

Dear Dog Lover,

Our monthly story at the end of this email: "[A Scaredy-cat Dog](#)"

We'll be closed Dec 20, 2009 until Jan 3, 2010. No classes, no Open Play Times, no Daycare.

Need a unique Christmas gift for your dog or dog-loving friend?

- We have lots of options, for \$2 - \$275.
- Training and mushing equipment, books and booklets, an Iditarod DVD,
- Classes and workshops ranging from \$55 to \$225,
- Daycare and Open Play Times single day or punch cards for \$35 - \$275.

NEW: Open Play Times 2010: For 2010, we'll move the Open Play Times to **Mondays and Fridays**, no Tuesdays. The first day will be Jan 4th. We'll also (again) change the hour from **8-9pm: Mondays and Fridays** will have an overflow hour **for large dogs**, additionally to their regular hour from 7-8pm. The online calendar on our web page will always be the most accurate information (besides calling us ☺). Please check for more details below under paragraph 4).

I added Rally Practice for Rally College graduates on three Thursday evenings in January.

I've moved Tricks 'N Clicks to an earlier date in March.

Like last time you'll find all changes from the December newsletter in **RED** below. Please, even if you're already signed up, check the schedule below to see if your class is affected.

Have a wonderful holiday season and we wish you and your dogs the best for 2010,
Claudia

Below you'll find:

- 1) Information on upcoming events
- 2) Dates and times of upcoming classes
- 3) How to sign up for the classes
- 4) **REVISED:** Information on the Open Play Times
- 5) This month's story: A Scaredy-cat Dog

1) INFORMATION ON UPCOMING EVENTS:

Mushing Seminar 2010:

Mushing Part I: Sunday, January 24th

Mushing Part II: Sunday, January 31st

Mushing Part I - without your dog: \$55

- What equipment do I need? Connecting the dogs to the sled, the harness, booties, musher's gear
- Making your own lines from polyrope (material will be provided)
- The sled – parts, types, driving techniques
- Practical training – sled pulled by snowmachine

Mushing Part II – with your 1-2 dogs: \$75 (Mushing I+II: \$120)

- Safely hooking up the dog(s), “Line Out!”-command
- Practice with your own dog team (1-2 dogs)
- Teaching the dog(s) to pull despite handler being behind them on the sled
- Safe mushing – uphill, downhill, curves, other teams
- How to teach directions
- After the run: checking the dogs for injuries – what if?

If you'd like to try it out before buying all the equipment: we have a couple loaner sleds and loaner dogs, to add to your one-dog-team ☺.

Skijor Seminar 2010:

Skijor Seminar: Sunday February 7th

Skijor Seminar: \$55

For intermediate cross-country skiers – one dog per skier.

- Learn to ski with your dog
- Teach your dog to run in front of you
- Part indoors, then outdoors on trail (at the dog training facility)

2) DATES AND TIMES OF UPCOMING CLASSES:

Behavior classes starting Jan 13th/14th 2010:

Instructor: Claudia

All classes will run for seven weeks, and end Feb 24/25.

Wednesday 5-6pm: [Puppy 1 – Preschool](#) (first week: 6-8:30pm without the dogs)

Wednesdays 6:15-7:15: **FC overflow class** (first week: 6-8:30pm without the dogs)

Wednesday 7:30-8:30: [Foundation Class](#) (first week: 6-8:30pm without the dogs)

Thursday 5-6pm: [Rally Practice](#) on Jan 14, 21, 28; [High School](#) starts Feb 4th, ends Feb 25th

Thursday 6:15-7:15: [Puppy 2 - Kindergarten](#)
Thursdays 7:30-8:30: [Elementary School](#)

Mushing Seminar Jan 24th + 31st 2010:

Instructor: Frank – two time Iditarod finisher

Sunday, Jan 24th, 10am-2pm: Mushing I – without dogs

Sunday, Jan 31st, 10am-1pm or 1-4pm: Mushing II – with 1-2 dogs

Skijor Seminar Feb 7th 2010:

Instructor: Kirsten Ballard – member of the US National Skijor Team 2009

Sunday, Feb 7th, 10am-2pm: Theory and practice – for intermediate and above skiers

Behavior class starting Feb 4th 2010:

Instructor: Claudia

This class will run for four weeks, and end Feb 25.

Thursday 5-6pm: [High School](#) If this class gets cancelled due to lack of interest, we'll continue our Rally practice during this hour. I'll keep you posted here!

