

Dear Dog Lover,

**Our monthly story at the end of this email: “Training goals – what we want and how we get there”**

**Breaking news: The Anchorage Pet Expo is canceled!!!!**

Read more below.

Enjoy your dogs,  
Claudia

## **Our October Newsletter:**

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## **PART I: News**

### **Anchorage Pet Expo is canceled**

After having postponed the Anchorage Pet Expo from June to September, the organizers surprised us two weeks before the event with a sudden full cancelation of the event. At this point it's a guessing game why they canceled, but rumors are floating around about not enough traffic on their web page for the Anchorage event, maybe not enough vendor booth sign-ups or short notice vendor cancelations.

I'd assume it has financial reasons, cutting a loss right now before more expenses are incurred, and maybe also thinking of us, the people who reserved a booth, not to put any more money or effort in this event and then not having enough traffic at the event to make it worthwhile for us. Although at this time most of the vendors' expenses have already occurred – stocking up any for sale items, purchasing giveaways, organizing raffles, printing flyers, advertising our presence at this event ...

We don't know if they plan on organizing another Pet Expo here in Alaska in the future. For this year I'm almost a bit relieved, less organizing and this frees up two days for me. But overall, I'm sad to see this event go and maybe not come back – I had fun at the last two Pet Expos and liked strolling through all the different booths, learning more about what's available here in Alaska that I wasn't aware of before!

### **Re-Structuring the Open Play Times**

After reviewing the last few months of our Friday evening “Open Play Times”; we realized that we are seeing some of the same difficulties repeatedly when introducing a young large-breed puppy into our small breed Open Play Time (OPT) at 5pm. We need to make a change. We have been starting all puppies in the 5pm group so as not to overwhelm young puppies, no matter what breed. But small-breed dogs just have a different play style – and it wasn't working well for either the small breed dogs OR the large-breed puppies. We'd like to return to a version of something we have done successfully in the past – using a large x-pen area at the back of the room to temporarily separate puppies from the older dogs to introduce large-breed puppies to 'their kind' – (similar breeds) at the 6pm OPT instead of trying to get them to fit in with small dog breeds that have a very different play style and sometimes (understandably) aren't comfortable with the galumphing, rough and tumble style of large-breed puppies. This has always worked better indoors during the winter when we are able to have the bigger fenced off x-pen area in the back of the facility, so now seems like a good time to go back to that method.

**The 5pm OPT** will from now on be **ONLY for small breeds up to 25 lbs. adult** weight. Bring those Chihuahuas, Pugs, Shih Tzu's, Doxies and little ragamuffins of all kinds! There is plenty of room for lots of LITTLE dogs! Call us if you are a first-timer! 😊

**All medium and large breed puppies** will be **introduced at the 6pm OPT** to our **dogs of 30-50 lbs.**, and need a reservation for that hour, since we only take 10 dogs maximum.

**All large dogs 60 lbs. and up** come to our **7pm OPT** and have been either moved up from the 6pm OPT or evaluated before their first time (unless we know otherwise that the dog will fit our 7pm group).

**As usual, all new dogs over 6 months of age** need to talk to us to determine if they need an evaluation before they can join the OPT. We'll see how it goes, and we really appreciate your input!

## **PART II: Events**

### **🐾 Recap of the Nose Work trial Sep 13/14 in Ninilchik**

What a great getaway place Ninilchik is! I'd never have gone there, if it wouldn't be for our Nose Work trials last year and this year. About an hour south of Soldotna, this is a wonderful place along Alaska's coast, the home of famous fishing, great beaches and the Kenai State Fair. If you need a reason for a weekend to get out, plan on coming to next year's Nose Work trial – either with a dog to compete or to volunteer! Even if you don't know anything about the sport of Nose Work, you can volunteer and we'll train you on the spot.

Volunteers get the best of everything: The best view of the dogs in the competition, free food all day and being part of a great supportive group of people! I went down to Ninilchik together with Deb, my friend and office manager. We enjoyed sharing a room in a little B&B within walking distance of the fairgrounds (where the event is held), bringing our dogs and volunteering on different days. On Saturday I volunteered and Deb competed, we switched on Sunday and then stayed an extra two days for a Nose Work seminar.

