

Dear Dog Lover,

Our monthly story at the end of this email: “Spring Fever in Dogs?”

Open Play Times: The Open Play Times for Friday, May 28 as well as for Monday, May 31 are cancelled. Happy Memorial Weekend!!! We have already been outside for our Open Play Times, and the dogs LOVE it. They romp around over the young grass, while the owners enjoy the sun, both loading up with Vitamin D. No worries anymore about the dogs marking anywhere, just clean up the #2 eliminations. And if it rains, we can still go inside as well. Especially for the later hours, you might want to bring an extra layer and Mosquito repellent.

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

Enjoy the spring, watching the grass grow and the trees turn green,
Claudia

Below you'll find:

- 1) **Information on upcoming events**
- 2) **REVISED: 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: **Spring Fever in Dogs?****

1) INFORMATION ON UPCOMING EVENTS:

May 15th: Skydance Paragliding is using the building for their Paragliding 101 – Introduction to this sport
Call 841-7468 (Frank) or go to www.skydanceparagliding.com for more information.

2) DATES AND TIMES OF UPCOMING CLASSES:

Drop-in classes running right now:

Instructors: Claudia (NW, RP), January (NW), Cheri (RP)
Weekly every Wednesday until June 30. July/August will be on Thursday evenings.
Outdoors classes in fenced field. **Punch card available online.**

Until June 30th:

Wednesday 6:30-7:30pm: Nose Work (maximum 6 dogs) **FULL**
Wednesday 8-9pm: [Rally Practice](#) (maximum 6 dogs)

Starting July 8th:

Thursday 6:30-7:30pm: Nose Work (maximum 6 dogs) **FULL**

Thursday 8-9pm: Rally Practice (maximum 6 dogs)

Agility classes starting June 5th:

Instructors: Claudia, Kat, Heather

These classes will run for six weeks, with a break on July 3rd (Fourth-of-July-weekend) and end July 17th.

AGAIN NEW TIMES:

Saturday 9-10:15am (including set-up): Agility Puppy/Beginners

Saturday 10:30am-12pm (including change): Agility Puppy/Beginners

Saturday 11:30am-1pm (including change): Agility Skills Training

Lunch break: 1-2pm

Saturday 2-3:30pm (including change): Agility Skills Training

Saturday 3-5pm (including 2x change): Agility Sequencing

Saturday 4:30-6pm (including change): Agility Trialing 1

Saturday 6-7:30pm (including take-down): Agility Trialing 2

Behavior classes starting June 15th:

Instructors: Claudia (HS), Heather/Claudia (P1, FC)

High School runs for 4 weeks (ends July 6th), the other classes will run for seven weeks, and end July 27th.

Tuesday 5-6pm: High School

Tuesday 6:15-7:15: Puppy 1 – Preschool (first week: 6-8:30pm without the dogs)

Tuesday 7:30-8:30: Foundation Class (first week: 6-8:30pm without the dogs)

Behavior classes starting July 21/22:

Instructors: Rose, Claudia

All classes will run for seven weeks, and end Sep 1/2.

Wednesday 5-6pm: Puppy 2 - Kindergarten

Wednesdays 6:15-7:15: Elementary School

Starting Aug 11: Wednesday 7:30-8:30: High School 4-week course, ends Sep 1

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)

Agility classes starting July 24:

Instructors: Claudia, Kat, Heather

Saturday 9-10:15am (including set-up): Agility Puppy/Beginners

Saturday 10:30am-12pm (including change): Agility Puppy/Beginners

Saturday 11:30am-1pm (including change): [Agility Skills Training](#)

Lunch break: 1-2pm

Saturday 2-3:30pm (including change): [Agility Skills Training](#)

Saturday 3-5pm (including 2x change): [Agility Sequencing](#)

Saturday 4:30-6pm (including change): [Agility Trialing 1](#)

Saturday 6-7:30pm (including take-down): [Agility Trialing 2](#)

Upcoming classes:

Starting Aug 11: [High School](#)

Tentatively starting Aug 17: [Puppy 1 – Preschool](#) and [Foundation Class](#)

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 on the pricing page – 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 us 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. Vaccinated dogs only (5-way/DHPPi, dogs over 6 mo: Rabies, Bordetella). We also require having the dog dewormed or a fecal sample checked.

Please note the following dates when we'll be **closed for Open Play Times:**

May 28: No OPT, daycare will be open (Memorial Day weekend)

May 31: No OPT, no daycare (Memorial Day)

July 5: No OPT, no daycare (Independence Day celebration)

First-timers: bring your vaccination papers, we want to see them! Dogs over 6 months, please for the first time come on a Friday, when Claudia and Frank are managing the play times. After that, we'll discuss with you which hour will be best and if you can come Mondays as well.

Fee: \$7 at the door or punch card \$35 for 6 visits.

Our Open Play Times (indoors+outdoors) 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 Monday AND Friday:

5-6pm: toy and small dogs and puppies 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)

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) SPRING FEVER IN DOGS?

