit organization that supports veterinary research, Dr. Goh hopes to find similar success in canine patients.

“We’re interested in stem cells for orthopedic disease because they can develop into ligaments, bones and cartilage, which don’t typically heal well,” Dr. Goh says. “We want to see if we can use stem cells to promote healing in [those types of] tissues, with poor or slow healing capacity.”

STUDY BUDDIES

The MAF-funded study included 40 client-owned dogs who had already undergone surgery for their first CCL rupture. Half received stem cell therapy during recovery, while the other half were given a placebo. The dogs were then examined at regular intervals for 18 months, the timeframe in which most dogs would normally develop a second rupture.

"Having the financial support was helpful and having the frequent follow-up visits was comforting as well," Lechman says. "If Bodie could be checked on more frequently and we were part of research to help dogs, to me it was a no-brainer."

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

Bodie's surgery and recovery went smoothly — although the two months of crate rest were challenging (he is a Lab, after all) — and he soon returned to his energetic self. Unfortunately, he developed a tear on the opposite knee about a year after the first. Although that surgery was also successful, his study participation came to an end because of the second tear. Though he is no longer a participant, Lechman says she's glad they were able to contribute.

"Of course I was optimistic going into the study," she says, "and I was happy to be part of it to help with research in general. There were no negative side effects to participating."

Dr. Goh says the remaining dogs are still going through follow up, and she expects to begin analyzing the results in 2015.

She hopes that stem cell therapy, which involves just one joint injection, could offer minimally invasive, early-intervention therapy for dogs at risk.

"Of course I was optimistic going into the study, and I was happy to be part of it to help with research in general."

"The biggest question I get from owners and vets is how to prevent the second side from becoming injured," Dr. Goh says. "If we can find a treatment that can help regenerate the cruciate ligament and help the knee early on, that would be the ultimate hope." 🐾

PROTECT YOUR POOCH



All dogs can experience CCL rupture, but the injury is most common in the "weekend warrior" — dogs who are inactive most of the time (and maybe even a little overweight) but super active on occasion (like weekends).

Tips to avoid CCL rupture:

- ✓ Keep your dog at a healthy weight
- ✓ Provide daily moderate exercise
- ✓ Avoid high-intensity, weekend-only activities

For more information on studies funded by Morris Animal Foundation, visit MorrisAnimalFoundation.org.



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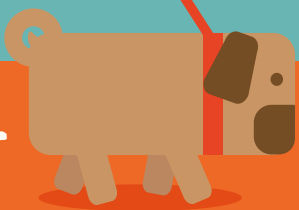


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GETTING FIT



WITH FURRY FRIENDS

workouts that promise a howling good time

BY TRICIA MONTGOMERY

For a large portion of the pet parent population, the top New Year's resolution each year is to lose weight. Exercise is an important element of a healthy lifestyle, helping to control food cravings, de-stress the body and increase calorie-burning. You've probably heard that working out with a buddy is a great way to stick to fitness goals — but who says that your exercise partner can't have four legs?

Pets and pet parents can share lots of physical activities, adding up to a workout routine that's fun and beneficial for both of you. Regardless of fitness level, these workouts guarantee a good sweat and a fun break from the usual routine — and your pet will never cancel on your workout!

READ ME FIRST!

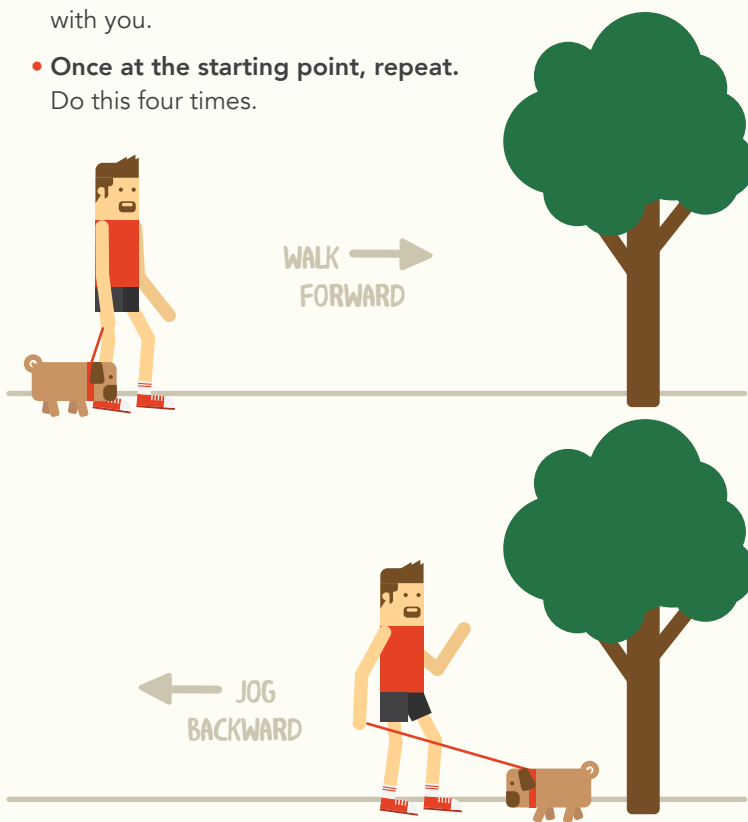
tips for a happy, healthy workout together

