



Keystone Canine Training Club

Building Location: 5167 Brownsville Road, Pittsburgh, PA 15236 (412) 833-2211

Mailing Address: P.O. Box 921, Bethel Park, PA 15102

www.KeystoneCanine.com

June 2018

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

President

Dan Goldberg

Vice President

Lucy McCloskey

Treasurer

Pam Lewis

Corresponding Secretary/

Membership Chair

Clara Marie Schmalz

Recording Secretary

Donna Latham

Enrollment Coordinator

Debbie Aheimer

Training Director

Pat Warnick

Director At Large

Amy Rusenko

Director At Large

Emil Pohodich

Contact the Board at

Board@keystonecanine.com

Mailing Address P.O. Box 921

Bethel Park, PA 15102

Phone - 412.833.2211

Webmaster

Lucy McCloskey

Newsletter Editor

Debbie Aheimer

Website Editors

Lucy McCloskey

Dan Goldberg

**Content of this Newsletter
has been proof read and approved
by selected Board Members.*



JULY MEMBERSHIP MEETING

TROPICAL NIGHT

WITH TROPICAL SNACKS

PINEAPPLE, COCONUT, MANGO, KIWI

WEAR YOUR TROPICAL ATTIRE

JULY 15, 2018

NO DOGS PLEASE - THEY DON'T LOOK

GOOD IN GRASS SKIRTS!

From the President

Our new Officers and Board of Directors took office in May. The only change is that Amy Rusenko has replaced Mackenzie Hafen as Director-at-Large. I would like to thank Mackenzie for her years of service to the club, both as a Board member as an instructor (which she will continue). I would also like to welcome Amy to the Board. Amy is a long-time member of KCTC, and was instrumental in bringing agility classes into our club back in the 1990s. She served as our Teacup Agility Trial Chair for many years, and most recently has been very active in our Scentwork program. She has a proven track record for getting things done, and I look forward to working with her on the Board.

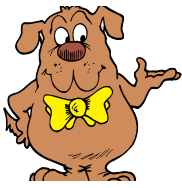
We had another successful WCRL Rally trial May 12 – 13. The trial was actually full on Saturday, and also had good attendance on Sunday. Thank to Trial Chair Bonnie McKeown and her team for all the long hours and hard work they put into the trial.

As previously mentioned, we are having our first-ever Scentwork trial on July 7 – 8. Laura Leonard will be the Trial Chair. We are also having a Mock Trial on June 16, so that you can practice with your dogs in a trial environment. This will also give our trial committee a rehearsal before the real thing. On a personal note, both of our retired agility dogs discovered Scentwork late in life, and it gave them something to really look forward to every week at class. They were old and slow and moped around at home, but were spirited and alert at Scentwork class! I would highly recommend Scentwork as a fun thing to do, regardless of your dog's age.

Doggie quote for the month: "I'm suspicious of a person who doesn't like dogs. But I trust a dog when it doesn't like a person!" -- Unknown

Remember, have fun with your dogs!

Dan Goldberg, President



K-9ers 2018 Schedule

The K-9ers are scheduled to return to Prime Time Adult Day Care in June. Prime Time is located in Christ's United Methodist Church @ 44 Highland Road in Bethel Park, Pa, 15102

Their clients requested a June doggie wedding.

The performance time is 11:00 AM on Wednesday, June 13, 2018.

The K-9ers have returned to do the doggie wedding routine for Prime Time every June for 14 years. I guess they must really like seeing the dogs dressed in their wedding finery.

Thank you,
Caroline Chapman

Volunteers Needed

On June 23rd, Keystone Canine will again participate in the Christ United Methodist Church's 14th Annual Hearts & Paws 14th Annual Pet Adoption and Care Fair. The fair runs from 9:30 am to 3:30 pm. We need volunteers to spend 1-2 hours representing the club at our table & talking with the visitors who walk by. We would also like to have some morning demonstrations of the various classes we offer - agility, rally obedience, family manners, nose work & tricks. If you are able to help out, please contact Rosanne Minich at rd.minich@gmail.com or call or text her at 412-512-5645.