We see it at the classes, and at our social hours, the Open Play Times. Towards the end of winter, or during spring, the dogs seem extra antsy. You might already see it at home, too. The dogs forget all their manners, jump up more, pull on the leash more, don't remember how to complete the easiest task like a "Sit". It mostly happens when you take the dog somewhere, like to classes or the dog park. But it also happens at home, where now the yard is available again, there's dirt to dig in, flowers to dig out, pedestrians to bark at, kids to chase.

Winter was a little easier, when the cold kept even the toughest dogs from wanting to stay outside. The deep snow prevented them from taking off, making them exhausted quicker. Throwing the ball three times in the snow was like doing it for ½ hr in the summer. Now it's warmer and the dogs are ready for any adventure, with or without

you. Sometimes they embarrass us when they behave as if they forgot everything we taught them.

When owners come to me in disbelief and frustration, I see several reasons for a dog misbehaving that had already learned some manners.

Reason #1 could be a phase during the dog's maturing process, which can last as long as until 4 years of age. Especially intact males can turn into "airheads", when their hormones kick in. But neutered males or females can also change their behavior during this time, genetics and learning experiences shaping the outcome. We're not helpless against these challenges and we shouldn't give the dog a free pass because of this reason. We need to keep our goals up, and with consistency and patience show them again what they're supposed to do. E.g. when you can't get your 2-yr old dog to sit at the door (even though she usually would), don't give up, and DON'T come with a treat. Just gently take the dog by the collar, to avoid the dog running away. Then patiently invite to a "Sit", and wait. They won't get their freedom back, until they sit. That's all there is to it.

Reason #2 could be a change in the environment your dog is in. Maybe during the winter it was rather calm around your home, and your dog lives on the property. It was easy then to call your dog to you, to come back into the house, at 10°F. Now it's warm outside, the Red Robin's are back, the neighbors have started to walk their dog, and the neighborhood kids are now bicycling up and down the road. These environmental changes pose new distractions to your dog, which he might not be ready for. In this case, it might be helpful to go back to rewarding your dog with a piece of steak, when he comes to you, and a nice play session in the house. You might also have to take some of the dog's freedom away again, like unsupervised roaming outside the house, and instead tether the dog to a chain or only going out with the dog on a retractable leash. Then, you practice with your dog in a controlled situation (leash/tether) and only if your dog shows enough obedience despite those distractions, he earns his freedom back, a little at a time.

Reason #3 is lack of socialization during the winter. As much as people get cabin fever during the winter, when they look forward to their monthly run to town, dogs need their social time as well. Unlike the summer, during the winter they see less dogs and don't get out as much due to weather conditions; they need LOTS of social interaction to make up for that. It would help bringing them to a class to freshen up on their obedience, especially around other dogs as the distractions. It can also be very frustrating for them to come to a class, where they now can see and smell other dogs, but aren't really interacting with them. I sometimes have dogs in the class that seem to be overly distracted by the presence of the other dogs, and keep whining, pulling towards the other dogs, and not being able to keep their attention with their owners at all. Some of them get so frustrated, that they bark at the other dogs aggressively, the source of their frustration. These behaviors can get worse over the course of the class, because that frustration increases with each hour they come. It's important to give those dogs an outlet for their social needs, where they can freely interact with other dogs (as

long as they're still dog-friendly). And other family dogs often won't do the trick. Dogs want to meet OTHER dogs, away from their family and pack members; new dogs that provide new stimuli for them, new behavior patterns, new play styles, new smells. A good mix of free social interaction and classes will help those dogs to get their balance back and to re-learn their manners around other dogs.

One of the most common phrases I get from dog owners is, that he/she should KNOW now. "But he already KNOWS 'Come'!" Most dogs don't KNOW to 'Come' in any given situation until that command has been practiced thousands of times. A dog might know to come in the kitchen. That doesn't mean she knows to come away from a pack of playing dogs. Different situation, different environment, different distractions. All this has to be learned by the dog, with a gradual increase of the difficulty for the dog. And as long as we keep changing the settings, we can't EXPECT the dog to KNOW. And we shouldn't fade out the reward just yet. We can decrease the reward of the Come in the kitchen, but when outside, with birds flying around, mice being noisy in the field and kids shouting, the reward still has to be HUGE, when the dog makes the right decision. A thousand different situations, a thousand different environments, a thousand different distractions, and your dog KNOWS what come means. Then you can probably start expecting your dog to 'Come' in the thousand-and-first situation. Until then, if your dog would have KNOWN, he/she would have COME. Until then, you'll have to decide for each situation, environment, and possible distraction if your dog is ready for the freedom of being off-leash.

There're lots of ways to exhaust your dog while being more on-leash. Our Open Play Times are a wonderful opportunity to practice the recall off-leash with a (sometimes too) dog-friendly dog. We give special private lessons for just the recall, if you already took an initial class with us. Just ask us!

Claudia
Claudia Sihler, CPDT-KA
(Certified Professional Dog Trainer)