

Dear Dog Lover,

Our monthly story at the end of this email: “Can Rehoming be the Right Answer?”

Fun classes starting up again!!! Our instructors are back from their summer break and we have fun activity classes like Flyball, Freestyle, C.L.A.S.S. and Rally College back on the schedule! Check our calendar!

Enjoy the rest of your summer,
Claudia

Our August Newsletter:

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- 3) **BetCo's annual RDO-Day** Saturday, 9/6, 10am-4pm
- 4) NEW TIME! CGC®-test at BetCo Sunday, 9/7 at 11am
- 5) **Dog First Aid Seminar** at BetCo Sunday, 9/7 at 3pm

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PART I: News

Road Work at Edlund/Fern intersection

This is of great interest for clients/students who approach us by way of KGB (Knik Goose Bay) Rd or downtown Wasilla! Finally; they're nearing completion on the connection of **Fern St.** through to Edlund Rd.! This will offer a much shorter, **straight shot** from KGB Rd. to Fairview Loop Rd., starting at mile 1.2 of KGB (only 1/2 mile from

the Palmer-Wasilla Ext. intersection). You'll be able to take Main St./KGB Rd. from Wasilla., turn left on Fern (there is a traffic light for an easy left turns coming or going), drive straight to the end and turn left onto Fairview Loop Rd to get to us. No more winding all the way through Fairview Loop or Edlund Rd. anymore! **People coming from Big Lake, Houston and Willow** can stay on KGB Rd until Fern St., turn right, drive straight through to Fairview Loop Rd and turn left to get to us – so much easier and quicker! **There is a traffic light** at KGB, for easy left turns either off KGB towards us or from Fern left onto KGB to drive to Vine Rd when going home north (and yes! Vine Rd is nearing completion, too!).

During the final phase of construction; there may (or may not) be a short delay where they are still working right at the corner of **Edlund Rd. & Fern St.** Hopefully this will already be a thing of the past by the time you read this newsletter! ☺

PART II: Events

🐾 Doggy Day at the Palmer State Fair Sunday, 8/24

Don't bring your own dog but come to the corral and watch dog lovers demo their activities with their four-legged friends! You'll see agility, obedience, herding and lots of other fun activities, giving you lots of ideas for your own pastime with your dog(s).

BetCo was asked to demo twice this year, once at 2:30-3:30pm and again at 5:30-6pm. We'll show the newer sports of Nose Work (pet detection sport) and Treibball (driving a ball), plus some clicker training. We haven't decided yet what to show at the second time – let us surprise you!

🐾 BetCo's annual RDO-Day Saturday, September 6, 10am - 4pm

Saturday, September 6th: Annual Responsible Dog Ownership-Day at The Better Companion!

It's that time again, so mark your calendar!!!

You can just

- show up with your family (including your friendly dog) or
- reserve a booth space for your company or group, or
- let us know if you'd like to offer anything special (door prizes, nail trim, micro-chipping ...), or
- reserve a time spot for a presentation on a specific topic

We will have door prizes, free hot dogs and soda/water, activities all day long with dog sport demos and other presentations, and we can present your dog in the "Meet-The-Breed" (going on all day), even if you have a mixed breed!

NEW this year: We're testing out a new test, the CGCA! Community Canine® or **Canine Good Citizen Advanced®** is the newest higher level test by the AKC (American Kennel Club), available to dogs who already passed the CGC-test and held at an event site (versus a staged/simulated situation in the CGC-test). This time only we'll offer this test for free, but it will be totally legitimate if you pass! Please look up more information about this test on the AKC web page or read our story of the February 2014 BetCo newsletter (came out in January). The time for this test will be on our flyer, coming out in a couple weeks with our September Special News.

🐾 NEW TIME! Canine Good Citizen®-test at BetCo, Sunday, September 7, 11am

This test is governed by the AKC (American Kennel Club) and for all purebred and mixed breed dogs. It tests dogs in 10 everyday situations to prove that your dog is well-mannered and under your control in public. If you'd like to show your friends, neighbors or landlord that you're a responsible dog owner with a well-behaved dog, this is for you! If you hope to take your dog to schools, nursing homes or hospitals as a therapy dog or are training your dog to become a service dog for your own needs, this test gives you a good baseline to work from and is actually used widely with a few modifications to screen dogs before they go on to become therapy dogs or train as service dogs. The CGC® test does not qualify your dog in any way to become a therapy or service dog, but the behavior and skills tested cover a lot of what these dogs will need to know before going out in public.