- **Before jumping into a workout** routine, schedule a visit to the veterinarian to make sure your furry friend can lend a paw with your fitness goals.
- **Give your dog lots of praise** each time he follows your command, so he knows he's doing well!
- **Choose activities and exercises** with your dog that move as many body parts as possible. Think about lunges, squats, jumping jacks, jumps or sprints. As long as you're both moving, it's a workout!
- **Remember**, your dog looks to you as his workout buddy, too. He's always there for you, so be there for him, too. Make it a year of commitment to each other and to better health "fur" all!



wag-worthy warm-up

- **With your dog's attention on you**, walk forward, keeping your dog beside you, with his left ear next to your right leg. If he wants to pull forward, say, "Heel!" and turn to the right, and continue walking in the new direction.
- **When you reach a designated spot** (cone, tree, end of the room), begin jogging backward to the starting point as you say, "Come." Your dog should turn to follow you (so you're facing each other) and shouldn't pass you. This helps your dog work on staying engaged and maintaining eye contact with you.
- **Once at the starting point, repeat.** Do this four times.



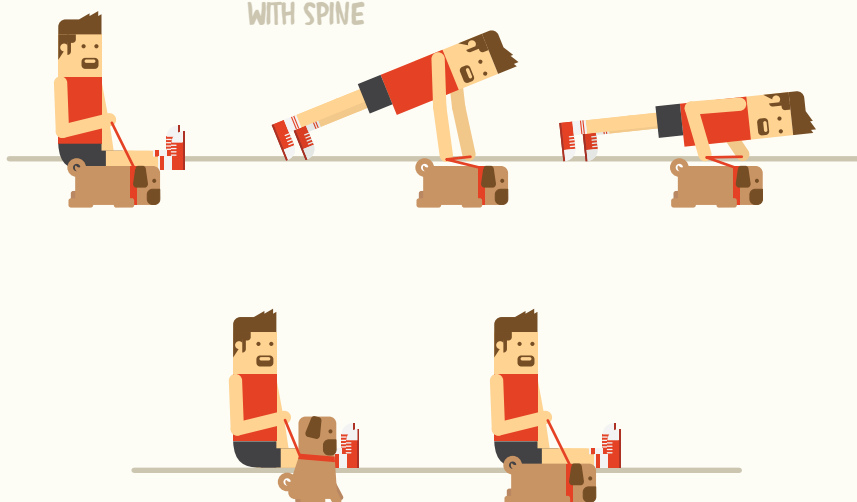
sit + stay side lunges

- Have your dog stand facing you, and hold his leash.
- Keeping your left leg straight, step out to the side with your right leg, bending your right knee and sitting back into a lunge.

- Holding the lunge, ask your dog to "Come" — he'll move to your right as well. Once he's there, have him "Sit, stay."
- Step back to the center, legs together, then lunge to the left. Have your dog "Come," then "Sit, stay" again.
- Repeat 10 times on each side.



KEEP HEAD IN LINE
WITH SPINE



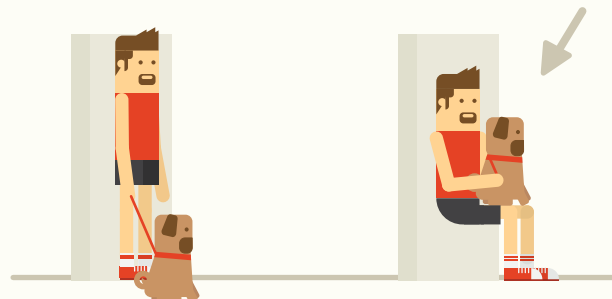
puppy push-ups

- Sit on the floor and ask your dog to sit or lie down next to you.
- Move into the push-up position, hands under your shoulders. Hold your dog's leash in both hands.
- Perform 10 push-ups, keeping your head up and in line with your spine and your abs pulled tight.
- Now it's time for your pup to do push-ups! Ask your dog to move from a "Sit" to a "Down" three to five times.
- Repeat push-ups for you and your dog three times.

wagging wall sits

- Ask your dog to sit beside you.
- Place your back against the wall and slide down until your thighs are parallel with the floor. Squeeze your glutes and abs as you press into the wall and hold for 10 seconds.
- Ready for the challenge? If you have a small dog, do this exercise holding your pup — he'll add extra resistance. If you have a large dog, ask your dog to put his front paws in your lap.
- Return to a standing position, and repeat five times. 🐾

ADD (CUTE) RESISTANCE





ask our experts: your questions answered

Petplan staff veterinarian Dr. Nina Mantione answers some common medical questions about your pets

Q:

It seems every time I turn around, my Siamese cat is lapping away at her water dish. Should I be concerned?

