

Dear Dog Lover,

If you receive at any time an email from us with HUGE font, please be assured we DON'T do that. It's a glitch in the Microsoft software, and we can't seem to get a handle on it. So a font of 110 or 120 is not on purpose, but an accident. The software ignores the dot of the 11.0 or 12.0 font for just parts of the email as it gets sent.

Our monthly story at the end of this email: **Open Play Times - how rambunctious is ok?**

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

If you receive this email in full html, you can just [click on the events underlined and in blue](#) to get to the correct page on our web site!

➤ **Open Play Time in 2012:**

- Starting January 2012 **we'll offer OPT only on Fridays.** Times stay the same, with 5-6pm for dogs up to about 20#, 6-7pm for dogs 30-50# and 7pm for approved dogs over 60# . For weights in between please contact us! We evaluate dogs at 8pm and 8:30pm by appointment on Fridays, especially before they join the 7pm group.
- **The 6pm OPT is now restricted to 12 dogs,** and we WILL send home any additional dogs. Please reserve a spot for your dog or call in before you come to make sure we have room for your dog. We'll have for the last time 14 dogs on Feb 17.

➤ **Free short training sessions:**

During March 10-24, **I'll need 4 different dogs to teach them a skill**, three of them by coaching the handler, to earn a newly available degree. Those dogs can know me, but can't be already trained by me and shouldn't know the skill they get taught. If you're interested in **getting a short free training session with me** most likely on a Friday, which will be taped and sent in to the testing agency, please contact me! This is your chance to get to meet me and to learn more about the training style we use here at the facility.

➤ **Classes March 2012:**

- **Nose Work or C.L.A.S.S.?** Due to the high interest in Nose Work, we're considering adding a Nose Work Beginners class starting March 6th, 5-6pm. [Please contact us if you're interested](#) in taking that class! This spot is competing with an **overflow C.L.A.S.S. Course**, so I also need to know how many are interested in that. I'll make my decision based on YOUR responses [by Feb 23rd](#).
- **Rally College or Elementary School?** We also had enough inquiries about continuing obedience after P2 or FC, to consider offering an **Elementary School** starting March 7th, 7:30-8:30pm, instead of our Rally College. Please contact us if

you're interested, even though you just want to switch your existing registration over to that class! I'll make that decision also by Feb 23rd, so please don't delay letting us know!

- **Does your dog have C.L.A.S.S.?** Practice real-life skills in our CLASS-BA Course starting March 6, then test your dog to earn a Bachelor's degree! B.A. skills include wait at the door, come and leashing up manners, loose leash walking and attention, meet and greet (people), leave it, wait for the food bowl, stay, and settle. This course is a 6-week class, with maximum 6 dogs. All exercises will be practiced in form of games and role plays, including some higher level (M.A., Ph.D.) exercises each week as well. The fee for this course is \$120 pre-registration or \$130 regular fee. There's no second class discount available for CLASS Courses, due to their restriction to 6 dogs.
- For the **Puppy 2 Class starting March 7**, we have **one payment by credit card without a name**. If you paid for this class and have not received an email confirmation for your payment, **please contact us!!!**
- For our **Rally College starting March 7th**, if it happens (see above), we'll allow **Rally College graduates to drop in** with their training punch card (or single payment), depending on spot availability. We'll contact you individually in case Rally College gets cancelled to make room for another class.

➤ **Other News:**

- **The kennel cough is on the rise again!** This is the typical time for kennel cough to spread through the pet population, starting with a big dog show in Anchorage and more dog teams on the mushing trails preparing for the big races. We didn't have any known case at our facility (yet), but it has already come to the Valley. At this point we **recommend to renew any Bordetella/ kennel cough vaccine that is over 6 months old**, instead of waiting for it to expire after 1 year. This is our recommendation, not a requirement. We require Bordetella for all daycare dogs once a year, want Bordetella on at least 90% of all dogs over 6 months of age in our classes, and highly recommend it for all dogs at Open Play Times. We understand that you might want to try out our OPT first before spending the extra money on that vaccine, but our **regular visitors at OPT should have Bordetella protection** for their dogs. You CAN vaccinate an 8 week-old puppy already, we just don't require it at that young age, to allow you to split up all the necessary vaccines your dog needs.
- Get your dog's **snow suit** to be ready for next year! We now have **all sizes in stock!** Price ranges from \$28-\$34.
- We have **new state-of-the-art chest harnesses** available, called the **Freedom Harness**. They are anti-pull harnesses like the Easy Walk Harness we stock, just a little different design.