Agility classes starting Feb 6th:

Instructors: Claudia/Kat

These classes will run for six weeks, with a break on Feb 13 (Agility Trial) and end Mar 20.

Saturday 10-11:15am (including set-up): [Agility Puppy/Beginners](#)

Saturday 11:15-12:45pm (including change): [Agility Puppy/Beginners](#)

Saturday 12:15-1:45pm (including set-up): [Agility Intermediate](#)

Lunch break: 1:45-2:30pm

Saturday 2:30-4pm (including change): [Agility Intermediate](#)

Saturday 3:30-5:30pm (including set-up + change): [Agility Advanced](#)

Saturday 5-7pm (including set-up + take-down): [Agility Advanced Trial](#)

Behavior classes starting Mar 10th/11th:

Instructor: Claudia

All classes will run for seven weeks, and end Apr 21/22.

Wednesday 5-6pm: [Puppy 2 - Kindergarten](#)

Wednesdays 6:15-7:15: [Elementary School](#)

Wednesday 7:30-8:30: [Tricks 'N Clicks](#)

Thursday 5-6pm: [Puppy 1 – Preschool](#) (first week: 6-8:30pm without the dogs)

Thursday 6:15-7:15: **FC or P1** (first week: 6-8:30pm without the dogs)

Thursdays 7:30-8:30: [Foundation Class](#) (first week: 6-8:30pm without the dogs)

3) HOW TO SIGN UP FOR THE CLASSES:

It's easy!!! On our webpage www.bettercompanion.com, use the menu bar on the left. You'll find a button "Classes", with the subtitle "Registration", which brings you directly to the **one registration form for ALL classes**. After clicking "enroll" at the end, you'll get to the pricing and payment page, which explains all payment options, policies, and allows you to pay online, too. You can also check out the pricing page first, to learn about prices, payment and cancellation policies. **Take advantage of our pre-registration fee by signing up a minimum of 14 days before the start of your class. Please read our cancellation policy – you almost can't lose!**

Puppy 1 Preschool clients, please remember you can also purchase the **Puppy School Packet**, including P1 and P2 class. You only have to commit to the seven weeks of P1 class, and will receive a voucher for P2, valid for 1 full year! For P2 voucher holders, the voucher will be your payment. After you fill out the registration form for P2, you can email me the number of the voucher, mail the voucher to us or drop it off at the facility.

Reserve your spot! Please note **our registration policy: Only the payment will hold your spot.** Spots are reserved in the order we receive payment for them. **Always sign up for the class you want to join**, even if it could be full. Only the payment will keep you on the waiting list, in case somebody else drops out before the class starts. **Your payment is never lost**, even if the class is already full. Your payment will 1) save you a spot at the class, or 2) save you a spot on the waiting list, or 3) can be carried over to a later class, or 4) can be refunded if I couldn't get you in the class you chose, or 5) can cause me to open an overflow class ☺. Just as a note: I sometimes get up to three dogs per class moved in from a waiting list before the class even starts. **We now can take credit card payments over the phone and at the facility.**

4) SOCIAL HOUR - OPEN PLAY TIMES:

Come with your dog for one hour of dog play and dog owner social time. Each dog must be supervised by an adult handler, one dog per handler only. First-timers: bring your vaccination papers, we want to see them!

Fee: \$7 at the door or punch card \$35 for 6 visits. Vaccinated dogs only (5-way/DHPPi, dogs over 6 mo: Rabies, Bordetella). We also recommend having the dog dewormed or a fecal sample checked.

Our Open Play Times (indoors) have become a safe playground for dogs of any size due to the newer size restrictions for each group. Only timid and absolutely non-reactive dogs can be slightly heavier than the group limit. The group from 7-

8pm is limited to 8 dogs, and reservations can be made in advance. Just call us and we explain the details.

Every Tuesday AND Friday (in 2010 every MONDAY and Friday):

5-6pm: toy and small dogs up to 25#

6-7pm: puppies and medium adult dogs 30-50# (giant breed puppies can be heavier)

7-8pm: Large adults over 60# (indoors: 8 dogs max; outdoors: 10 dogs max)

Nov + Dec: Tuesdays 8-9pm: Large Dogs over 60# (if needed)

Fridays 8-9pm: Small Dogs up to 25#

Jan 2010: Mondays 8-9pm: Large Dogs over 60# (if needed)

Fridays 8-9pm: Large Dogs over 60# (if needed)

You can check the web page www.bettercompanion.com for info on classes, facility, and schedule, read testimonies from other students, print out the registration form...