Healthy cats do not typically drink a lot of water, so I worry when a cat seems thirstier than usual. Many conditions can cause increased thirst (known as polydipsia) in feline friends, from kidney disease and diabetes to thyroid disease, to name a few. After a thorough physical exam, your veterinarian will likely order basic diagnostic tests to look at a complete blood count, chemistry screen, thyroid level and urinalysis. Sometimes a diagnosis can be made from these tests, but your vet may also want to pursue radiographs or urine cultures. Many of the conditions that cause polydipsia can be well managed over time, so call your vet to quench your cat's thirst safely.

Q:

Our Great Dane puppy is 6 months old, and we'd love to start taking him for jogs — anything we should be aware of?

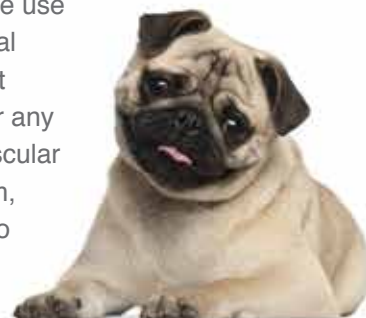
I'd advise waiting a while before lacing up. Puppies, especially large and giant breeds like your Great Dane, are still growing and developing. He may be physically able to join you on jogs, but the undue stress on his growing bones and joints could lead to orthopedic problems down the road. It's best to wait until he is over a year old and done growing before he starts dogging your jogs! After his first birthday, introduce him to the activity gradually, so he develops the stamina and fitness required for longer distances. For now, work on teaching him really good leash manners. That way, when he is finally older and big enough to accompany you, he isn't pulling you off your feet!



Q:

My Pug's tongue has started to stick out. At first we thought it was cute, but now I'm worried something is wrong. Should I call my vet?

It's likely nothing overly serious, but he should have a thorough physical exam. Your veterinarian will want to know if your pet seems to have normal tongue function, despite it sticking out. Can he use it to drink normally and draw it back into his mouth? Your vet will perform a thorough oral exam to check for missing or loose teeth, as well any bite irregularities that may make it difficult for him to keep his tongue in his mouth. The tongue itself should be checked for any abnormalities, such as a mass that may be pushing it forward. Some neurologic or muscular disorders can affect tongue function, so I would be sure to do a careful neurologic exam, as well. If his exams are normal and his tongue is functional, then I wouldn't worry — no treatment is necessary.





Q: I have seen leashes for cats in the pet store, and I'm intrigued. How can I train my cat to walk on a leash?

Actually going for a walk may be a bit of a stretch, since cats have their own ideas about how best to explore the outside world, but it can certainly be accomplished! (I'm not promising it will be easy, though!) Cats are trainable — I once had a cat who mastered a “high five!” — but they may not be as obviously eager to please as canine companions.

That being said, a little positive reinforcement goes a long way, and most cats can learn to tolerate a leash. Start slowly, praise often and proceed one step at a time. Introduce the harness or collar slowly; leave it out for a few days for them to sniff, then slip it on for short amounts of time. Once they're comfortable with that step, introduce the leash. I know several cat parents who use a leash to offer their cats supervised outdoor time, and their cats love it!



Q: We're looking forward to taking our Labrador to the lake for the first time this summer. Do we need to give him swim lessons, or will his instincts kick in?

Generally, most Labradors are willing and able swimmers, but there may be a learning curve involved. I would not start off by putting him in water that is over his head. Introduce him to the water by letting him wade around in a shallow area on a leash until he becomes comfortable enough to gradually go deeper. Just like a person who has never learned to swim, a dog can panic and be at risk for drowning before he figures it out. Since he is a Lab, chances are that he will enjoy the idea of swimming, but some stockier breeds, like Pugs and Bulldogs, just aren't built to swim well. There are dogs who never really learn to swim, and some just don't like water — if yours seems scared or uninterested, don't force him. If he seems willing but you have concerns about his safety or natural ability, try a doggy life jacket!



Do you have a question for a Petplan veterinarian?

Go to:
[GoPetplan.com/ask-an-expert](https://www.petplan.com/ask-an-expert)

But note, please check with your regular veterinarian if the problem is persistent or requires immediate medical attention.





**A
WEIGHTY
MATTER**

seven safe steps to help pets shed pounds

by dr. ernie ward





Pet owners hate it when I suggest their pet needs to lose weight. I get it. Maybe they feel guilty for overfeeding or not exercising their dog or cat enough. Maybe they're struggling with weight or body image issues of their own. Maybe they think I'm just a skinny guy judging them — what do I know, anyway? Whatever the reasons, and there are plenty, I keep on talking about the benefits of healthy lifestyles for both pets and people.