The online calendar can look very confusing. Please don't hesitate to call or email us with any questions about upcoming classes or practices.

Enjoy the spring-like weather,
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: **Open Play Times - how rambunctious is ok?**

1) Information on upcoming events:

No events scheduled at this time

2) Dates and Times of Upcoming Classes:

- A) Drop-in Practices (Nose Work, Rally, Flyball)
- B) Behavior Classes (include Rally and Tricks class)
- C) Sports Classes (Agility, Treibball, Nose Work and seasonal sports)

A) Drop-in Practices:

Indoors or outside – please bring clothes accordingly. Training punch card available online. One card for all practices!

 **Nose Work Advanced** For 'Intro to Odor' Graduates:
Supervisor: January/Claudia

Practice on Mondays, 7:45-8:45 at the facility, ending Mar 5. We might add an 'outing' on Mar 12. TBA.

Practices start again Monday, April 2nd, meeting at 6:30pm already!
Reservation required.


 **Rally Practice** For Rally College Graduates:
Supervisor: Claudia/Ella-Kate

Practice on Thursday, Feb 16, 7:30-8:30 at the facility. Come 15 min early to help setting up.

We'll allow Rally Practice participants to drop into our Rally College Class depending on availability of spots.

Rally Class starts Wednesday, Mar 7, 7:30-8:30pm, weekly, and ends Apr 11.

Reservation required.

 **Flyball Practice:**
Supervisor: Karla

No further practices planned so far.

If the demand is there for some **indoors box work** at our facility, Karla can set something up for a Tuesday in February. **Contact us or Karla if you're interested!**

B) Behavior Classes (include Rally and Tricks class):

Listed are start dates. The classes will run once a week for 6 weeks.

Puppy 1 – Preschool:

Thursday, Mar 8, 7:30-8:30pm. Instructor: Claudia

Next: April on Sundays

Foundation Class:

Thursday, Mar 8, 5-6pm. Instructor: Claudia

Thursday, Mar 8, 6:15-7:15pm. Instructor: Claudia

Next: April on Sundays

Puppy 2 - Kindergarten:

Wednesday, Mar 7, 5-6pm. Instructor: Claudia

Wednesday, Mar 7, 6:15-7:15pm. Instructor: Claudia

Next: May on Thursdays

Elementary School:

Next: May on Thursdays

Rally College:

Wednesday, Mar 7, 7:30-8:30pm. Instructor: Claudia

Next: September 2012

Tricks 'N Clicks Class:

Next: **May 2012**

High School (CGC-prep class - **6 weeks**):

Next: **July 2012**

C.L.A.S.S. Course:

Tuesday, Mar 6, 6:15-7:15pm. Instructor: Claudia

Tuesday, Mar 6, 7:30-8:30pm. Instructor: Claudia

Evaluations:

CGC-Evaluation: Sunday, Sep 9, 2012

C.L.A.S.S. Evaluation: Tuesday, April 17, 2012

C) Sports classes (Agility, Treibball, Nose Work and seasonal sports):

Listed are start dates. The classes will run once a week for 6 weeks.

