

Dear Dog Lover,

Our monthly story at the end of this email: “The Recall – a live saver for any dog”

Summer is short and busy for all of us. Planning ahead is crucial to make sure nothing is overseen. Do you have dog training on your list of projects? Then don't delay signing up, the next class opening might be in 4-8 weeks! Do you have projects on your list where your dog is in the way, like remodeling? Then call us for an opening in Doggy Daycare, where usually same week-reservations can be accommodated. Or relax together with your dog after a strenuous day at our Open Play Times.

To plan the group classes better, including canceling a class in favor for an overflow class, we're changing our pre-registration structure. Prices stay the same, but **pre-registration now ends two weeks prior** to the start of the class. This will be in effect for all classes and seminars starting on or after August 1st.

This summer you can **visit / help us at three local events:**

- 1) On August 7-9 we'll have a booth at the annual dog shows in Palmer on the fairgrounds.
- 2) On August 30 we'll give a **demonstration at the doggy day of the State Fair**, again in Palmer at the fairgrounds.

Let us know if you're interested in volunteering! We'll need playful puppies, ES graduates, and TCC graduates.

- 3) On September 19 we'll give an **agility demonstration at the Willow Dog Mushing Symposium**, at the Willow Community Center.

Responsible Dog Ownership (RDO) Day on Saturday, Sep 12th, and the Pet Partner seminar Sep 25-27 will be held at our facility.

The RDO-day will include a dog gear swap meet, a CGC-test, meet the breed, and other interesting events. The tentative schedule includes a dog first aid class; showing a DVD about traps and how to prevent and help a dog getting trapped; networking about dog blood donors, dog and puppy rescue, dog sports and more. Everything will be free besides the CGC test (\$10) and the dog first aid class (\$40).

The Pet Partner seminar will prepare and test handlers and their dogs to visit nursing homes, hospitals, libraries or schools. Friday evening will be a seminar without dogs from 6:30-8:30pm, Saturday will be a seminar and workshop (half with the dog) from 10am-5pm, and on Sunday dogs and handlers will be tested by appointment. The fee will be \$115 and includes a book, lunch on Saturday, and the test on Sunday.

Contact us for more information and how to sign up.

Enjoy this beautiful summer,
Claudia

Below you'll find:

- 1) **Dates and times of upcoming classes**

- 2) **How to sign up for the classes**
- 3) **Information on the Open Play Times**
- 4) **This month's story: The Recall – a live saver for any dog**

1) DATES AND TIMES OF UPCOMING CLASSES:

Agility classes starting July 18th:

Instructors: Claudia/Kat

These classes will run for six weeks, with a break on Aug 8th (Dog show at the Palmer Fairgrounds), and end Aug 29th.

Tentative times – will change if we need to add or cancel a class:

Saturday 11-12:15am (including set-up): [Agility Puppy/Beginners](#)

Saturday 12:15-1:30pm (including set-up): [Agility Puppy/Beginners](#)

Lunch break: 1:30-2:15pm

Saturday 2:15-4pm (including set-up): [Agility Intermediate](#) (we can open a second class if necessary)

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

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

Behavior classes starting Aug 3rd:

Instructor: Claudia/Rose

All classes will run for seven weeks, with a break on Sep 7th (Labor Day) and end Sep 21st.

Monday 6:15-7:15pm: [Puppy 1 – Preschool](#) (first week: 6-8:30pm without the dogs)

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

High School class starting Aug 6th:

Instructor: Claudia

This class will run for four weeks, and end Aug 27th.

Thursday 5-6pm: [High School – CGC](#) (all weeks with the dog)

This is the preparation class for the CGC-test on Sep 12.

Behavior classes starting Sep 9th/10th:

Instructor: Claudia

All classes will run for seven weeks and end Oct 21st/22nd.

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

Wednesdays 6:15-7:15: overflow class

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

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

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

Thursdays 7:30-8:30: Tricks 'N Clicks

Also coming up 2009:

August 7-9: Booth at the Dog Shows, Palmer Fairgrounds

August 30: Demo at the State Fair – doggy day

September 12: Responsible Dog Ownership Day, with CGC-test!

September 19: Willow Dog Mushing Symposium, Willow Community Center

September 25-27: Pet Partner seminar and evaluation

October: Agility classes starting up indoors, Oct 17th.

October or November: Weight pull seminar

2) 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.

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 fully reimbursed 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.**

3) 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, 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 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 groups from 7-8 and 8-9pm are indoors limited to 8 dogs, and reservations can be made in advance. Just call us and we explain the details. We recommend the later hour for new-comers and new move-ups of 60lbs and more.

Every Tuesday AND Friday:

5-6pm: toy and small dogs under 30#

6-7pm: puppies and medium adult dogs 35-55#

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

8-9pm: Large adults over 60# (indoors: 8 dogs max; outdoors; 10 dogs max)

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).