The reason I'm so passionate about living healthier is because I've seen too many pets suffer. Type 2 diabetes ends in an insulin syringe, but it begins in a cat's food bowl. Crippling arthritis is complicated by excess weight and a deficiency of activity. These two conditions alone cause undue pain to furry friends, cut loving lives short and cost pet parents billions in vet bills.

And here's the thing: they're almost completely preventable!

Start prevention for your own pet by incorporating these seven simple steps into your daily routine. (And if you need some nudging, I'll be here to help remind you!)



follow a food formula

Do you know how many calories your pet needs each day? If not, you don't know how much you should feed. (And you can't always trust the feeding suggestions on the packaging!) Feeding guides are formulated for adult, intact, active dogs and cats. If you give the amount on the label amount to an older, spayed or neutered indoor lap potato, you're probably feeding 20% to 30% too much. Don't just "feed less," though — you could accidentally cause serious nutrient imbalances or life-threatening liver failure. Instead, ask your vet to calculate your pet's precise caloric needs.

To get an idea at home, try this formula: Divide your pet's weight by 2.2. Multiply this figure by 30, then add 70. That gives you a general idea of how many calories to feed per day to a typical sedentary, indoor, spayed or neutered dog or cat weighing between 6 and 60 lbs. For example, Bowser weighs 44 lbs. $44/2.2 = 20$. $20 \times 30 = 600$. $600 + 70 = 670$. Of course, each pet's metabolism is unique, so consult with your veterinarian before cutting calories — or if your dog is smaller or larger than this range.



#2 carefully count kibble calories

Chances are, you already have the single greatest tool in the fight against excess weight: a measuring cup. Some pets, particularly cats, are fed an “all-day buffet” that results from the “just keep the bowl full” feeding method. The problem then becomes tracking how much your pet is really eating each day.

The Association for Pet Obesity Prevention has determined that feeding as few as 10 extra tiny kibbles of food per day can add up to a pound of weight gain per year in indoor cats and small dogs. So after you calculate how many calories your pet needs, determine how much food you should feed at each meal — and then measure accurately.



Remember: whenever you give goodies, be sure to count those calories, too. Many pet owners feed the proper amount of food but sabotage their efforts by adding one or two high-fat, high-calorie treats throughout the day. As few as 30 extra calories per day means your pet gains over 3 lbs. by year’s end. (These numbers are the same for pet parents, too!)

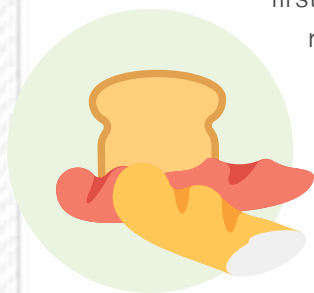


As few as **30 extra calories per day** means your pet gains over **3 lbs. by year’s end.**



#3 cut down the carbs

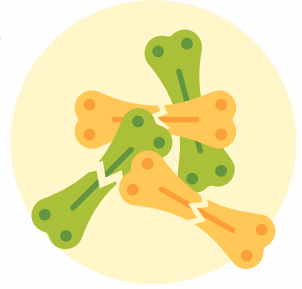
Most pets I see don’t need a high-carbohydrate diet. Yet that’s exactly what they’re being fed. Many popular pet foods contain 60% or more carbs — check the label! In general, I prefer low- or no-grain options with a protein source as the first ingredient, especially for cats needing to slim down. I also recommend starting with a higher-protein, lower-carb diet for all my patients who need to lose weight. Opinions on dietary strategies vary though, especially if your pet has underlying medical conditions, so be sure to ask your veterinarian before changing diets. If one particular formulation doesn’t work well, change tactics within three months.



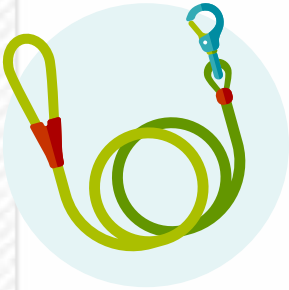


try tactical treating

When it comes to treats, furry friends don't do division. Snap snacks into peewee pieces and divvy one out only when your pet earns it. Be cautious of "guilt-treating" — the practice of giving your pet a treat because you feel bad about leaving him home alone or to seek forgiveness when you return. Instead, use food treats to encourage and reward good behavior. Pets (and people) need to learn to earn extra goodies. Praise, pet and play more rather than constantly reaching into the cookie jar.



hustle for health



To live a long, comfortable and disease-free life, research proves our most powerful partner is daily exercise. Speaking of partners, many pet parents already have a built-in, no-excuse exercise buddy. For humans and hounds alike, as little as 20 to 30 minutes of brisk walking is all it takes to boost immune function, improve cardiovascular health and reduce stress and anxiety. Do yourself and your dog a favor and commit to daily walks, rain or shine. After all, the health benefits of walking extend to both ends of the leash! For cats, try playing with a laser pointer, remote-controlled toy or even a balled-up piece of paper for five to 15 minutes every day. Chances are, you'll have a chuckle, and both of you will enjoy the time spent bonding.



seek out smart supplements

Almost every two- and four-legger can benefit from taking a daily omega-3 fatty acid supplement. These powerful essential oils pack a potent antioxidant punch proven to help prevent and treat numerous diseases. In addition, omega-3 fatty acids may help ease achy joints and potentially promote weight loss.