New KCTC Members

Terri Bricker and Sunshine her Keeshond

Linda Cornell and Mandy an All American

Stephanie Frank and Jethro her Basset Hound

Jen Heid with Calvin, Ralph, Steevee Ann, Jordi Benny and Lucas her Cocker Spaniels

Melanie McDonough with Ruby her Australian Shepherd

Thomas Zarichansky and Luna an Australian Shepherd and **Socks** a Cocker Spaniel

Applying For Membership

Sammy Ismael and Taitor his Beagle are applying for membership. They have taken Flyball twice and Agility. He is endorsed by Lucy McCloskey and Clint Connors.

Kim Hrubes is applying for membership with **Harley** a Staffordshire Bull Terrier. She has taken Family Manners I and conformation classes. She is endorsed by Rosanne Minich and Cris Gill.

Megan Smith and Tucker a Labradoodle are applying for membership. They have taken Family Manners and CGC/TDI twice. She is endorsed by Dan Goldberg and Alice Roberts.

Antoinette Young is applying for membership with **Kobe** her Shepherd/Husky mix. They have taken Family Manners I and II. Antoinette is endorsed by Pat Warnick and Cris Gill.

WCRL Rally Trial

Dear Keystone Canine Training Club Members:

As you all know, our WCRL Rally trial was held at the club on May 12 and May 13, 2018. The event was a huge success mainly due to your support. We had a remarkable number of runs at this trial. The most we have had so far especially on Saturday. All the efforts to spread the word, whether by formal publicity or word-of-mouth, have certainly paid off. The club is so very fortunate to have such generous members who make our trials possible and successful. A special note of thanks for the great variety of good food and refreshments. Everybody enjoyed that. Plus, the time and energy put into set up and clean up. Our crews once again outdid themselves in making the building so clean and friendly. Wow! Comments from the competitors were wonderful to hear. The list includes the friendly members, the wonderful food and exceptional baskets. If any of you have suggestions, please do not hesitate to send them to me. This is how we will change and grow.

Many thanks to all of our loyal and energetic volunteers. We truly appreciate all of your contributions.

Bonnie McKeown, Trial Chairperson

WCRL Rally Titles Earned May 12 & 13 at KCTC

We are pleased to list your accomplishments.

A big **THANK YOU** to everyone who entered our trial.

If we missed anyone, let me know at mckeownbonnie@comcast.net.

INTRO

Jennifer May & Zoe RLI
Linda Irwin & Ruffles RLI
Dawn Dinger & Piper RLI
Sarah Maleski & Fletcher RLI
Laurie Schlossnagle & Emme RLI

Individual level Titles

Pam Berman & Sophie RL1
Dawn Dinger & Piper RL1
Rosanne Minich & Bailey RL1
Linda Cordle & Molly RL1
Susan Kruman & Captain RL1
Jennifer May & Zoe RL1
Jen Heid & Steevee Ann RL2
Elayne Swift & Tobias RL2
Sandy Milligan & Avalon RL2
Mary Jo Daly & Nikki RL2

INDIVIDUAL LEVEL CHAMPIONSHIP TITLES

Lorie Ritchey & Pinch RL1X
Paula Shimko & Chloe RL1X
Pia Crouse & Simba RL1X
Diana Squicciarini & Glinka RK1X6
Denise Siefers & Tyson RL2X4
Lorraine Fox & Greta RL2X7
Pam Lewis & Laika RL3X
Lorraine Fox & Greta RL3X5
Charlene Zeleznock & Stella RLV
Denise Siefers & Tyson RLVX
Tena Parker & Shayne RLVX3
Lorraine Fox & Greta RLVX10