You can pre-register for the test online on our web page, by contacting us or just come on the day of testing at 11:00am to sign up and pay. Pre-registration is \$20, regular registration and same-day payment is \$25.

🐾 Dog First Aid Seminar at BetCo Sunday, September 7 at 3pm

Learn how to help your four-legged friend in an emergency until you can get to a veterinary clinic or while you're too far away from any civilization, which can easily happen in our State! We'll have a couple dogs here for some hands-on training and every participant will receive the official American Red Cross book with DVD for home. Please leave your own dog at home or in the car.

PART III: Classes + Workshops

🐾 Flyball class and practice starts August 13!

This is offered once during the summer only! We'll offer **Flyball Beginner** class and **Flyball Practice!** Flyball will be held outside on our fenced, groomed field and postponed to the next week if weather isn't cooperating.

We plan for 4 weeks but could end up finishing later if we have to postpone a week.

Start date: Wednesday, August 13

Times: Flyball Beginner: 5-6pm
Flyball Practice: 6:15-7:15pm

We take only 6 dogs maximum for the class to allow enough individual time for everybody.

Last year several of the beginners stayed (and paid) for the after-class Flyball Practice and the dogs LOVED the extra time! 'Practice' attendance is optional – you can sign up for one or all four as long as you are in or have attended Flyball classes.

 **NEW! Sunday Sports Classes in September – you decide**

Your opinion counts!!! Tell us what class you'd want to see offered on Sunday mornings (somewhere between 10am and 12pm). We have two spots available and the choices are:

- Agility Beginners
- Treibball Beginners
- Freestyle Beginners (Freestyle in October on Tuesdays will be Level II – you could continue right then!)
- Rally Practice (for our Rally College graduates)

Please email or call us and let us know which class you'd sign up for if it's offered and it could end up becoming reality! We want to offer the right classes, and YOUR CHOICE is significant in what we'll offer!

 **October offers Freestyle II and CLASS-BA**

The fun continues in October. All Freestyle beginner graduates are invited to a **Freestyle Level II** class starting Tuesday, October 7th. Let's take Freestyle to the next level!

CLASS-BA practices real-life situations and is suitable for all Elementary School and most Foundation Class graduates. Dogs should be able to work in our arena without visual barriers and be close to other people and dogs (no direct contact necessary). **CLASS® (Canine Life And Social Skills)** is a program by the APDT similar to the CGC® program of the AKC but in more of a "game-like" setting. It promotes good manners at home and in public and a test is available (not part of the class).

PART IV: Open Play Time and Doggy Daycare

 **Next Scheduled Closures**

OPT every Friday evening
Next scheduled closure: **Aug 29 (Labor Day weekend)**

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

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, (907) 357-2521.

<u>CLASS</u>	<u>Aug</u>	<u>Sep</u>	<u>Oct</u>	<u>later</u>
<u>Behavior Classes</u>				
Puppy 1	Mon 8/11	Thu 9/11 Sun 9/21?	Tue 10/7	Nov 2014
Foundation Class	Tue 8/12	Thu 9/11 Sun 9/21?	Tue 10/7	Nov 2014
Puppy 2		Thu 9/11	Mon 10/6	Dec 2014
Elementary School		Wed 9/10		Nov 2014
High School				Jan 2015
CGC-test (one day)		Sun 9/7		2015
C.L.A.S.S. - BA			Mon 10/6	2015
C.L.A.S.S. Evaluation				Fall 2014?
Tricks 'N Clicks				Mar 2015
<u>Sports Classes</u>	<u>Aug 2014</u>	<u>Sep 2014</u>	<u>Oct 2015</u>	<u>later</u>
Rally College				Nov 2014?
Rally Practice		maybe Sun 9/14		TBA
Freestyle I		maybe Sun 9/14		TBA

Freestyle II			Tue 10/7	2015
Nose Work Beginner				2015
Nose Work Odor		Wed 9/10		2015
Nose Work Practice	TBA	Wed 9/10	cont'd	Nov 2014
Treibball Beginner		maybe Sun 9/14		TBA - fall?
Treibball Intermediate				TBA
Treibball Practice				Cont'd
Flyball Beginner	Wed 8/13			Summer 2015
Flyball Practice	Wed 8/13			Summer 2015
Agility Puppy/Beg		Sat 9/13 Sun 9/14		Nov 2014
Agility Skills		Sat 9/13		Nov 2014
Agility Sequencing		Sat 9/13		Nov 2014
Agility Trialing		Sat 9/13		Nov 2014
Weight Pulling				Fall 2014

You can check our web page 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, (907) 357-2521.