L-carnitine has been shown to aid weight loss and support lean muscle mass. I've been prescribing (and taking) L-carnitine for over 15 years and I'm still impressed. Ask your veterinarian if either or both of these supplements make sense and get the right dosage for your pet.



#7

grab greater goodies

I'm not anti-treats — I'm anti-junk treats. If you're going to give your pet goodies, make 'em count. Too many commercially available pet treats are the equivalent of a box of doughnuts: "calorie grenades" laden with sugar and unhealthy fats. Opt instead for functional treats that boast a bonus, such as cleaning teeth or promoting mobility with ingredients like fish oils.

As an alternative to highly processed biscuits, try offering your pet whole food snacks such as small pieces of baby carrot, green bean, celery, broccoli, cucumber, sliced apple or banana. These naturally nutritious tasty tidbits are a healthy option for many dogs. For cats, try a flake of salmon or tuna when you're feeling generous. Who knows? Maybe your pet's new healthy habit will rub off on you, as well!



..... ★ ★ ★

Too many pet treats are the equivalent of a box of doughnuts: "calorie grenades" laden with sugar and unhealthy fats.

.....

Now is a great time to be your pet's health superhero. Remember: Your daily choices have real impact on your pet's well-being. We all have to eat, so why not give our food a little thought? We all need to move, so why not make our activities meaningful? The same holds true for pets, who can't make those decisions on their own — you must decide for them.

It's our responsibility as pet parents to keep our pets at a healthy weight, which means feeding them healthy, nutritious foods, tempering the treats and including exercise in their daily routine. By following these seven simple suggestions, you'll be on your way to your pet's best — and healthiest — year yet!

..... ★ ★ ★

why walk?



In my 20 years of practicing veterinary medicine, nearly every dog I've encountered has jumped for joy at the prospect of going for a walk — but why don't we jump at the chance for this exercise? *(That was a trick question; we should!)*

social creatures: The social benefits of walking your dog can't be underestimated. You'll see friends, catch up on neighborhood news and enjoy viewing the world outside your windows. Dogs likewise need environmental stimulation to remain physically, mentally and emotionally healthy. In fact, many behavior cases I see dramatically improve with daily open-air excursions.

reduce disease risk: Studies over the past 20 years have shown that maintaining lean body mass and aerobic fitness reduces risks of developing type 2 diabetes, osteoarthritis, high blood pressure, cardiovascular diseases, kidney diseases, respiratory conditions and many forms of cancer.



similar speed: Dogs of all shapes and sizes seem to enjoy walking at

about a 15- to 18-minute per mile pace. That's a brisk walk for you — one of the best walking speeds to help you stay healthy.

equal energy burn: Dogs and humans are a perfect pair — we burn close to the same amount of energy per pound when walking or running.

man's best motivation: Sure, you can give your pooch a cookie, but what he really, desperately wants is your interaction, your affection, your time. Exercising together is a great way for you both to benefit.

Make it your goal to walk your dog (and yourself) at least 30 minutes each day. This isn't rocket science — it's good old-fashioned common sense. Now go take your dog for a walk! 🐾



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pet stats

unusual measure-mutts
and surprising cat-tistics

57.6

percentage of cats in the u.s. who are either overweight or obese*



*according to the association for pet obesity prevention



37

percentage of the 7,651 u.s. dog agility association (usdaa) advanced agility dog awards that have been won by border collies



sixty-eight

height, in inches, of the jump cleared by greyhound and canine high jump world record holder, cinderella may



600k

number of miles traveled by a cat called hamlet when he escaped from his carrier on a flight from toronto



amount, in dollars, petplan reimbursed to the family of abby, a 2-year-old border collie mix who cut her tongue while chewing on a stick

90

percentage of older dogs who have osteoarthritis in at least one joint



chow down

by dr. ernie ward



Whether it's a dog bounding along a beach or a cat leaping after a laser, four-legged fun involves plenty of physical activity, which requires proper fueling and hydration. Cats tend to be less athletic than dogs, but if your cat is an Olympian in training, talk to your vet about offering oily fishes, poultry and meat proteins after activities, in addition to regular provisions. Pet parents of canine athletes, perk up your ears to these tips for keeping Fido in top shape.