COMBINED LEVEL CHAMPIONSHIP TITLES

Shari Caruso & Halo ARCHEX
Tena Parker & Rio ARCHMX

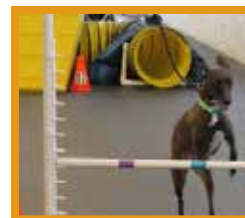
Bonnie McKeown,
WCRL RALLY
Trial Chair

KEYSTONE CANINE ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Tempe Loyalhanna Scent Work Trial
 May 12 & 13, 2018
 Novice B Interiors - 1st
 Novice B Containers - 1st
 Novice B Buried - 1st
 Novice B Containers - 2nd
 Novice B Interiors - 2nd
 Novice B Exterior - 4th
 Novice B Exterior – Q
 Amy Rusenko



KCTC SNIFFERS @ LOYALHANNA



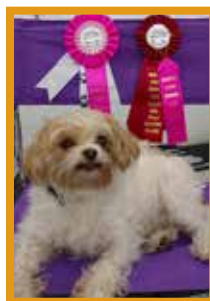
I want to thank everyone who gave **Noah** and me encouragement to participate in his first TDAA agility trial on April 28 at the

club. Although we participated as an FEO entry on lead, for reasons that are well-known to anyone who has been in class with my quirky, independent Italian greyhound, I'm pretty sure I could have had him off lead that day and he would have been with me all the way. And what an unexpected delight to receive the gorgeous teacup and saucer as a memory of the day (don't worry; after allowing Noah to inspect his prize, it went quickly to the safety of the china cabinet). Thank you so much to our current instructors Emil and Amy, and all of our instructors and classmates along the way, for the support and patience that have helped him to come so far. And thanks to Jen Heid for the action shot!
 Angie Carducci

At the WCOTC Scentwork trail **Teagan** earned her Scentwork Buried Novice, Scentwork Interior Novice, and Scentwork Exterior Novice titles to finish their Scentwork Novice title. She also earned her Scentwork Container Advanced title.
 Tracey Miller



Pinch scored a perfect 210 at the KCTC WCRL rally trial in May... her first perfect score! She also earned her 4th double Q toward her championship and a new title RLX1.
 Lori Ritchey



Team **Ruffles** competed at the recent WCRL Rally trial held on May 12 -13 at KCTC. Ruffles earned her Intro Title along with an Award of Excellence and also earned 4 more Q's toward her RL1X2 - four more to go! Thanks to the judges and the entire Keystone team for putting on a top-notch trial - good food, great prizes and the chance to catch up with friends. Congratulations to all the participants, especially the fellow members of our Thursday Advanced Rally class - you rock! We had a lot of fun and I am so proud of Ruffles!
 Linda Irwin



Having fun with your dog is even better when you're also having fun with friends!
Avalon earned her RL2 title at KCTC's



WCRL rally trial last month and had scores of 207, 210 and 208 (for second, first and second place, respectively). I'm proud to be part of a team with such a joyful, talented girl -- and I'm also proud to be learning alongside supportive, talented peers who are always ready to give encouragement. Thanks for a great weekend!
 Sandy Milligan

On May 26th Team **Glinda** journeyed to The Canine Campus in Hubbard, Ohio to participate in Do More With Your Dog Stunt Dog trials! We earned our three foundation level titles: Novice, Open and Proven with high scores with honors! We had a blast! The enthusiastic audience applause was especially appreciated. Thank you, Judge Patty Stafford, and your wonderful crew. Can't wait till our next Stunt Dog trial!
 Love you Glinda!
 Diana Squicciarini



Molly and her Rally Obedience ribbons from the May 12-13 trial. Four qualifying scores, two thirds and a fifth-place ribbon for her classes 1A and 1B, and her Rally 1 Title ribbon. Highest score was 209 (out of a possible 210). We had so much fun! Feeling accomplished with Team Molly!
 Linda Cordle



I'm pleased to share that **Rave** earned her NW2 and baby Winnie earned NW1 at an NACSW event in Loveland, OH in May. They each had placements in individual elements, and each placed second overall in their level. I'm so proud of them! And a big thank you to the scent work team at Keystone for running such a strong program!
 Susan Erickson

Keystone Canine Training Club
Membership Renewal Form
July 2018 – June 2019

Name(s) _____

Address: _____

Home Phone: _____ Cell Phone: _____

Email Address: _____

Dog's Name: _____ Breed: _____

Dog's Name: _____ Breed: _____
(Please attach a separate sheet for additional dogs, if necessary.)