PART VI: Monthly Story: “Can Rehoming be the Right Answer?”

Rehoming a dog is seldom easy (or shouldn't be, in any case), and in our business we see and hear a lot of people struggling with this dilemma. It can be especially difficult when other dog owners look at this as 'taking the easy way out' or even 'selling out a family member'. There might be the occasional case where I'm grinding my teeth, thinking 'is this really necessary' or 'isn't there a better solution?' but the truth is that in many cases rehoming can be the best solution for the dog as well as the owner. The

following is a combined effort by me and my office manager Deb to shed some light on this uncomfortable issue.

First, please let us say right up front – this is **not** intended as a lecture about why you should or should not give up or rehome your pet. This article is meant to address the realities of having to give up a dog, the reasons it happens and what you can do to understand and accept that this can and does happen to even the best owner. We will also cover options to consider that could help, in some circumstances, to avoid needing to rehome a dog.

I'll (Deb) start it out by asking ...

Question: You've lost your husband, sold your home and have to go back to work full time. Your only financial option for the foreseeable future is a tiny 'efficiency' apartment in town. Do you keep your beloved 1-year-old, 100+ lb. Great Pyrenees, hoping for a miracle? He is all you have left of your old life. Take your time thinking about it – it's a huge decision.

Question: You adopted a lively, large Lab X from the local shelter three months ago. What a handful he has become!! He is cheerful but willful, doesn't come when he is called and yanks you across the street when you are walking him. You are exhausted and embarrassed and your husband is angry. You argue all the time about this disruptive dog. Do you keep the dog? Take your time ... what are your (and the dog's) alternatives? Bear with me, I have just one more.

Question: Your daughter/son is moving out of state and dumped their dog on YOU, his parents. You promised (although you didn't want the dog in the first place <sigh>) to take care of it. But the dog doesn't get along with your current, older dog, is not completely housebroken and he WHINES all the time when you have to kennel him because you go to work during the day. He is making your life SO difficult. Do you keep him? What would your son/daughter SAY if they came home and he was gone? Gasp!

The reasons for rehoming a dog are myriad. Many are certainly valid. OTOH; a lot of them are unnecessary but instead only expedient. And there are times when someone tells me, "I have decided to rehome my dog" and it is all I can do not to break into spontaneous applause! Some dogs are better off rehomed. The "stories" I listed above are all true – and the dogs involved DID end up being rehomed with people who love them. Because of the WAY the rehoming was accomplished, the dogs were the true winners in each situation.

Here are some of the more common reasons for deciding to rehome your dog (or cat or whatever pet) and some of our thoughts on the options:

- **Rehoming an older dog** because it doesn't get along with the new puppy ...

This is actually a very common issue – not the rehoming itself, but that an older dog doesn't like the puppy right away! Often this can be worked through with careful 1st introductions, good supervision, divided quality time for each of the dogs while the other

is confined or otherwise occupied and helping the older dog to perhaps team with YOU to teach the puppy social boundaries and respect, so that the adult dog doesn't feel it has to keep going at it or hiding from it.

With you being proactive for your older dog, he should be encouraged to help show the puppy the ropes, so to speak (with your supervision), and they will both be happier for the more clearly defined roles. If it really seems to have been a bad match and it's too stressful for your adult dog, then rehome the puppy! It's much easier to find a new home for a puppy and much less stressful for the puppy than for the older dog to adjust to a new home. And having said that; please think twice before adding a puppy to your home – puppies are fun, but will this be an appreciated new family member and play-buddy or mainly stress for your current dog(s)?

- **Rehoming due to illness or injury ...**

This one hits home for me (Deb) and I'm sure for many folks. It is one reason for rehoming that we often have little control over and it can be a painful situation in so many ways. Sometimes it can be avoided IF the person's illness or injury is transitory and you can find a family member, friend or rescue organization willing to take in your pet(s) until you are recovered enough to care for them again. Sometimes the best you can do is control HOW the rehoming is handled and gain comfort in knowing someone else will love them as much as you do. When my husband suffered a severe TBI, I ended up with dogs, cats and goats scattered half-way across Alaska – and to this day (5 years later), I am sure I could have/should have done things differently. We literally left home the day of the accident – and didn't return (for the most part) for two months. I did lose one dog (out of 4) during that time, and one of my cats ended up moving permanently to my sister's home in CA (she offered to ship him back the following summer, but he was SO happy there I couldn't disrupt his life yet again) ... but the rest of us were eventually reunited. It could have been much worse.