water down

Your pup's secret to endurance — especially when it's hot and humid — is proper hydration. Make sure you pause the fun for your dog to take a water break at least every 30 minutes, offering 4 to 8 ounces followed by a few moments of rest. After exercise is over, offer small amounts of water every five to 10 minutes until thirst is quenched. Be careful not to allow your dog to gulp large amounts of liquid after exercise, to reduce the risk of bloat. If your dog shows any signs of dehydration during exercise — including seeking shade or water, decreased interest or failure to respond to commands — call it quits.

post-workout

Your athletic pet's needs don't end when the com-paw-tition does. Massage, rest, veterinary care and a diet rich in healing whole foods are essential to peak fitness. You also need to pamper and praise your pooch for a job well done! Remember, fitness is about having fun and living a healthy lifestyle, not winning ribbons or being the best at everything. Pay more attention to your pet's emotional health and you'll both be richly rewarded.



recipe: super-green omega bites

Spirulina is a nutritional and protein powerhouse in algae form. These bites make terrific training treats or a perfect post-playtime pick-me-up.

Preheat oven to 350°F. Grind the oats into a flour consistency. In a small bowl, mash the sardines, then add the oatmeal and spirulina and mix well. Roll into small balls and flatten. Bake for 15 minutes, then turn off the oven and let sit for 10 minutes. Store in an airtight container or freeze.

Yield: About a dozen. Approximately 23 calories per bite.

1 3.75-oz. can of sardines (packed in water)

1/2 cup steel-cut oats

2 tsp. spirulina powder

for feline friends: Omit the oatmeal and roll into mini bite-sized pieces or, if your kitty prefers crunchy cuisine, bake for 10-12 minutes. One dozen kitty treats equals 9 calories per snack.



food for thought

Dogs in training for search-and-rescue, athletic or other strenuous events need to have carefully considered optimal nutrition. Feeding a small, regular breakfast three to four hours before an event can help stabilize blood sugar and insulin levels and enhance metabolism of fatty acid, the best energy source for both humans and dogs. If your dog is being asked to perform for 90 minutes or more, consider offering high-fat and high-carbohydrate snacks every 30 to 60 minutes, depending on the level of exertion and environmental conditions. Ask your vet about commercially available treats specially formulated for athletic and working dogs.



**“ AT FIRST
I WAS EMBARRASSED.
ME, A CAT, LIVING WITH
A SINGLE GUY. BUT WHEN
I WATCH HIM PICK SOMETHING
UP WITH HIS HANDS AND EAT IT,
I CAN'T HELP BUT LOVE HIM. ”**

**—MARU
adopted 01-10-10**

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IS THE BEST
THING TO HAPPEN
TO A SHELTER PET**



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Dog Sports

is your pup ready to go pro?

You may already have a primed athlete in your home, smart as a whip and faster than a speeding squirrel. But how about turning that amateur into a professional competitor? Check out these top dog sports — which will build your pet's physical and mental strength alike! — and see if you and your pup are ready to take it to the next level.

by Anna Schumacher



1 Competitive Dog Agility

In this fun and fast-paced sport, canine athletes run an obstacle course consisting of jumps, tunnels, slalom poles and “contact obstacles” (such as teeter-totters and A-frames) with guidance from their trainers. Dogs are judged on their speed and accuracy. Size classes keep things fair — after all, you wouldn't want a compact canine competing against a hulking hound!

Enter your dog if: He can overcome any obstacle standing between him and his food bowl.

Best for: People-pleaser pups with energy to burn, such as Border Collies, Poodles, terriers and shepherds.

Getting started: Start by buying (or building) some agility equipment to practice on at home. Once your

dog is fully grown, sign up for a dog agility class. (Classes are not recommended for puppies, as they can lead to injuries.)

Bottom line: Agility training can help your pup learn obedience and stay in peak condition, whether he's a champ on the course — or just in your heart.



2 Disc Dog Competitions

You and Fido love tossing the ol' Frisbee® around — but did you know that you could take your hobby pro? Daring disc dogs can compete in three types of events: long distance; toss and fetch (in which dogs catch as many discs as possible in 60 seconds); and an inventive freestyle category where handlers choreograph a creative throw-and-catch routine with their pups, often to music.

Enter your dog if: The Frisbee is his favorite toy.

Best for: Retrievers, Weimaraners and German Shorthaired Pointers (although all types and breeds of dog are allowed to join the official competitions).

Getting started: It's easy — all you need is a Frisbee and an eager dog! Get creative

with your at-home tosses to see what event your dog might like best, and then look for an organized group to take you to the next level.

Bottom line: This sport requires no special courses or fancy equipment, making it one of the most popular competitive dog activities in the world — and one that is very easy to train for!