After excelling with her dog Baxter on Saturday, Deb got a prime spot on Sunday as a timer for the vehicle search, and watched two dogs trained at the Better Companion taking the first two places (finding the hide the fastest). One of these dogs, Hank, ended up overall first place and winning the trial and my dog Sally ended up third overall in the trial, but we both couldn't beat little (Westie) Dabu in finding the hide on the vehicles. It took her only 18 seconds! Congratulations also to our fellow students Roki, Leo, Treasure and Taku (and their people!) on their new titles in Nose Work!

After the trials we spent time on the beach, socialized over a good meal at one of the restaurants in Ninilchik and usually got to bed early, to get ready for another day at the fairgrounds. Weather treated us well, with sun on Saturday (although a storm was forecasted), overcast but dry on Sunday, and mixed weather the next two days.

## **PART III: Classes + Workshops**

### **🐾 Oct 6<sup>th</sup>: C.L.A.S.S. Course – practice manners the fun way**

Practice **CANINE LIFE AND SOCIAL SKILLS** in this class through role play and fun games. This class can be taken at any level after Foundation or Puppy 2 Class. Every exercise can be practiced at your dog's skill level and you can come back later and take this class again at a different skill level!

We take only 6 dogs for this class to assure a lot of individual practice – so sign up now!

### **🐾 Oct 7<sup>th</sup>: Freestyle II – continue heeling with tricks**

For all Freestyle I graduates; continue this fun activity with your dog! We have a couple spots left – maybe for people who are participate in Freestyle I right now on Sunday mornings – you can continue on to Freestyle II in October on Tuesday evenings from 5-6pm. Reserve your spot now!

 **Oct 30<sup>th</sup>: Rally College – teamwork through an obedience course**

Just like in agility; a course will be set up that changes every time, using obedience ‘obstacles’ instead of jumps and tunnels. This is a great way to build the basic foundation for any other sport – improving the teamwork between dog and handler, extending the attention of the dog to the handler and refining the overall obedience. My dogs and a lot of our students’ dogs are better in agility because of the obedience foundation we built in Rally. This class is for Elementary School (ES) graduates – so if you haven’t participated in ES yet – sign up for it now and be ready!

## **PART IV: Open Play Time and Doggy Daycare**

 **Next Scheduled Closures**

**OPT** every Friday evening  
Next scheduled closure: **Nov 28 (Thanksgiving weekend)**

**DDC** every Tuesday and Thursday  
next scheduled closure: **Thanksgiving** 😊

 **Re-Structuring the Open Play Times**

As described above here are the new groups, with the **changes in bold**:

5pm: Small Breed dogs up to 25lbs (estimated adult weight), **no large breed puppies**

6pm (reservation only): medium dogs 30-50lbs, **large breed puppies 10-50lbs**

7pm: (reservation only): large dogs over 60lbs

## **PART V: Class Schedule**

Listed are start dates. The classes will run one hour, once a week for 6 weeks unless otherwise specified. A **“maybe” for a class means YOU can tell us** if you want this class to happen. Enough student interest could put it on the schedule! 😊

Click [here](#) to view the online calendar by month. To see who’s instructing the class you’re interested in, go to our online [calendar](#) and click on any week of that class to see the details.

Click [here](#) to register for a class.

Already registered? Click [here](#) to pay for a class.

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

<u>CLASS</u>	<u>Oct</u>	<u>Nov</u>	<u>Dec</u>	<u>later</u>
<b><u>Behavior Classes</u></b>				
Puppy 1	Tue 10/7 Wed 10/29		Tue 12/2	Nov 2014
Foundation Class	Tue 10/7	Sun 11/2	Mon 12/1	Nov 2014
Puppy 2	Mon 10/6		Tue 12/2	Dec 2014
Elementary School	Thu 10/30			Nov 2014
High School				Jan 2015
CGC-test (one day)				2015
C.L.A.S.S. - BA	Mon 10/6			2015
C.L.A.S.S. Evaluation				Fall 2014?
Tricks 'N Clicks				Mar 2015
<b><u>Sports Classes</u></b>	<u>Oct</u>	<u>Nov</u>	<u>Dec</u>	<u>later</u>
Rally College	Thu 10/30			2015
Rally Practice				TBA
Freestyle I				TBA
Freestyle II	Tue 10/7			2015
Nose Work Beginner				2015
Nose Work Odor				2015
Nose Work Practice	Wed 10/29	cont'd	cont'd	Jan 2015
Treibball Beginner			Tue 12/2	TBA
Treibball Intermediate				TBA
Treibball Practice				TBA
Flyball Beginner				Summer 2015

