

Dear Dog Lover,

Our monthly story at the end of this email: “Dog Parks – good or evil?”

Sign up now for our **Skijor Seminar on Feb 7th**! Looks like we’re getting a good track here, with fresh snow right now!

We also have little room left for our **Mushing Seminar**. Part 1 will be on Jan 24, 10am-2pm, and Part 2 will be on Jan 31, 10am-1 pm. If we get **more participants**, we’ll have **Part 2** for those people **on Feb 7, 2pm-5pm** after the skijor seminar.

NEW CLASSES are added starting in February: We’ll start our first Tuesday evening classes on Feb 9th. We’ll offer Puppy 1 – Preschool and Foundation Class, the two starter classes for new dogs of any age. _

The High School Class planned for February might be canceled to give way for the higher demand on Rally practice. **UNLESS, we get enough sign-ups by Jan 27 (Wednesday)**, to override the Rally demand ☺. **What is High School:** Practice for a Canine Good Citizen (CGC), in 10 everyday situations. No matter if you are planning on taking the CGC-test later or not, this is good practice for behavior in public. Skill/class requirements: best done after graduating from Elementary School, but also possible already after Foundation Class, if your dog is quite well-mannered and has already learned some stay with walking away.

Like last time you’ll find all changes from the January 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 snow, and the increasing daylight with every day,
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) Information on the Open Play Times
- 5) This month's story: Dog Parks – good or evil?

1) INFORMATION ON UPCOMING EVENTS:

Mushing Seminar 2010:

Mushing Part I: Sunday, January 24th

Mushing Part II: Sunday, January 31st and Sunday, February 7th (Participants will come on one of these two days)

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:

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 Sunday, Feb 7th, 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

Canine Good Citizen 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, we'll continue our Rally practice during this hour. I'll keep you posted **at the practice!** **Decision day: Jan 28.**

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 Feb 9th:

Instructor: Claudia

All classes will run for seven weeks, and end Mar 23rd.

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 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)

Agility classes starting Mar 27th:

Instructors: Claudia/Kat

These classes will run for six weeks, with a break on Apr 24 (Agility Trial) and end May 8. (Agility trial May 15 ☺)

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 May 12th/13th:

Instructor: Claudia

All classes will run for seven weeks, and end June 23/24.

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

Wednesdays 6:15-7:15: **FC or P1** (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 College](#)

Thursday 6:15-7:15: [Puppy 2 - Kindergarten](#)

Thursdays 7:30-8:30: [Elementary School](#)

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

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) 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 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) DOG PARKS – GOOD OR EVIL?

Lots of discussion has been going on about the benefits and dangers of dog parks. First of all, what IS a dog park? It's basically a public place where dog owners are allowed, and encouraged, to meet other dog owners and their dogs. These designated areas can be open or fenced in. Some have specific rules set, which could include the vaccination status of the dog, a current license, wearing a tag for proof, clean up after the dog, and more.

Here's an example for a fenced dog park in Kansas City, Missouri:



The dog park had a designated area for smaller breeds as well; it was close to an animal shelter, to give people who walk shelter dogs and those who adopted a dog from that shelter an opportunity for off-leash exercise and socialization. The biggest benefit of a dog parks is **socialization and exercise** of the dog. If everybody follows the rules above, it should be a positive experience for all dogs and their two-legged fellows.

Unfortunately, not all dog parks have safety rules like these, and very few dog parks have the man power to enforce these rules. Some dog parks, specifically if created and maintained by a club, will be able to enforce these rules through their own members, who frequent the park on a regular base.

In dog parks, owners often detach themselves from their dog and allow the dog to freely interact with any other dog(s). They get busy chatting, live or on cell phones, and let the

dogs 'figure it out' by themselves. One big negative to dog parks is the lack of or little supervision. Dogs can become **stressed and bullied** by other dogs and no longer have fun encounters. Owners may not pay attention to the effect other dogs are having on their own dog. And let's not forget about the little stinky piles being left behind, if nobody observes the dog for going #2.

At the end of the dog park visit is the dog exhausted from happily playing? Or could he/she be exhausted due to the stress and anxiety the park and the other dogs caused? Maybe YOUR dog was happy, but caused other dogs to get nervous? It doesn't take a vet bill to have an undesirable experience at the dog park. Dogs can be mentally traumatized from stress and anxiety. Next time your dog interacts with another dog, observe them both for signs of fun or stress. Look for this canine body language:

Fun: loose body posture, moving, tongue lolling around, tail loosely wagging or even circling, happy eyes, play bow ...

Stress: tail tucked, slow moving, freezing, mouth shut, short lips, 'moon eye' (seeing part of the white), dilated pupils, lots of 'looking away', trying to slowly walk away from the situation, being more on the ground than standing up, tucked tail when being chased ... Just one of these signs indicates stress and the dog is no longer having fun but trying to avoid confrontation.

Dog parks are often fenced in not only to show the boundaries to dog lovers and people who'd like to avoid them. The fence keeps the dogs safely away from traffic and other hazards. It also allows people to take their dog **off-leash even though they can't reliably call them back**. Their dog isn't that obedient – yet. But is that really a benefit of the dog park??? Wouldn't you prefer meeting a dog that can be called back to its owner, if your dog seems stressed? Or is it ok if the owner just shouts "don't worry, my dog is harmless!", while the dog darts in a beeline directly to your dog.

Dog parks are convenient places to **PRACTICE OBEDIENCE** with your dog, even under very distracting circumstances. If you don't 'give up' and instead work with your dog, you'll be able to enjoy the park, your dog, and the socialization. **Other dog owners will enjoy your company, too**. They might even be compelled to practice with their dogs as well. It could become contagious: A snowball effect!

We try to encourage the people who come to **our Open Play Times** to **practice the recall** during these times. Dogs have become more reliable around their walks after having practiced at the Open Play Times. We also show you how to **become a good advocate for your dog**, so that you can take that knowledge with you when going to another dog gathering, like a dog park.

If you feel the dog park in your area is not safe for your dog, or your dog is not suited to join the dog park, then consider other ways of getting your dog tired: There are lots of dog sports available, which not only exercise your dog, but also strengthen the bond between you and your dog, because '**you're in it together**'! You can choose between **agility, flyball, obedience, Rally, tracking, carting, skijoring, mushing, weight**

pulling, lure coursing, hunting, field work, dock jumping, search and rescue, or even go into therapy dog training ... I hope I didn't forget anything important offered here in Alaska. A new sport coming up for all dogs is called **K9 Nose Work**. There's a seminar in Anchorage about this new sport coming up in March. If you're interested, I can email you the information about it!

And now enjoy your dog, sporting or playing,

Claudia

Your BetCo Team at

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