When the injured/ill one is the pet ... there are times it sadly comes down to purely a matter of finances. Too many folks just cannot foot what can add up to thousands of dollars in vet bills, especially for an illness that could mean years of ongoing expenses. Do you drop the dog at the shelter because you can't afford it's dental care? Contact rescue groups! My friend adopted her adorable Chihuahua, Molly, when someone surrendered it for exactly that reason. \$800 later (which she knew about going in and could fortunately afford), my friend has a dear friend for life. Meet Molly at Open Play Time some Friday!

- **Rehoming due to moving** – one of the most common 'reasons' given ...

A move shouldn't automatically cause people to think about giving up their dog, but everyone's situation is different and we are not here to judge – just to offer alternatives to consider. Moving is a 'reason' I find difficult personally (Deb here), having moved across the country more than a couple of times myself – and there have always been dogs and cats involved. My last cross-country move included driving from Michigan to Alaska with two dogs and three long-haired house cats. It was a challenge, to be sure – but we managed it. Oh, the stories I could tell! Claudia brought one of her dogs with her

from overseas ... it can be work to overcome the obstacles involved, but they CAN be overcome.

Renting - It sure can be hard to find a place that accepts multiple dogs or specific breeds, especially if you are **renting**. But don't give up before you try! Sometimes all you need is something to bridge a little time until you find something. You can contact the shelter or other pet rescue organizations (here **or** the area you are moving to) to see if there might be a foster family found to home your dog in the short-term, as long as you're willing to pay for their expenses. These organizations might even know where to look for pet-friendly rentals. Try local churches – many keep lists of resources. Friends or relatives might be able to help out either by taking in your dog or by hosting you for a while, until you can find a pet-friendly rental. Be flexible, too - a longer commute might garner whole new search areas.

Moving out of state is not necessarily a reason to give up a dog, either, even leaving the country or going overseas. It makes it more difficult, to be sure ... and it likely won't be cheap. These are considerations and we realize sometimes rehoming is not avoidable. The military will assist in helping a serviceperson keep a pet if they are just being reassigned, but being deployed on active duty is often a different story. There isn't always someone willing or able to step up and keep your pet for you for upwards of a year while you are away serving your country. Sad, but all too often true, and we thank you for your service and your sacrifices.

Moving due to a divorce can also be very difficult, but honestly ... in such difficult times you'd want to keep your one best friend, right? That would for me be one more reason to KEEP MY dog, although I wouldn't necessarily want my spouse's left-behind pet, which maybe was one of the reasons for the divorce? Actually, my spouse doesn't have a dog, they're all MINE! Especially when they need to go outside at night... (Hmm ... Claudia wrote that part, but it could easily have been either of us! <L>)

- **Rehoming due to pregnancy/kids**

This can be a serious consideration, depending on the individual dog – we cannot begin to give any sort of cut and dried answer to this. There are excellent resources out there on how to prepare and introduce your existing dog to a new baby in the family and growing up with a great pet dog can be a wonderful experience for a child. But the wrong dog, with the wrong temperament ... well, the child **must** be the number one priority.

If it's just a matter of no longer having time for the dog because you are expecting or have small children, well ... I'm sorry, but that dog could be the best babysitter you ever had! True! I (Deb) added a lively, 18-mo-old Rough Collie-mix to my young family when my two children were one year (Tom) old and six WEEKS old (Dan) – because our neighbor wanted to 'get rid of him'. The wife was pregnant, they were moving to an apartment and they didn't want to worry about the dog with the baby. Seriously? We knew this dog's temperament and personality ... "Dillon" was a treasure who loved, watched over, patiently endured teething, standing up and toddling with his fur

scrunched tight in tiny-person fists, was a patient 'pillow' during nap-times and protected my baby boys for the next 13 years. I only occasionally wondered if those folks had a clue what they had missed out on.

But ... when the dog in the family shows aggression towards the baby or the children, or you are expecting and your dog has had issues with small children in the past, it becomes a huge trust issue. We can, with training, limit the situations in which the dog might show aggression, but nevertheless if this dog is willing to solve new arousing stress issues with aggression, that risk will stay with that family. Unless the family can manage and supervise the kid(s) and the dog(s) at ALL TIMES (not likely), this is a risk they'd have to be willing to take – and many families understandably can't or won't. Where to draw that line and to trust a dog or not to trust a dog is totally a 'family affair' and nobody else can make those decisions. We can only be supportive.

