

Vol. 9 • Winter • 2006

The Barker

A Therapy Dog Publication of St. John Ambulance NS/PEI Council

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Behavioral Changes in Older Dogs

What it means when your pooch isn't acting himself.

It can be a nasty shock if your well-behaved older dog starts soiling in the house or stops greeting you at the door at night. If your dog seems to need an attitude adjustment, don't just blame it on his age. Your pet may have a treatable medical problem that's causing changes in his behavior.

It's All in His Mind

Has your beloved companion gradually become more sedentary, less tolerant of change, and a bit grumpier? Maybe he follows you around the house constantly now, whereas before he spent his afternoons watching squirrels race by the window.

Or has he gone the other way, acting indifferent to your attention? Are there times he doesn't seem to recognize you? Does he occasionally get stuck behind furniture or go to the hinged side of the door to be let in? Perhaps he even has accidents in the house now and then, a rare event during his younger years.

If your dog exhibits such behavior changes, he may be suffering from cognitive dysfunction syndrome, a newly recognized disease in dogs. If so, your veterinarian can suggest behavior modification techniques and medication to manage this condition.

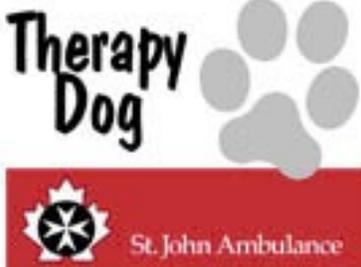
Any older dog will benefit from continued mental exercise as he ages, so encourage play with stimulating toys, review lessons learned years ago in obedience class, and refresh your dog's memory with familiar commands. You may discover that you can teach your old dog new tricks!

Accidental Spills

After patiently housebreaking your pet, it can be a surprise when your older dog soils in the house. But your pet's "accidents" could signal a medical problem, including bladder infection, diabetes mellitus, or renal disease. Or your pet may have a mobility problem - he just can't make it to the door fast enough!

Don't punish your dog for his accidents - this could induce fear- or anxiety-related behavior problems. Do schedule an exam with your veterinarian right away. Identifying the cause quickly can be lifesaving, and will help prevent your dog from developing bad habits.

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"They say the dog is a man's best friend. I don't believe that. How many of your friend's have you neutered?"
- Larry Reeb

From the Editor

I don't exactly know where the time goes, but believe it or not, Christmas is just one month away, which means that the end of 2006 is just around the corner. It seems like time certainly has been flying by this year, and it has been such an awesome and exciting year for the St. John Ambulance Therapy Dog Program. To learn about what has been going on, check out the program update in this edition of the newsletter. With all the progress that we have made this year, I'm really anticipating 2007!

I would like to take a moment and thank all of the wonderful people that have taken the time to volunteer on behalf of the St. John Ambulance Therapy Dog Program. Each and every one of you has done so much for the people you visit, and it is greatly appreciated. Thank you and keep up the good work!

Congratulations to the Therapy Dog Holiday Cards Photo Contest Winners! The winners are: Gizmo (owned by Natalie Warren, Glace Bay, NS), Tanner (owned by Tanya Kontuk, Westville, NS) and Abbey (owned by Paula Barrett, Halifax, NS). The cards are in the process of being produced, so they should be in the mail by early December. I would like to thank everyone that sent in photos for the contest, they were all wonderful and I enjoyed looking at them. If you didn't win this year, don't worry, we will be holding the contest again next year as well. On that note I would like to wish everyone a safe and happy holiday season filled with good friends, good cheer, and lots of doggie kisses!

Dog Jokes...that make you wanna HOWL!



Behavioral Changes in Older Dogs

What it means when your pooch isn't acting himself.

...Continued

See No Evil, Hear No Evil

If your older dog is slow to greet you at the door, it could be that he's suffering from vision or hearing loss. But if he's otherwise healthy, he should perk up as soon as he notices you're home.

Your veterinarian can check your dog's vision and hearing. He might be suffering from an ear infection, dry eyes, or cataracts, which are treatable conditions. Ask your veterinarian to explain your dog's condition and possible treatments.



A Lingering Effect

Is your dog spending more time in his bathroom - that certain corner of the yard, or under that special tree? Constipation sometimes plagues older dogs because of insufficient exercise, poor nutrition, prostate disease, tumors, weakening bowel muscles, or low water consumption. And dogs with impacted anal glands can also appear uncomfortable and constipated.

You can help prevent constipation problems by making sure your pet always has access to fresh water. If he doesn't seem to be drinking enough, mix water with his normal chow. High-fiber diets may also help ease your dog's distress by promoting extra water absorption in the large intestine. Your veterinarian can help pinpoint the problem.

Immediate Relief

Dogs who need their water bowls filled more often - and then race outside to urinate - may be showing signs of renal disease, Cushing's disease, or diabetes. Let your veterinarian know right away, and never withhold water to slow your revolving doggy door. Restricting your dog's water intake may make the underlying medical problem worse.