Dock Diving

In this wet and wild competition, water-loving pups dive from a dock into a body of water, chasing toys tossed by their handlers; the pooch with the longest jump takes home top-dog honors. The sport originated in 1999 at the request of ESPN, which hired a veterinarian from Ohio to develop it for their Great Outdoor Games event. The sport puts little pressure on joints.



Enter your dog if: He's a natural water-baby.

Best for: Strong swimmers such as Labradors, Chesapeake Bay Retrievers and Belgian Malinois (but it's not limited to retrieving breeds, since returning the toy is not required). Bigger dogs tend to do better because they can fly farther, but all breeds are welcomed.

Getting started: Next time you're vacationing by the lake, try tossing a toy off the dock into safe, deep water. If your pup goes for it, he may be the next champ!

Bottom line: Dock diving requires little training, so it's easy to get started. Just show up and give it a shot! It's also a great sport for families of all ages — handlers are allowed on the dock starting at just 7 years old!

Flyball

In Flyball, teams of four pooches swap off in a relay race to jump four hurdles and retrieve a tennis ball. When your dog successfully returns the ball to the starting line, the next pup is up. Around since the 1960s, Flyball really made the public's ears perk up when it made an appearance on "The Tonight Show Starring Johnny Carson."



Enter your dog if: He plays well with others and has wings on all four feet!

Best for: Well-socialized dogs who are good sprinters, such as terriers, Whippets, Border Collies and Poodles.

Getting started: At home, start testing your dog to see how fast he can run to you to get a ball — start with treats if you need to entice him, then slowly transition to just the ball as a reward. When you think he's ready, look for a Flyball club in your area. Ask around at local kennels or the dog park, or see the sidebar for online resources.

Bottom line: Flyball is more than just a sport — it's also a great way for dogs and their two-legged pals to exercise and socialize together while they compete. 🐾

 **Go for the Gold!**
Want to go pro? These governing organizations can point you in the right direction.

Competitive Dog Agility	Dock Diving
✓ U.S. Dog Agility Association www.usdaa.com	✓ Dock Dogs www.dockdogs.com
✓ North American Dog Agility Council www.nadac.com	✓ United Kennel Club www.ukcdogs.com
Disc Dog Competitions	Flyball
✓ Skyhoundz www.skyhoundz.com	✓ The North American Flyball Association www.flyball.org
✓ Disc Dog Events www.discdogevents.com	✓ Flyball Dogs www.flyballdogs.com





Nicholas and Max

Photos of Nicholas and Max by Shannon Locker. Restaurant photos courtesy of Laurel Restaurant.



*Laurel
Philadelphia, PA*

nicholas elmi

by holly russel

Nicholas Elmi knows a thing or two about “licking” the competition. Not only did he claim the title of *Top Chef* in Season 11 of Bravo’s hit reality competition, but his year-old Philadelphia restaurant, Laurel, is also racking up accolades, earning high praise from *Philadelphia Inquirer* food critic, Craig LaBan, as well as a nomination for a James Beard Award for Best New Restaurant.

Though this all happened just last year, both wins have been a long time in the making. The 33-year-old Massachusetts native started cooking at age 14, left college to attend the Culinary Institute of America and spent the next few years honing his skills in some of the most prestigious French restaurants in the world, including Guy Savoy in Paris, Lutèce in New York City and Le Bec-Fin in Philadelphia.

When the producers of *Top Chef* came knocking, it took four tries to get the popular young chef on the show. “I had been talking to them off and on for a few years, but the timing never worked out,” Elmi recalls. When he finally made it on the air, Elmi rose to the top — beating all 19 of his competitors to win the \$125,000 grand prize, despite criticism from some fans of the show. “Putting yourself out there is weird,” he muses, “but I didn’t want to change my personality. My wife says I’m not the easiest person to deal with so she was like, ‘everyone’s going to know now!’ But I wanted to be honest. I wanted to be real.”

Elmi’s insistence on authenticity has helped his 26-seat French/American restaurant, Laurel, stand out in a town famous for its dining scene; the eatery has a two-month waiting list for reservations and was recently named the number one restaurant in the city by *Philadelphia Magazine*. Despite the honor, Elmi remains humble. “It’s nice to feel like you’re doing it right, that you’re getting recognition,” he admits. “I take a tremendous amount of pride [in my work], but I try not to read much about myself or the restaurant. My whole team just constantly works to get better every day.”

When he’s not donning a chef’s toque, Elmi can be found at home in New Jersey, where he has a few two- and four-legged helpers in the kitchen. Rounding out the pack, which includes wife Kristen, daughter Grace and son Wesley, is 13-year-old Max, a rescued Maine Coon mix who still has plenty of spring in her step. “She wants to be an outdoor cat so bad,” laughs Elmi, “and she’s very protective of the kids, which is funny for a cat. If my son is upset about something, she’ll jump in his lap. She’s very comforting to them and very snuggly for an old lady,” he says.