- **Rehoming due to the dog's personality/temperament**

I wish more people would research a little more about the **breed** they're getting. Even if it's a mixed breed, but most 'parts' are known, consider that gene pool. The Border Collie and Belgian Malinois (for example) are some of the most hyper-drive dogs I can think of, and not just beautiful – they need to work. Most Terriers, Shetland and Icelandic Sheepdogs were bred to BARK as part of their territorial, herding and/or guardian dog duties. Most (not all) dog breeds were initially **bred for a working purpose** and that core purpose will affect their personality. This needs to be considered before (yes, before) bringing a new dog into your family. Many dogs need to be "doing something"; therefore need a lot of exercise, both physical and mental. Hunting, herding and mushing long distances are the most common 'dog jobs' here in Alaska (but not the only ones!), so you will see a lot of these breeds. These dogs won't just lay on the couch; they'll jump over it or chew on it all day long if they don't have something else to do! If you want a dog who will lay quietly in the sun or under your feet, look for breeds that excel at THAT. If you have close neighbors and don't want them complaining about the barking, there are quieter breeds. Really!

My (Claudia's) best experience about a temperament misfit was an elderly lady who came to class to me years ago with a Lab/Husky puppy. After a few weeks of class I suggested to her bringing the puppy back to ADPR because it really was too much for her. She later visited me, smiling from one ear to the other, and told me she wouldn't need my classes anymore because on the day she brought back the puppy, there was an adult dog coming in that needed a home and that dog is exactly the couch friend she wanted. Well behaved, mellow and snuggly. What a **happy ending for not only one, but two dogs!** The puppy found a better-fitting home, and the adult family dog was adopted faster than anybody imagined.

Mushing kennels are a different example of "reasons for rehoming" – they rehome dogs regularly (it can't be ignored, but should be understood). For them, it is a matter of necessity, and for the dogs' own good. It is not because they DON'T care about their dogs, but because they DO CARE! Each kennel has different expectations on their dogs, and a dog that happily runs 15-20 miles on a given day would be as wrong in an

Iditarod kennel (where it needs to be happier going 50-100 miles!) as it would be wrong in a retiree kennel where it would be bored senseless. While we had a mushing kennel, we often received dogs from other kennels. We kept them if they fitted our recreational team and the amount of mushing we did, and **sold or rehomed** dogs that didn't fit. We made sure they always had it better where they ended up, **instead of being either overstressed or underused** in our kennel. Mushers love nothing more than to see a good mushing dog's career end in someone's pet household with lots of hiking or bicycling and skiing – or just plenty of sofa-time.

- **Rehoming because it's the easy way out**

I think this is probably the least common - although very real - reason for giving up a dog. It can't be swept under the table. Sometimes people sadly do choose to simply give up a dog in order to open the door for a new, younger or "better" pet or maybe they just no longer want to have a dog at all. Sometimes the owners have lived with the dog and accepted an unpleasant situation for too long, and instead of reaching for help early on, waited until they couldn't stand it anymore, and then the only thinkable solution was to 'get rid of the dog NOW'. Worst case scenario they just turn the dog loose out onto the street.

Final thoughts:

If this article accomplishes nothing else, we hope it causes people to think about and possibly utilize all their options – options that can offer their unwanted dog the best chance at a new forever home. There are great resources available through the shelter, multiple rescue and support organizations and social media like Facebook and Craig's List, no reason to suffer through a bad situation on your own!

Sure, we don't like seeing people rehoming their dogs, but sometimes rehoming is the best solution FOR THE DOG AND THE PERSON. Moving due to a new, very time-consuming job or moving from the country to the city CAN (doesn't always have to) be a reason that rehoming is a better choice. How often have you thought 'that Husky doesn't belong in an apartment!', or 'That Newfie would be miserable in Arizona'. Yes, a lot of people can give Huskies in the city and Newfies in Arizona a great life, but somebody might also consider finding a great home for his Husky or Newfie here in Alaska instead of keeping them 'no matter what'. Putting the well-being of your dog first is a selfless, loving and often painful thing, but sometimes rehoming is for the best. I don't think there's any clear right or wrong answer to this issue.

Most people who end up rehoming a dog do think hard and try hard and just haven't found a solution for their specific problem. Sometimes we might be able to help them keep their pet by offering the right combination of advice and resources, and sometimes we can help them and their dog **more** by assisting them find a new, better-suited home for the pet. It is seldom a matter of want, but of need. HELP them if you can, but please DON'T CONDEMN! There is almost always more to the story.

We can hope that our readers will never need to make the difficult decision about rehoming a dog. But whether you do or not (who knows what the future will bring?), we hope you will better understand the often complicated reasons behind what sometimes seems to an outsider to be an easy or even thoughtless action.

Claudia (and Deb)

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
Member of The Dog Gurus

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