Or contact us by email or phone (see below).

5) A SCAREDY-CAT DOG – FROM KAREN PRYOR’S NEWSLETTER

Karen Pryor is the one who brought clicker training into our households, not only for the dogs, but for our lives. Her web page Clickertraining.com has tons of information, and she organizes the ClickerExpo twice a year, a weekend for clicker trainers to meet, share and learn. This is from her latest newsletter, and if you'd like to sign up for her future newsletters, just go to her web page at clickertraining.com.

A Scaredy-cat Dog

Dealing with fear

I've had a lot of dogs in my life, Labradors and poodles and Great Danes and Border terriers, a Weimaraner, a collie, a golden, and a great mutt named Goulash. But I never had a fearful dog—until the current Dog-in-Residence, Misha, my German spotted poodle. He's ten years old now, and still panics at every sudden sound or strange sight. If a new person or a new piece of furniture comes into the house, Misha has to lift his leg somewhere. If I'm too preoccupied by work, or, God forbid, annoyed with Misha, he vomits and has diarrhea, usually on the dining room rug, which of course makes me more annoyed.

Help from England

Then I read Kay Laurence's perceptive and amusing new book, [*Teaching with Reinforcement*](#). Using her own cluster of sheep dogs and Gordon setters, Kay demonstrates the ways in which our everyday life with our dogs is riddled with both reinforcement and punishment contingencies we may not notice or understand.



I watched Misha for a few days and discovered that a LOT of my "normal" behavior is punishing to Misha. Even his name can be aversive: "Oh Misha, did you do that AGAIN?" Misha is entirely manageable, he knows a lot of tricks, his human and dog manners are splendid—but we need some higher thinking here. Goal: no more anxious looks and slinking around the house. I want daily merriment.

I started by seeing if I could help Misha have a whole day without feeling fear. It turns out that I can. When he pulls back and freezes at something—my briefcase in a new place in the car for instance—I used to think “Oh Misha, get over it.” Then I'd lift him into the car manually. Now I'm learning to give him time to study the situation and cope with it at his own speed. So that reduces some of our chronic conflict.

Our everyday life with our dogs is riddled with both reinforcement and punishment contingencies we may not notice or understand.

Help from Sweden

Next I read the final manuscript of a wonderful new clicker book we are publishing in January, *Agility Right from the Start*, by Swedish trainers Eva Bertilsson and Emelie Johnson Vegh. Here are step-by-step instructions for teaching a dog how to play with toys (teaching an owner to play, too, a lesson I sorely needed). I broke out the clickers and some new, tiny, star-shaped treats that Misha loves. I carefully shaped taking and holding a small ball.

We did that for two weeks, ten minutes a night. Then suddenly, one day at the office, Misha found a tennis ball and exploded into ball play, chasing the ball up and down the halls, throwing the ball on his own, dropping it at my feet for me to throw. Yay Misha! Now he plays with all kinds of toys, even new, strange toys that he used to avoid. Click [here](#) to see Misha playing with his new Pogo Plush toy

Misha and Karen's excellent Christmas present

But wait, there's more. In their book, Eva and Emelie have given us a precise set of clicker exercises for gradually teaching a dog to enjoy making things clatter and bang—knocking down a pile of metal bowls, say. When a dog learns to earn clicks and really

delicious treats by making noise himself, then noisy events and mishaps on the agility field—jumps falling over, the teeter banging, loudspeakers nearby, and so on—become far less disturbing. Of course it would be the same in everyday life, too. So that's my Christmas present to Misha: we're going to do all the exercises in Eva and Emelie's new agility book for teaching a dog to love a commotion.

And you know what?

Being obliged to have some clicker fun with my now-elderly dog is Misha's Christmas present to me.

Here's good news for all of us:

- Kay Laurence will be joining us again at ClickerExpo this season AND she's teaching a [Session on play](#).
- Eva Bertilsson and Emelie Johnson Vegh will also be at ClickerExpo, teaching four amazing clicker [Sessions](#) and workshops based on *Agility Right from the Start*. [Join us!](#)

Happy clicking,

Karen Pryor

I hope you enjoyed this excerpt from Karen Pryor's clicker newsletter, Claudia

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