Keeping a mature kitty fit has been surprisingly easy; Max stays spry by “hunting” in the family’s fenced-in yard, getting lots of playtime and avoiding extra treats — although Elmi admits that rule can sometimes be hard to enforce. “My daughter’s at the age now where she’ll just go to the fridge and start feeding the cat ham,” he chuckles, “but we mostly stick to cat treats, so she rarely gets people food.”

Elmi says the family hopes to add more pets down the road, which should be fine with Max. “When we go away, she goes to my in-laws’ house, and their neighbors have a dog that Max gets along with. She’s a Cavalier King Charles Spaniel, and they’re buddies.” When it comes time to add more paws to the pack, Elmi can always turn to his friends at the Philadelphia Animal

Welfare Society (PAWS). Elmi has lent a paw — and his culinary expertise — to PAWS’ annual Chefs’ Dinner fundraiser, fusing his passion for pets and his sautéing skills for a good cause. In 2013, Elmi and his fellow participating chefs helped raise \$350,000 for the city’s homeless animals, and he plans to repeat his support at the summer 2015 event.

A hot restaurant, a budding family and a “pet” cause may all seem like a lot to tackle, but Elmi doesn’t mind having a full plate. In fact, he’s set his sights on opening a second restaurant in the coming year. With an entire city behind him and the support of his family (two- and four-legged alike), we’d say this is one *Top Chef* who has the future all but licked.

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A hot restaurant, a budding family
and a “pet” cause may all seem
like a lot to tackle, but Elmi
doesn’t mind having a full plate.
.....

fetching finds for discerning pet parents

Welcome to the *fetch!* marketplace, where you'll glimpse great products, services and innovations to help four-legged friends lick trouble and live life to the fullest. In this, our "Lickety Fit" issue, we're featuring products to pump pups up and keep kitties conditioned. These were hand- (or in the case of Montgomery and Jethro, paw-) picked by our editorial staff, which means we have used them ourselves, we loved the results and we think it's time to wag our tongues about them!

If you would like to learn more about how your products can be featured in *fetch!* marketplace, please email us at adsales@fetch-magazine.com.



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runs in the family

by keith guse

When Carla and Susan adopted Zola, a rambunctious 12-week-old puppy from the Western Border Collie Rescue, they gave life not only to a best friend left behind, but also to a dream.

“We’re both active runners and wanted a dog that could keep pace,” admits Susan, who logs 12 to 13 miles a week pounding the pavement with Carla. “This mischievous Border Collie/Husky mix was a crazy dog right from the start. She was the perfect fit.”

When Zola turned 1 in 2010, she joined her parents on the local trail runs in Centennial, CO. Before long she could jog 5 miles at a time, but her pet parents quickly realized her leash was getting in the way of their form. That’s when the idea for Iron Doggy™ was born.

“We needed a better option,” says Susan.

“So we had the idea to find a seamstress to help create a special hands-free running leash.” But the road of life is often paved with unexpected detours, and Susan and Carla soon needed to put their business idea on “paws.”

While on a trip visiting friends out of town, Zola managed to slip away from safety — she darted into the road and was struck by a car.

The accident left her with a fractured femur and collapsed lung — and left her parents with looming vet bills to treat their best friend’s injuries.

“It was such a stressful time,” recalls Carla. “Zola had to wait



three days in the hospital for her lung to inflate before they could even fix her femur.” Still, time heals all wounds, and after six surgeries and nearly two years of recovery and restricted activity, Zola was given a clean bill of health — thanks to a little help from her friends at Petplan.

“We have a lot invested in this dog, emotionally as well as financially. Having Petplan was better than playing

Time heals all wounds, and after six surgeries and nearly two years of recovery and restricted activity, Zola was given a clean bill of health.

the stock market!” beams Susan. “It allowed us to do all the therapies needed, and our return on investment was almost priceless or \$11,095, to be exact. We

can’t tell you what a relief it has been.”

During Zola’s recovery, Carla and Susan’s leash idea took off running: they quickly learned that lots of other runners were in the same predicament. Since launching in 2011, Iron Doggy’s “Runner’s Choice Hands-Free Leash” has been mentioned right up there with the top dogs of the running world in *Fitness* magazine and more. Both the company and their chief running buddy are now leading the pack in four-legged fitness.

“We’re just happy that we can finally control our crazy dog, and that she’s happy and healthy,” laughs Susan. “But knowing we’re helping others do the same for their furry buddies? That’s a mission we can believe in for the long run.”



I'M STILL HERE, WAITING

I've watched puppies go home to rambunctious owners and kittens leave the shelter with happy young things. But I've not been disappointed. I'm waiting for my person, who takes me on walks, but enjoys a quiet sit on the porch. Who loves companionship more than just play. I've been waiting for you.



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