How would you like to help out at the Club? _____

What did you volunteer for since last July? _____

Check here if you have instructed or assisted in at least one session: _____

I/we agree to abide by the Constitution and By-laws of the Keystone Canine Training Club. Also, I/we agree with the Liability Waiver on Page 2.

_____ (Please sign here)

* * * * *

Please mail this form, along with your **check payable to Keystone Canine Training Club** (\$70 for first member plus \$35 for a family membership if there are two or more names above, unless pro-rated) and a **copy of your dog(s)' vaccination records** to:

ClaraMarie Schmalz
2915 Amy Dr.
South Park, PA 15129

Due date: **July 1, 2018.**

Also please fill out the Emergency Contact Information on Page 3. Thank you!

LIABILITY WAIVER

I understand that the classes, seminars, training, instruction, trials and events offered by the Keystone Canine Training Club (KCTC) involve dogs, both my dog and dogs owned by others, and are physical activities that may utilize equipment or other training devices that involve certain inherent risks and dangers of injury or damage to myself, my dogs, and my property. All classes, seminars, training, instruction, trials and events are offered by KCTC without any liability whatsoever on KCTC for loss or damage from disease, death, running away, theft, fire, injury to persons, other dogs, other animals, or property by said dog, or other unavoidable causes. In consideration of KCTC permitting me to participate in KCTC classes, seminars, training, instruction, trials and events, I assume full responsibility for such risks. I further certify that my dog does not pose a hazard to persons or other dogs. I agree to hold KCTC, its members, directors, governors, officers, instructors and assistant instructors, volunteers, agents, other participants, any location or referring organization, and the owner and/or lessor of the premises and any provider of services that are necessary to hold the classes, seminars, training, instruction, trials and events, harmless from any claim for loss or injury which may be alleged to have been caused directly or indirectly to any person or thing by the act of my dog or myself while in or about the event premises or grounds or near any entrance thereto. I personally assume all responsibility and liability for any such claim. I further agree to hold the aforementioned parties harmless from any claim for loss, injury or damage to my dog, myself, and my property. Additionally, I hereby assume the sole responsibility for and agree to indemnify the aforementioned parties harmless from any and all loss and expense (including legal fees) by reason of the liability imposed by law upon any of the aforementioned parties for damage because of bodily injuries, including death at any time resulting therefrom, sustained by any person or persons, including myself, or on account of damage to property, arising out of or in consequence of my participation in this event. This includes injuries, death or property damage that may be caused or may be alleged to have been caused, either in whole or in part, by the negligence of KCTC or the aforementioned parties. I further agree not to sue or bring any claim or claims of any nature whatsoever against KCTC or any of the aforementioned parties.

EMERGENCY CONTACT INFORMATION

(This page will be kept on file at the club in case of an emergency.)

Your printed name: _____

Your signature: _____ Date: _____

Emergency contact name: _____

Phone number(s): _____

How do you greet a dog politely?

Martha Knowles, Author

I was visiting a friend's house for a small social gathering. One of the people visiting brought her beagle puppy to the occasion. Everyone adored the puppy and solicited her attention, immediately wanting to touch or hold her when greeting her. What was telling was that for most of the time that people chatted away at the gathering, the puppy chose to move away from the traffic of people to go sniffing around the apartment in the quieter corners. So, when she had free will to choose where she could go, she chose to stay away. Not much attention is paid to such subtle choices, and you could say there is not much to observe with respect to body language, but the behaviour of the puppy was telling. The fact that she made the choice not to solicit touch or attention and wanted to create more space between herself and the crowd of people speaks quite loudly on its own.