Agility Puppy/Beginners:

Saturday, Feb 11, 10am-12pm (class 10:30am-11:30am). Instructors: Claudia, Kat
Next start: Mar 31

Agility Skills Training:

Saturday, Feb 11, 11:30am-1pm (class 12-1pm). Instructors: Kat, Claudia
Next start: Mar 31

Agility Sequencing:

Saturday, Feb 11, 2-4pm (class 2:30-3:30pm). Instructors: Claudia, Kat
Next start: Mar 31

Agility Trialing:

Saturday, Feb 11, 3:30-5pm (class: 4-5pm) - weeks 3-6 at Sirius Ranch, we'll start at 4:30pm. Instructors: Kat, Claudia

Saturday, Feb 11, 5-6:30pm (class:5-6pm) - weeks 3-6 at Sirius Ranch, we'll run from 5:30-7pm (for 6-9 dogs). Instructors: Claudia, Kat

Next start: Mar 31

Treibball Beginners:

Monday, Apr 2, 5:15-6:15pm (set-up starts at 5pm) Instructor: Karla
Next Start: TBA

Treibball Intermediate:

Monday, Apr 2, 6:30-7:30pm (set-up starts at 5pm) Instructor: Karla
Next Start: TBA

Nose Work Beginners:

Possibly Tuesday, Mar 6th, 5-6pm
Next: TBA

Nose Work - Intro to Odor:

Next start: **Apr 2**. Instructor: Claudia

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. Please note that **some workshops have their own cancellation policy**, even though they use the same

registration form as the classes. Take advantage of our **pre-registration fee** by signing up a minimum of **14 days before the start of your class**. Different deadlines might apply to some of the workshops and seminars.

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 six 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 can take credit card payments over the phone and at the facility.**

4) Doggy Daycare and Open Play Times:

Doggy Daycare: Offered on Tuesdays and Thursdays 6am-7pm, with their playtime ending at 5pm, at which time they'll be kenneled if not picked up before. Call us for details.

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! Larger dogs over 6 months, please call us before your first visit, so that we can decide together which hour would be best for your dog, and if we need to evaluate your dog first. We offer evaluations on Fridays at 8pm (see below).

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 (large dogs) is limited to 8 dogs, and **the group from 6-7pm (medium dogs) is limited to 12 dogs.** Reservations can be made in advance. Just call us and we explain the details.

Since Jan 1st 2012 on Fridays only:

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 –for evaluations. \$35/half hour

You can check our web page www.bettercompanion.com for info on classes, facility, and schedule, read testimonies from other students, print out the registration form and more.

Or contact us by email or phone: info@bettercompanion.com, (907) 357-2521.

5) OPEN PLAY TIMES - HOW RAMBUNCTIOUS IS OK?

Recently we have experienced a spike in our Open Play Times on Fridays, with more dogs showing up and also more rambunctiousness, arousal and bullying going on. I want to try to analyze what's going on, to help you all understanding better the purpose of the play times and how all participants can help to manage them better.

It's the season:

First of all, we have seen a spike in arousal levels around this time of the year more than at other times. This year to the extreme, probably due to the extreme weather conditions. First it was too cold for quite a long time, then it got slick, and many people weren't able to take their dogs out as usual, and to give them the exercise they needed at other times than during our Open Play Times (OPT). When the dogs then come to us, they're overly excited, hyperactive, on and over the edge, and out-a-control. **This EXPLAINS their behavior, DOESN'T EXCUSE it!**

Open Play Times are social hours:

For the dogs that naturally have a nice, rather submissive play style with good role change, OPT can be their energy outlet as well as a time to socialize with other dogs. For the rambunctious type, sometimes a bit overconfident, and with tendencies to 'bully', the OPT needs to be seen more as a **socialization time, but not as an energy outlet**. They need to first have an energy outlet through another way, before they can come and socialize with other dogs.

Play styles:

We can control the type of play only to a certain degree during OPT. Dogs have different play styles, and some will pick up new play styles from other dogs, others won't **We will discourage** dogs from mounting, putting their front feet on other dogs' backs, from grab-and-hold and from 'burying', laying on top of another dog. We'll also give a dog that gets chased a safety zone, where the chase will end, if the dog chooses to come to the safety zone. Some dogs need quite some practice before they understand that principle and will come to a safety zone. **We won't be able to avoid** that your dog learns play styles like ankle biting, neck grabbing, or chasing, IF your dog WANTS to learn that. Some dogs will keep their play style no matter what else they see, and some

with certain tendencies in their genes will pick up on those play styles. Play in a group of 10 or 12 dogs will always be different than if it's just a one-on-one, and has helped some over confident dogs to settle a little, realizing they can't control the whole group, as well as it has caused some dogs to play a little rougher than before.

