

Dear Dog Lover,

Our monthly story at the end of this email: “The Alpha Fallacy”

We'll offer our first **Beginner Nose Work Class** as a 6-week class starting March 22nd. For anybody that would like to try out this new sport, and the ones that already enjoyed our drop-in style classes and aren't on odor yet, this is the class you want to join. The advanced level keeps its drop-in style.

The next set of Behavior Classes starts March 9/10. If you're right now in Puppy 1, you can already reserve your spot for Puppy 2. If you're currently enrolled in the Puppy 2 or Foundation Class, make sure to reserve a spot in the Elementary School Class! Anybody else, **Tricks 'N Clicks** might just be the right class for you! Want to turn your dog into a little household helper, cleaning up their toys, and maybe even your stuff? We teach you how to train your dog to show tricks like Roll-Over, jumping through a hoop, close the door, bring the remote, and open the fridge – oh wait, not the last one!!! ☺ The class will be at a convenient time at 7:30pm. Tricks 'N Clicks is only offered twice a year, usually once at 7:30 and once at 5pm.

We start more Agility classes Mar 26th and have some openings. Times are listed below under classes.

I want to invite you to a couple seminars happening at other facilities: “When Pigs Fly” is an **agility seminar** by Jane Killion held here in the Valley March 5/6. On March 18-20 Suzanne Clothier will be at the Alyeska Canine Trainers in Anchorage, talking about **healthy relationships and humane training**. Both are well-known speakers all over the country and beyond. Read more about those two events and how to sign up below under “Upcoming Events”.

Our online schedule can look very confusing. Don't hesitate to call us to help you decipher it! Especially the Tuesdays in March are quite loaded.

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

Enjoy playing in the snow,
Claudia

Below you'll find:

- 1) Information on upcoming events/ workshops
- 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: **The Alpha Fallacy**

1) INFORMATION ON UPCOMING EVENTS:

Jane Killion – When Pigs Fly

Train Your Impossible Dog – Solve Problems

Using free-shaping in agility training for basics and to solve problems. Jane works a lot with non-agility breeds, dogs that aren't bred to "fly" over the course.

March 5/6, at the Valley Canine Camp, Wasilla. For more information including sign-up, go to <http://alaskaagility.org/>.

Suzanne Clothier

Improving healthy relationships and humane training

Suzanne will on Friday evening look at the issues of power and leadership; on Saturday focus on the dog, its individuality, personalities, matches and mixups; and on Sunday talk about how to work with fearful, shy and reactive dogs.

March 18-20, at Alyeska Canine Trainers, Anchorage. For more information and a sign-up form, go to <http://www.alyeskak9trainers.com/events.htm#clothier>.

2) DATES AND TIMES OF UPCOMING CLASSES:

Drop-in classes running right now:

Instructors: Claudia, January

Weekly every Tuesday

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

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

- Beginners and Intermediate: Tuesdays 5:15-6:15pm – last drop-in will be Mar 1– please contact us if you're interested!
- Advanced: Tuesdays 6:30-7:30pm – Mar 8 and 15 will most likely be field practices

Rally Practice:

- Tuesdays 7:45-9pm (please come on time for course set-up) – last Rally Practice on April 5th

Flyball Beginners Class starting Mar 8th:

Instructors: Karla (+ Linda)

The class will run for 4 weeks and end Mar 29th.

Flyball Beginners (**with** your dog): Tuesdays 5:15-6:15 or 6:15 -7:15pm

Behavior classes starting Mar 9th/10th:

Instructor: Claudia

All classes will run for seven weeks, and end April 20/21.

Puppy 2 - Kindergarten: Wednesday 5-6pm

Elementary School: Wednesday 6:15-7:15

Tricks 'N Clicks College: Wednesday 7:30-8:30pm

overflow class: Thursday 5-6pm

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

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

Nose Work Beginners Class starting March 22nd:

Instructors: January, Claudia

The class will run for 6 weeks and end Apr 26th.

Nose Work (**with** your dog): Tuesdays 5:15-6:15 or 6:15 -7:15pm

Agility classes starting Mar 26th:

Instructors: Claudia, Kat

The classes will run for 6 weeks, with a break on April 30th (for an agility trial held in the Valley) and end May 7th.

Agility Puppy/Beginners: Saturday 10am-12pm (class 10:30-11:30am)

Agility Skills Training: Saturday 11:30am-1pm (class 12-1pm)

Lunch break: 1-2pm

Agility Sequencing: Saturday 2-4pm (class 2:30-3:30pm)

Agility Trialing 1: Saturday 3:30-5pm (class: 4-5pm)

Agility Trialing 2: Saturday 5-6:30pm (class:5-6pm)

Upcoming classes:

This summer will be filled with Agility outdoors, Nose Work and more Flyball action besides our regular classes! Watch our schedule for upcoming classes and events.