How dogs use and create space when they are interacting with an environment or individual can speak volumes. The amount of space and how it is used are key points. It is also interesting to observe how much confidence and skill individual dogs show in choosing to use the environment by increasing distance, decreasing distance or being able to make the choice to walk away - each dog has his or her own skill set, depending on experience and personality.

It is in our human nature as a species to want to interact with other animals through touch, which we seem to take for granted as an acceptable way for other animals to interact. We might not make the same choices regarding touch when interacting with unknown humans. Patricia McConnell shares some wonderful footage of the interactions of different animal species on her DVD "Lost in Translation". Starting from 7:09 on the first DVD, there is video showing bonobo chimps interacting, followed by footage of humans interacting with their dogs in a dog class. Patricia points out the similarities in behaviour between the humans and the bonobo chimps with relation to interactions involving hands and touch. In the footage you can see humans repeatedly touching their

dogs in the dog class and, similarly, bonobo chimps constantly patting and touching each other during their interactions. The similarities between humans and bonobos using their hands in communication is striking and shows the shared behaviours between us and our primate relations. If you were to watch footage of dogs or wolves interacting, it would not be as common for them to place a paw on each other. In dog interactions, such instances could be seen as rude or bullying. It is worth taking note of the differences in behaviour between the human and canine species and the expectations we may have from a human perspective without considering the canine perspective.

On occasion, while I have been walking my dog, adults, generally accompanied by their children, have approached me and asked permission to pet my dog. Culturally we don't give much thought as to whether such a request by complete strangers walking up to us is appropriate. There are a few questions to consider in such situations: What is considered a polite greeting from a dog's perspective? Has any thought been given to the free will for the animal to choose whether they wish to interact with a complete stranger? Even with social interactions within our own species, touch may be appropriate or inappropriate, depending on whom we are interacting with, how comfortable we feel and the social situation we are in. Imagine a stranger walking up to you and running their hands through your hair or hugging you? The thought feels a bit creepy doesn't it?

How would a dog greet another dog politely?

In dog body language, careful negotiation of space and polite body language is key. Direct eye contact and a direct frontal approach could be seen as confrontational. Communication will normally start at a distance away. One of the dogs may stop and sniff the ground as a calming signal and wait for appropriate body language signals. The dogs may then slowly approach each other in a curve or curving of their bodies rather than a frontal approach. They would take their time approaching, sharing appropriate body language and calming signals. After approaching, they might slowly curve round to sniff behind and then slowly move away from each other. If the sniffs are too

invasive, the one dog may walk away, sniff the ground or give signals that he is not comfortable with too much invasion of space. He may even pee on the ground and walk away to give the other dog a chance to have a better sniff without too much contact. After a short introductory sniff of each other, they may go on their separate ways or stay nearby to share some sniffs of the environment and amble around together.

Dogs usually avoid eye contact when being polite, but they do squint their eyes (called shortening of the eye) or blink when giving selected careful eye contact; both of these could be seen as calming signals. These signals could be used to calm the other party down, as a friendly gesture or to show the other party that they are no threat (depending on the circumstances of the interaction).

So how can a human greet a dog in a polite manner?

- Firstly, do not approach the dog; let him approach you. It is always best to give the dog choice and let him decide whether he would like to approach or not. Allow the dog to have enough space to move away; do not restrict his movement in any way by holding, touching or blocking access to escape by the position you choose to stand in.

- A frontal approach (facing the dog) could be seen as rude or threatening in dog body language; turning your body side-on so your one shoulder is facing the dog is much more inviting. Stand still and wait for him to make the choice whether he would like to approach you or not.

- In dog body language, direct eye contact can be seen as rude and is normally used to warn or threaten. Try to avoid direct eye contact by turning your head away ever so slightly and using your peripheral vision instead. Or if you do give eye contact, do so for short periods, with ever so slightly squinted, softened eyes (slight squinting and softening your eyes will most probably encourage you to smile) or blink slowly when doing so.

- Once the dog has come up and given you a sniff, let him walk away and leave, especially if it is a dog you do not know.