Flyball Practice				Summer 2015
Agility Puppy/Beg		Sat 11/1		Jan 2015
Agility Skills		Sat 11/1		Jan 2015
Agility Sequencing		Sat 11/1		Jan 2015
Agility Trialing		Sat 11/1		Jan 2015
Weight Pulling				Fall 2014

You can check our web page [www.bettercompanion.com](http://www.bettercompanion.com) for more info on classes, Doggy Day Care, Open Play Times, our facility and schedule, read testimonies from other students, print out the registration form (or fill one out online) and more.

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

## **PART VI: Training goals – what we want and how we get there**

When you come to class with your dog, you probably have some expectations of how your dog's behavior should/could change for the better and what you'd like to see in the future your dog being able to do. People come to class with very **different goals in mind** and I might not even cover everything here:

- Socializing their dog
- Tiring their dog out
- Bonding time/ quality time with their dog
- Stopping specific behavior(s) the dog displays at home
- Having a well-behaved dog at home
- Having a well-behaved dog in public
- Taking the dog to work/ friend's house/ relatives
- Taking the dog for outdoor activities with or without meeting other dogs
- Using the dog for a specific task (service dog, therapy dog, hunting/herding ...)
- Competing with the dog (dog shows, obedience, rally, agility, hunting, herding, nose work, flyball, barn hunt ... )

In the classes we try our best to create that balanced, well-behaved dog and have them excel during the exercises and practices, no matter if it's for good manners or a dog sport. And most of the time we can see them improving over the weeks. But then I might see a well-behaved dog at class, and the owners tell me the dog is still very unruly at

home and not improving as they were hoping, or I might hear it the other way around and the dog is very unruly at the class but doing wonderful at home.

If you have such a discrepancy, and you don't know why or want to know how to change that to the better, please let the instructor know or email the office explaining your situation and your troubles. We want to help you to bridge that training gap between the class room and home.

The first step is to **define what you have and what you want** - I want to give some examples:

- Your dog listens to you at class but not at home.
- Your dog listens to you at home but not on your walks.
- Your dog always comes when you show him the treats, but not without that.
- Your dog listens to you but not to the kids.
- Your dog always comes – unless... e.g. there's a dog nearby.
- Your dog doesn't pull with the head halter, but won't learn not to pull without it.

There're probably plenty more examples, and the answers to all these are pretty similar. **It's called "baby steps"!** If you look at your situation and think of stair steps, there's one step at the bottom that you and your dog have reached already and are successful in. And then there's the next step, which is that goal that you are trying to reach and can't quite seem to. So, maybe that step is too high and for your dog we need to put a couple more steps in between, starting our training with the next lowest one.

Welcome to the wonderful art of dog training! Not all dogs learn the same way or at the same rate. A big part of the dog trainer's job is to find just the right steps in between for you and your dog, to keep you both successful and motivated. I want to give you some examples for adding these steps, and you might be able to skip steps, or you might have to add more steps in between, if one stair step is again too high.

- **Your dog comes to you in your yard, but not in the dog park when playing with other dogs:**

Be safe when practicing this and rather have your dog on a long line when you're in a non-fenced area, unless the area is safe and your dog won't run into any hazards. Steps in between home and the crowded off-leash dog park could be (any or all):

- Around the house outside the yard
- In the dog park without any dogs present
- Only one dog further away
- Only one boring dog close-by
- Two dogs far away on-leash
- A quiet dog behind a fence near-by
- A barking dog further away
- Your dog on-leash with other dogs as far away as necessary to have a successful recall from the end of the leash to you.