What we'll do on our end:

- **Maximum number of dogs:** We have already cut down the amount of dogs for 7pm (large dogs) to maximum 8, and the amount of dogs for 6pm (medium dogs) to maximum 12 (including the pen). If need be, we'll cut that down even more.
- **Separation:** We've started again at the 5pm group to use the pen to separate the tiny dogs up to ~10lbs from the small dogs (~20lbs). We'll switch out who's in the pen during that hour.
- **Structure:** We'll start adding more structure to the 6pm group as we did for the 7pm group, adding frequent recalls. If the same dog won't come when called and keeps bullying others instead during the hour, we'll either move that dog up to the next group or ask to improve the recall significantly before coming back. A class or private lesson can be helpful to learn how. **We need dogs with a good recall at our Open Play Times!** We don't expect a perfect recall every single time, but should see improvement through the hour and over the next weeks.
- **Supervision:** We'll stop micromanaging single dogs and instead interrupt the whole play time to explain our recommendations we have for a single dog to everybody. That way everybody can learn from it, and we don't explain the same 10 times in one evening. We then can also supervise the group as a whole better.

What we want you to do on your end:

- **Recall:** Practice the recall, and bring the best treats you can think of for your dog's recall at OPT. Don't feed your treats to any other dog than your own. With best I really mean steak, hot dogs, cheese, smoked salmon, ...
- **Safety Zone:** When we tell you that your dog needs a safety zone, take that seriously. Just because you think your dog should be fine doesn't mean your dog thinks the same. Compare this to somebody bringing a tarantula in the room and approaching different people: Some people want to hold it, some are ok with the spider being held close by, and some want that thing out of the room immediately! Telling them that it's perfectly safe to put the tarantula on their shoulder won't help. **We need to look at what your dog needs to feel safe**, not what we think is safe for them. **Everybody is encouraged to give any dog a safety zone** who needs it, not only the owner of that dog. We hope that eventually the owner will be the main safety zone, but if a dog needs a safety zone where he/she is at that moment, away from the owner, we need to help, too.
- **Tell us:** if there's anything you can't do or feel is wrong that we asked you to do, please talk to us! You might not be comfortable pushing other dogs away, or can't bend over due to physical limitations, or couldn't hear our recommendation in the first place. **Let us know!** We're there to help, to recommend and to find solutions, not to command you around! **Thanks for all your input, suggestions and questions so far**, that's why I'm writing this!
- **Socialization:** Use our Open Play Times to connect with other dog owners, exchange contact information so that you can meet and have nice one-on-one play for your dog.

Maybe find 2-3 other dogs that you feel fit well with your dog's play style and rent our facility just for that small group of known dogs. You can rent during the day on Mon, Wed, Fri and Sunday.

- **Structure:** Some dogs will get too aroused because they're **under-exercised**. Our Open Play Times can't be the only 'outing' your dog gets. Take your dog out to other places, walk your dog, play with your dog at your home frequently, try to meet other dogs and their owners at other occasions. That way the Open Play Times lose a little of their 'specialty' and therefore lower the dog's excitement level. Also include obedience in your outings, to **teach self-control**. Some dogs get too aroused during longer play just because of their **breed**. Terriers are known for rather getting wilder than tired as do the 'bull' breeds. Those dogs need to be **extra tired** before trying to socialize them to other dogs. Then they can only **play for short times**, and need to be reminded to settle with lots of obedience, before their arousal level lowers and they can play again for a short time. They might only get to play 2-5 minutes for 2-3 times within the hour.

With all this said, I hope you'll come and enjoy our Open Play Times with your dogs!!!
Claudia

Claudia Sihler, CPDT-KA
(Certified Professional Dog Trainer)
APDT C.L.A.S.S. Evaluator
AKC CGC® Evaluator

Your BetCo Team at
The Better Companion - Regine Dog Training Facility
Claudia Sihler, CPDT-KA
Frank Sihler, Iditarod Finisher
Deb Frost (office)
Kelly Saunders (office)

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