- If the dog guardian is there, it is best to ask for permission if you would like

to pet the dog, and you should ask what type of contact the dog enjoys. Some dogs do not want to be touched; a hands-off greeting is perfectly appropriate and all that is needed. The dog will be perfectly happy with a quick sniff and walk away. I know for us humans it may feel like we have been snubbed, and somehow we don't feel complete without touching. Our egos get bruised easily if there is no contact, and we feel the dog might not like us. There is actually a greater chance of the dog becoming friends with you and liking you if your greeting is a hands-off one. The dog will appreciate your polite gesture of being respectful of his space.

My dog is generally friendly with people and is good-natured, but he does not feel comfortable with all people. It takes time for him to warm up to strangers. His reactions may vary, depending on how comfortable he feels with someone and the situation he is placed in. He may bark at people he is not comfortable with or he may shy away, not masking his fear. It is easier for people to notice fearful reactions when dogs shy away, but they often don't realise that a dog that is barking could actually be fearful too. It may be difficult inviting new guests who are not aware of dog body language into the house, and, depending on the guests' comfort level, it can be overwhelming being given a list of dog body language to follow when interacting with a dog. I generally choose to manage the situation by either removing my dog from the environment or, depending on the person, asking them to just ignore my dog - this

seems to be the simplest instruction if trying not to overwhelm someone. I have the great fortune of having a few friends who are well versed in dog body language, which makes an introduction with my dog so much easier. It is a real joy when I can step back. I had a dog savvy friend come over, and she showed some wonderful body language to introduce herself to my dog. He is a smaller dog, so she crouched down* at a distance, with her body turned away (about three-quarters side-on to my dog). This allowed my dog to make the choice whether to approach. Due to her posture and position, he felt comfortable enough to approach and have a good sniff; he then had the choice to walk away and did not have to endure being touched. This interaction was really positive for him;

he walked away with a relaxed body and gentle tail wag. Due to his space being respected, I have noticed his relationship with this person has grown quickly, as it started on such a positive note. He now seeks out this person when seeing them, approaching with gentle tail wags and a soft body. As this relationship grows and he learns to trust this person, he will allow himself to be touched and will accept scratches with time.

*Just a safety note on crouching down: It does make smaller dogs feel more comfortable if you do not loom over them, so crouching is an option when you interact with small dogs. However, I would not crouch down with a dog you do not know, as this puts you in a vulnerable position. If you misjudge the body language and you make a wrong move, your face is nearer to the dog when you crouch down and is not in the safest position should you get bitten. I would especially avoid crouching down for larger dogs. Turning side-on whilst standing is sufficient for larger dogs. Please take note that if you do crouch down for a small dog, it is better doing so at a distance, as crouching down suddenly into the dog's space could unsettle him.

A hands-off greeting between human and dog is perfectly polite and adequate from a dog's perspective. Invading space can be seen as impolite behaviour and could start the relationship on a bad note.

Sometimes the dog will not show 'calming signals'. What can you observe in situations like this?

Going back to the social gathering and the beagle puppy: At one stage a person was overwhelmed with the cuteness of the puppy and grabbed the puppy to hug it. The puppy landed up lying on its back and being held by the person. Normally you would look for calming signals like lip licks, head turns and yawns as signs of stress indicating how the dog is coping with an interaction. I was surprised there were no calming signals displayed. Did this mean the puppy was comfortable with the interaction and being held in this manner? No, the puppy was not comfortable at all! It is important to look at the body language as a whole - not just the signals.

There may be various reasons as to why signals may not be shown,

depending on the individual. Here are some possible reasons to consider:

- The individual may be too stressed; she may simply be shutting down.
- The dog's signals may not have been listened to in the past, so she does not find it beneficial strategy to use them.
- Each individual has different skills and experiences when it comes to communicating; this may lead to different communication strategies.
- The dog may not feel confident expressing herself directly.

I always feel more comfortable when I see signals and become a bit more wary when I don't see them. It is easier to read when there is direct communication and deliberate signals are apparent. This is why it is vital to listen to and encourage communication.

What body language did I observe in the puppy to know she was not comfortable?