- Your dog on a longer leash or long line and same as above.
- Your dog playing with one dog, calling only when they take a break anyway.
- Your dog playing with one dog, calling away from play.

... A good rule of thumb for developing a strong Recall is to not ask your dog to COME unless 1) you are at least 90% sure she will listen and come running, or 2) you have her on a long lead and can reel her in if necessary to make the recall successful – in either case, be sure to give loads of happy praise and treats as soon as she reaches you (yes, even if you had to use the lead).

You can see how you can progress on different levels, depending on your own dog - and you might change that order around to fit your situation, needs and training opportunities. If you hit a plateau, maybe back up a step or two to where you were successful and try again.

- **Your dog walks fine on the head halter, but pulls without it:**

- When your dog is tired towards the end of your walk, clip the snap of the leash to both the head halter and regular flat collar and go back to 1) more rewards for loose leash walking and 2) stopping if your dog pulls.
- Change that clip earlier on your walk (repeat/adjust this step several times until you can start walking with the leash clipped in both, head halter and collar).
- Towards the end of your walk, clip the leash in the dog's collar but keep the head halter on.
- Change that clip earlier on your walk as above.
- Towards the end of your walk, take off the unused head halter, keep your criteria and consistency up! Reward for no pull, stop when pulling.
- Take off the head halter earlier on your walk as you changed the clipping before.
- Repeat all of the above when walking in a different area - it can be amazing how you might have to start back at a much earlier stage of training when you first change the environment, but take heart! Your dog hasn't forgotten everything. Progress is almost always much quicker with each new practice location. 😊

- **Your dog comes when you show the treats, but not without:**

- Call your dog to dinner without showing the food first, then prepare his food (he knows it's coming, but can't see it).
- Call your dog towards the treat jar/kitchen, then bring out the treat when the dog **starts** coming to you.
- Call your dog to you inside the house from only 10 feet away, then when the dog **starts** coming to you run with her to the treats and give your dog a jackpot.



- Hide treats on you, wait a bit to make sure your dog forgot about them, then call your dog from only 10 feet away inside the house, wait for your dog to come, praise delightedly ... and then give your dog a nice jackpot!
- Call your dog from 20/ 30/ 40 feet away inside the house, praise so they know how HAPPY you are with them - end with a jackpot.
- Call your dog from 10/ 20/ 30/ 50 feet away in the yard, end with a jack pot every single time.
- Change the location and maybe have a long line on your dog for safety: driveway, back yard, front yard, quiet street, empty field, ... always start with a shorter distance and work your way up.

By now you have probably gotten some good ideas about how to include more baby steps by reducing or increasing the distance (reducing the recall distance, increasing the distance to a distractor) and by introducing distractions carefully and weaning off any training aids gradually. You didn't see me reducing the jackpot for the recall – if you have difficulties with the COME keep that up for a looong time to proof your recall in a lot of distracting environments first! Yes! You WILL eventually be able to phase out the treats, but please don't do this too soon or abruptly. A bullet-proof recall is dependent not on your dog being willing to come to you, but WANTING to come to you and HAPPY coming to you.

Can't come up with the baby steps for YOUR situation? Email us and we can try to help! Our interest in helping you train your dog doesn't end when you graduate from a class!  
☺

Have fun practicing with your dog – training never ends completely,  
Claudia

Claudia Sihler, CPDT-KSA  
(Certified Professional Dog Trainer - Knowledge and Skills Assessed)  
APDT C.L.A.S.S. Evaluator  
AKC CGC® and STAR® Evaluator  
Member of Animal Behavior Networks

Your BetCo Team at  
**The Better Companion - Regine Dog Training Facility**  
Claudia Sihler, CPDT-KSA  
Frank Sihler, Iditarod Finisher  
Deb Frost (office)  
Robin Jacoby (office)

(907) 357-2521  
[betco@mtaonline.net](mailto:betco@mtaonline.net)  
[www.bettercompanion.com](http://www.bettercompanion.com)  
1400 E Regine Ave, Wasilla, AK 99654