4) THE RECALL – A LIVE SAVER FOR ANY DOG

Your dog might never be off-leash or never leave the fenced yard. Your dog might – usually – follow you like a shadow. Still, for ALL dogs, not only the ones that are off-leash regularly, coming back to you can be live-saving! Dogs escape, dig, dash doors; kids (and adults) leave doors open, forget that the dog is out there; technical failures, structural fatigue can lead to an opening the dog takes advantage of.

Once they're loose, we can't force them into coming to us. We better have a way of them WANTING to come to us, making it ENJOYABLE to come back to us. We need to consider three things when we practice the recall:

- 1) Avoid common mistakes
- 2) Work within the dog's limitations
- 3) Know how to reward the dog for coming back

Avoid common mistakes:

- If we run after the dog, we make the dog the leader of the “chase me!-game”. Even just following a ‘sniffer’ means we agree to his behavior, no matter what we say while we follow. If the dog is about to run onto the street, following him will NOT change that, running the OTHER direction COULD!
- Calling the dog only at the end of playtime to restrain her is too easy for the dog to anticipate. The faster I come, the faster we stop playing. The slower I come, the

longer I'll get to play. Make sure you don't pair the reward for the recall with something very unpleasant. Keep playing with your restrained dog, to dilute the order of 'come and restraint'.

- Any agonistic behavior towards the dog who came to you can backfire the next time(s). Scolding the dog for coming late or slow, pulling the dog by the collar to you, catching the dog with a fast 'grab'-motion and even just leaning towards the dog can have a negative impact on your dog. Next time they'll think twice about coming to you as close...

Work within the dog's limitations:

- Recall does not equal recall. Just because your dog listens to the word "Come" in the house doesn't mean he 'knows' to come. Dogs don't generalize that easily. Dogs need to learn in which situations you want them to obey. Only after practicing a thousand ways, they'll probably listen to you in the 1001st situation, too. They need to learn to obey with distractions, at greater distances, and in difficult situations.
- Only call your dog when you're quite certain it'll work. Otherwise don't bother, and change the situation first. Get closer, take the distraction away if you can, prepare a reward worth coming for. The more unsuccessful recalls you have, the faster your dog learns how much fun freedom is, and that we really can't force them.
- If you can't afford your dog not listening, because it's too dangerous for the dog, then don't allow your dog to be free. Start working with your dog in safe environments, like the fenced yard, a ball field, or a large area, maybe having a friend with you with another dog that's already reliable on the recall. Competition between dogs can help. ☺ The Palmer Hay Flats or Hatcher Pass might work for you, depending on your dog/breed. Our Open Play Times are wonderful opportunities to practice the recall with distractions in a restricted area (fenced or indoors).

Know how to reward the dog for coming back:

- You want your dog to choose you over the squirrel? Yes, it's possible! But probably not just for "A" treat. It has to be "THE" treat, or even better, another squirrel! If you want the dog not to think twice about it, your reward has to be AWESOME. And the dog needs to know that in advance. So, if you usually use "A" treat for all the recalls, and now, with the squirrel present, you bring out the steak, your dog doesn't even know it! Your dog needs to know, that the "usual" treat IS THE STEAK! So, start using steak, even if it's an easy recall for your dog. That way your dog won't think twice about it, when you call her away from the squirrel.
- Now we don't want the dog to 'expect' steak every time. We want them to 'hope' for steak EVERY time. Sometimes we'll have it, sometimes we don't. Maybe

sometimes we reward the dog for coming by allowing them to go after the squirrel. We know the squirrel is already safe up the trees, so no harm done. The dog won't take off far, because the squirrel doesn't. And the dog will happily come to you, knowing that you'll allow her a little bit of a squirrel chase here and there. Now YOU are the leader of the hunt, telling your dog which ones to chase and which ones to let go.

- Maybe your dog is a ball or Frisbee fanatic? Rope tugger? Find the reward your dog loves, and switch out between praise, food, toy, hunt, or any other reward. My Jack Russell loves to jump in my arm! What better reward for the recall can you think of? She's safe in my arm, and even already rewarded! No treat necessary, only rarely does she get a steak or other treat anymore. Make sure your dog LOVES the close contact with you. My Aussie-mix Sally dislikes being hugged, and only allows it because I paired it with treats. She'll let me do it for the treat, but doesn't really enjoy it, specifically outdoors. Maybe your dog loves car rides? Another wonderful way to safely have your dog confined and reward them at the same time.

Do you have a success story to tell us? About the dog that came back to you even though you didn't think it would work? Tell us about it, and we'll publish it on the web under "Happy Tales". Please give us your dog's name, maybe breed and your first name, and tell us which class you attended or which other services of ours have helped you to that happy ending.

Claudia

Your BetCo Team at

The Better Companion - Regine Dog Training Facility

Claudia Sihler, CPDT

Frank Sihler

Rose Cotter-Lyford

Kat Gambill

Cindi Dupuis (office)

Sandy Wojtaszek (office)

Krystal Mitchell, CPCT (daycare)

(907) 357-2521

betco@mtaonline.net

www.bettercompanion.com

1400 E Regine Ave, Wasilla, AK 99654