The puppy initially flinched away, her body was stiff and frozen as she was held, her mouth was closed (and you could see a bit more tension around the mouth/lip area), her eyes were large and there was a bit of whale eye (seeing the whites of the eye). When the person let go of her, she immediately chose to walk away, removing herself rather than staying close and did a small shake off (this is when the dog shakes herself ever so slightly as if she were shaking water off, even though she is not wet). The shake off may occur after a stressful event. She then continued to remove herself and walked away to another room.

How do you know whether your dog is enjoying being petted?

I prefer to avoid touching dogs that I do not know and have not yet established a foundation of trust with. In the case of your own dog, if you have built up a relationship with him, you can watch the responses he gives you through his body language. Some dogs are fine and will actually solicit touch; some are not that keen, while some ask for it occasionally on their terms. There are some that prefer petting only from people they know. I would recommend trying a body language observation session

with your own dog and videoing the interaction so that you can look at it objectively.

Even when petting your own dog, it is still worth using polite body language: sit side-on with your one shoulder facing your dog. Once again, try not to give too much direct eye contact. When giving any eye contact, try squinting ever so slightly or blinking slowly. In general, dogs do not really feel comfortable with hands going over their heads, so try slowly moving your hand to the chest area or side of the shoulder. Give a gentle scratch and do so for the count of about 3 seconds, then take your hand away. Observe for body language signals such as lip licks, yawning, head turns, freezing, and try to notice if your dog moves his body away or ducks away. If you see any such body language, the dog may prefer your quiet company without touch. If he leans in or paws for more, then it is very clear he would like you to continue. Sometimes dogs may have a specific spot they prefer to have scratched; each is an individual. Often body language like freezing or walking away is overlooked, as to the uninformed it may look as if nothing is happening, but these subtle signals speak very loudly.

There is another scenario that may occur when you are observing whether your dog is enjoying petting. He may show mixed signals; for instance the dog moves in closer to you for scratches or does not move away but at a point starts showing lip licks. The dog may not necessarily dislike the whole experience, but he may feel conflicted at some stage during it. Sometimes things within the interaction change; the dog may have moved in and been fine with one-handed scratches, but when the person moved to scratching with both hands, the dog may have felt uncomfortable and trapped. Another reason could be that an obliging dog may not have as much confidence to remove himself from a situation; he may have initially enjoyed scratches, but then he started to regret his choice, as the situation might have gotten too much for him. When observing, it is worth giving breaks from scratching, just to monitor whether the dog still wants to be petted. By stopping the scratching, you are really asking, "Is this ok?" and accepting that the situation may keep changing, so it is important to keep watching, reassessing and

readjusting according to what you observe.

I hope this changes expectations and helps to create awareness of how species differ with regard to greetings. What may be appropriate in human terms might not be so in dog terms. Open the conversation, ask for permission, listen and readjust when necessary. A hands-off greeting is perfectly polite in dog terms; being respectful of space will help build trust and will ultimately start your friendship on the right note.

PUBLISHED BY
Martha Knowles

My vision is to create a community of dog guardians who share their observations and interpretations of their dogs' silent conversations. Hopefully, these experiences and stories will provide some insight into dog communication, which is often overlooked by the untrained eye because it is unfamiliar to humans. We are accustomed to communicating mainly with sound, so we are not attuned to the silent subtle gestures and body language used by dogs to communicate. If you take the time to observe, you will start to see these 'silent conversations' going on around you. My dream is for dog communication to become common knowledge with all dog guardians and as many people as possible. Surprisingly, there are still some professionals working in various dog related careers who are uneducated about dog body language. Greater awareness of how dogs communicate will help to provide better understanding and improve the mutual relationship between dogs and humans. This will promote safer interactions between our two species and hopefully remove some of the expectations placed on dogs within human society. I would like dog guardians to feel empowered with their knowledge of dog communication so that they can be their dogs' advocates and stand up for themselves and their dogs when it really matters.

[View all posts by Martha Knowles](#)