

Dear Dog Lover,

Our monthly story at the end of this email: “Allowing the dog to pull – is that smart?”

We’re now ready to take sign-ups for our **Weight Pull Workshop in November**. If you’re interested in joining our skijor or mushing seminar this winter, and your dog doesn’t know how to pull yet at all, this workshop is a highly recommended pre-requisite for that! Read about the exact times and dates below in the class section.

Our **last behavior classes of the year start Oct 27/28** (in less than two weeks!). Looking at the sign-ups and interest in the different classes, we have re-structured a little to offer more overflow classes. We’ll cancel Elementary School, and offer an additional Puppy 1 and Foundation Class instead. So one overflow class will be on Wednesdays, 6:15-7:15pm, and one on Thursday, 6:15-7:15pm. We’ll discuss at the seminar, which class will go where, and which dogs go in the original or overflow class. Even the **overflow classes are filling fast, so if you aren’t signed up for a class yet, this is your chance!** All P1 and FC students will come to Thursday’s seminar together. We also have **a couple spots left in our Rally College**.

Like last time you’ll find all changes from the October 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 beautiful fall, get out with your dog(s),
Claudia

Below you'll find:

- 1) Information on upcoming events
- 2) **New classes and workshops:** Dates and times of upcoming classes
- 3) How to sign up for the classes
- 4) Information on the Doggy Daycare and Open Play Times
- 5) This month's story: **Allowing the dog to pull – is that smart?**

1) INFORMATION ON UPCOMING EVENTS:

2) DATES AND TIMES OF UPCOMING CLASSES:

Drop-in classes running right now:

Instructors: Claudia (NW, RP), January (NW)

Weekly every Tuesdays we can offer 2 classes back to back.

Indoors or outside – please bring clothes accordingly. Punch card available online.

Nose Work (maximum 6 dogs – please call to reserve a spot):

Tuesdays 5:15-6:15pm
Tuesdays 6:30-7:30pm
No classes on Nov 23rd (week of Thanksgiving)

Rally Practice (maximum 6 dogs):

Only on Oct 24th and 31st. We'll set up an Advanced course.
Sunday 10am-12noon (including set-up and take-down):

Behavior classes starting Oct 27/28th:

Instructor: Claudia

All classes will run for seven weeks, have a break for Thanksgiving on Nov 24/25, and end Dec 15/16.

Wednesday 5-6pm: Puppy 2 - Kindergarten

Wednesdays 6:15-7:15: P1 or FC overflow class

Wednesdays 7:30-8:30pm: Rally College (will happen!)

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

Thursday 6:15-7:15: P1 or FC overflow class

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

Weight Pull Workshop Nov 13/20th:

Instructor: Kat

Each of the two sessions will be 1.5 to 2 hours, depending on the number of participants.

Dogs need to be 1 yr or older.

Saturdays, 1-3pm: Weight Pulling

Upcoming classes:

Nov 27: Agility classes

Nov 30: Puppy 1

Jan 2011: Mushing and Skijor Workshops; more behavior classes

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 and workshops**. 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 voucher number, 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) DOGGY DAYCARE AND OPEN PLAY TIMES:

Doggy Daycare: Our regular hours are now from 6am-7pm. That means **NO SURCHARGE for drop-offs any time after 6am!**
The fee for the monthly daycare is \$325.

BetCo will be closed Dec 18 - Jan 2

Last Daycare Friday, Dec 17th, 2010

Daycare resumes Monday, Jan 3rd, 2011.

If you get a monthly pass that starts after Nov 18th, we'll add 14 days to make up for that time.

Open Play Time: 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.

BetCo will be closed Dec 18 - Jan 2

Last Open Play Time Friday, Dec 17th, 2010

Open Play Times resume Monday, Jan 3rd, 2011.

First-timers: bring your vaccination papers, we want to see them! Dogs over 6 months, please for the first time make an appointment with us to 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 adult dogs over 60# (indoors: 8 dogs max; outdoors: 10 dogs max)

8-9pm: By appointment only

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) ALLOWING THE DOG TO PULL – IS THAT SMART?

We often hear that people are uncertain if they can allow their dog to pull a cart or sled, because then they'll pull more when on a regular leash as well. And we have heard it the other way around, that people that want their dogs to pull, like for mushing or weight pulling, can't teach their dogs to walk politely on a leash, because then their dogs won't pull anymore when they're supposed to.

No matter which way around it is, it clearly takes a little more effort if your dog for years was taught the one way, and all of a sudden is supposed to do the opposite. Another habit that forms is where the dog walks in relation to you. It'll be harder to teach a dog that for years walked besides you to walk now in front of sled and musher or the bicycle; and it will be harder to teach a lead dog from a mushing team to now walk besides you.

That doesn't mean you can't do it. And with a younger dog, it'll be even easier. And yes, they can learn to do both, pulling and not pulling. We just need to be very clear telling them when we want which.

Let's take the sled dog that's supposed to walk on a loose leash, and still should pull a sled in the winter, or even a cart in the summer. The harness they wear for pulling is one big cue for what we want, and the sled or cart itself is another. If none of those is around, and we instead put a head halter on the dog, it's clear that now is the time NOT to pull. Consistency is the cue, instead of excusing the pulling with "oh well, it's (or used to be) a sled dog".

Now let's look at the pet dog, who learned to walk beside us and now should pull the cart or sled. Which dogs are chosen to be good pulling prospects? The ones that already have a hard time walking on a loose leash. The ones that show us their power every day, making it hard for us to exercise them properly, having that seemingly endless energy. Wouldn't it be wonderful, if we could put a break on them, putting them in a lower gear, and at the same time exercise them even harder? Imagine your dog walking with you on a trail, having to pull something the entire time. That will slow him down, and wear him out faster. And he's pulling something else, while you walk next to him on a loose leash. Bingo, he can learn loose-leash-walk even faster now! And if you just worked with your dog pulling something over the property, don't you think it'll be

easier after the dog got tired from pulling, to take her now on a walk and have her NOT pull?

The first thing we do again, is introducing the dog to the pulling harness, which will be the biggest cue to pull. Those harnesses are designed to make it very comfortable for the dog to lean into them. The next step is again consistency. If your dog's leash is connected to his collar or head halter, no pulling is accepted. No excuse like "he's in a weight pull class right now" can change that rule. If the rope is connected to the pulling harness, and the pulling command is given, your dog is encouraged to lean into the harness as hard as he can. You can train with your dog loose leash walk right before the weight pull class, and even walking towards our facility when coming to another class or to Open Play Times. The change of the leash connection plus harness (head halter off, pulling harness on) tells the dog when exactly the "pulling permit" starts.

Some of the greatest weight pullers of Alaska were best behaved dogs coming onto the track. They were Labrador Retrievers, also trained for hunting, and would enter the track heeling with the owner, then sitting or standing still to be connected to the cart. Only when the owner gave the command, they started pulling like crazy, and have won lots of prizes and prize money throughout their career.

So is it smart to teach your dog to pull? Absolutely YES, as long as the rules are clearly set for the dog!

Here's a picture of one of those Labrador Retrievers at a local Weight Pull competition, in Dec 2003.

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

Your BetCo Team at
**The Better Companion - Regine
Dog Training Facility**
Claudia Sihler, CPDT-KA
Frank Sihler, Iditarod Finisher
Cindi Dupuis (office)

(907) 357-2521
betco@mtaonline.net
www.bettercompanion.com
1400 E Regine Ave, Wasilla, AK 99654