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. We need to know your dog before coming to daycare. Also appointments/ reservation is necessary.

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.

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 our 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: puppies, 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 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) THE ALPHA FALLACY

This is from the Training Textbook of Dr. Ian Dunbar's web page www.dogstardaily.com.

The

Alpha

Fallacy

It is popularly held that rank is established and maintained by physical strength and dominance and that the more dominant (i.e., higher ranking) dogs are more aggressive. Hence, dogs that frequently threaten, growl, fight and bite are often assumed to be "alpha" animals. Not so Joe! The above assumptions are quite awry. Not only do they betray a theoretically simplistic view of

a most sophisticated social structure but also, such notions tend to be counterproductive, inhumane and dangerous when cavalierly extrapolated to dog training, or the treatment of behavior problems.

In reality, a growly, macho topdog is a rare find. Topdogs seldom growl — they don't need to. A true topdog is usually a pretty cool customer, who is secure and confident of his (or her) privileged position and has no need to fluster and bluster to bolster up his rank. Moreover a true topdog is more likely to share a toy, a bone, or a sleeping place, than fight over one. On the other hand, bottom-ranking dogs rarely growl either. The prime directive of a low ranking individual is to maintain a low profile. Barking, growling and snarling only draw unwanted attention and if it came to a fight, the underdog would most certainly lose.

A topdog has little need to threaten and an underdog would be crazy to. Without a doubt excessive growling and repeated fighting are indicative of an underlying insecurity and uncertainty about social rank vis-a-vis other dogs. Protracted, blustery displays of aggressiveness are the hallmark of middle-ranking males.

Subordinance

Hierarchy

When the framework of a successful hierarchy is viewed in a developmental context, it becomes apparent that subordinance hierarchy is a more descriptive term for canine social structure. Maintenance of an existing hierarchy depends on underlings advertising their respect for higher-ranking individuals. The status quo is maintained because, lower-ranking individuals seldom challenge authority and so only occasionally, is there need to enforce higher rank with a display of physical, or more likely psychological, dominance.

Growing up around larger pups, adolescents and adult dogs, puppies simply cannot compete on the social scene in view of their smaller size and inferior physical and psychological strength. Thus, puppies learn their station in life well before they become sufficiently large and strong to be a threat to the established order. Most adult dogs are quite lenient with young pups until they approach adolescence, whereupon adults (males especially) relentlessly pursue, stand-over and growl at the adolescents (males especially). Even so, harassment by adult dogs is largely psychological, rather than physical. It would be a perversely undersocialized adult dog, which physically beats up young puppies.

Nonetheless, during the crucial puppy/adolescent stage of hierarchical development, youngsters are perpetually intimidated and harassed by adults and understandably learn to respond with exaggerated appeasement gestures to assuage the torment from their elders. Moreover, young adolescents quickly learn that bother from older dogs may be largely prevented by taking the initiative and demonstrating active appeasement before they are harassed. The pups' preemptive apology characteristically comprises: a low slung, wriggly approach with ears back, submissive grin and with tail and hindquarters awag. The youngster may paw the brisket and lick the muzzle of the older dog. The infantile pawing and muzzle-licking food-soliciting behaviors of puppyhood now acquire new meaning and are retained as neotenic appeasement gestures in adolescence and adulthood. In addition, the underdog may rollover and lift a leg to expose his inguinal region. And some may submissively urinate. Adult dogs may determine the age of a puppy/adolescent from the smell of the youngster's urine.

From this stage on, higher-ranking dogs need only chastise those individuals that do not voluntarily show deference and respect in their presence. Fighting and physical dominance rarely come into play during the maintenance of hierarchical harmony. On the contrary, the

major function of hierarchical structure is to lessen the amount of fighting. Once established, the hierarchy provides most of the solutions before problems arise. For example, when there are two dogs but only one bone, the ownership of the bone is pre-decided and therefore, there is nothing to fight about.

As a role model, we should always bear in mind the geriatric Yorkie, who habitually lords it over the two-year-old Great Dane. Any attempts in physical domination would no doubt end in one gulp. Instead the Yorkie patiently and gently, yet confidently and firmly trained the Great Dane by defining and setting limits for appropriate behavior. The Yorkie had the forethought and common sense to take the time to train the Great Dane at the right time — when he was still a puppy. Perhaps we should learn from this and do the same with pet dogs. Indeed, using brain over brawn to educate young puppies is the only safe, expedient and efficacious means for children to gain respect from adult dogs. Mental control is the key to success.

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

Your BetCo Team at
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