Appetite Alert

If your dog used to eat every meal like it was his first in three days and now barely stirs when you fill the food bowl, his taste buds could be at fault. Older dogs sometimes lose their ability to taste and smell food.

Be on the alert, though, in case your dog becomes extremely finicky or refuses more than two main courses in a row. And if your dog can't find the food bowl or forgets to eat, tell your veterinarian.

On the other hand, if your dog's appetite is suddenly insatiable, this could signal other medical problems, including Cushing's disease or diabetes mellitus, common endocrine disorders in older dogs.

Weigh your senior dog every month, and if you notice a 5 percent or greater change in body weight, schedule a visit with your veterinarian.

Volunteer Spotlight: Debbie Huskins

I am retired from Nova Scotia Power Inc. and not having any luck getting another worthwhile job I decided to do something different with my time. My husband and I bought a small business here in Yarmouth as he was severed from his job as well. In 2004 we got our dog Jesse, he is a golden retriever with personality plus. I heard about St. John Ambulance Dog Therapy through our local paper. I contacted the regional coordinator and was signed up for an orientation in Berwick where Jesse and I took our training.



We are presently visiting The Veterans Place in Yarmouth; it is a 15 bed facility for, of course, veterans. It is very personal and everyone loves Jesse there. I must tell you that they have other pets there, which include a cat, which we never see, a budgie bird name Charlie and a fish tank full of gold fish which is eye level to Jesse. When we enter Jesse greets everyone with excitement and goes over to Charlie and the fish tank, he plays with them and the Vets who are close at hand really enjoy the entertainment.

Such a rewarding experience for me and Jesse looks forward to going. He loves the attention they give and responds by leaning by their sides while they pat him.

Where this facility is part of the Southwest Regional Health Centre, every year the Volunteers, no matter where they volunteer or what they do are rewarded with a very special banquet, letters of appreciation and some awards. I participated this year for the first time and was overwhelmed with the attention that we received. It was very humbling.

I would like everyone to know what a privilege it has been for me to belong to such an organization as this.

**"Most dogs don't think they are human, they know they are."
- Jane Swan**

2006 Therapy Dog Award Recipient -Nancy Weaver

Nancy Weaver and her dog Angel joined the St. John Ambulance Therapy Dog Program in November of 2000. They were in fact the first Therapy Dog team in the South Shore. Nancy later had two more dogs, Ben and Thunder, evaluated as Therapy Dogs. Earlier this year Angel passed away, however Nancy continues to visit with Thunder on a regular basis and Ben occasionally.



Aside from their regular visits to Fisherman's Memorial Hospital and Harbour View Haven, Nancy and her dogs regularly help to promote the program in their area by walking in parades, attending dog shows, and participating in presentations to different groups to educate them about the Therapy Dog Program.

It is our pleasure to present the 2006 Therapy Dog Award to Nancy Weaver and her Therapy Dogs Angel, Ben and Thunder.

Honorary Therapy Dog

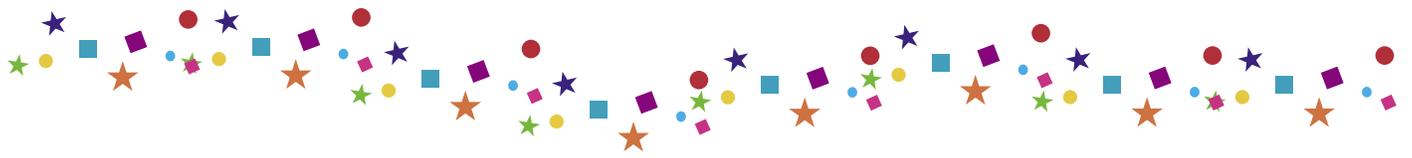
Recently I sent an email out to volunteers asking them to send in pictures of their Therapy Dogs dressed up for Halloween, in the hopes that I would get a few to use for the fall edition of The Barker next year. My inbox has been full of dogs in costume ever since, and the pictures have been quite amusing. When I opened up my email from one volunteer, I was wishing that I had held a Best Halloween Costume contest, as had I done that, this picture would have won the prize!



The picture to the right was sent to me from Gloria Armstrong, a Therapy Dog volunteer in the Annapolis Valley. This is a picture of one of her Therapy Dogs, Brogan, and her 2 year old granddaughter Caelyn Parker. Caelyn is dressed up as a St. John Ambulance Therapy Dog! I thought this picture was so cute; I just had to share it with all of you. I think that it is only fitting that we make Caelyn and "Honorary Therapy Dog"!

Thank you Gloria for sending this picture in, and thank you to everyone who has sent in pictures of their dogs dressed up in their costumes. They've kept myself and my co-workers giggling all week.

Welcome New Volunteers!



**Alexa Megeney
& Clover**

New Glasgow



**Elizabeth Robin & Sadie
Dartmouth**



Alisa Digout & Chloe

St. Peter's



Shelley Hutt & Slippers

Dartmouth



Leigh Hartnett & Sable

New Glasgow



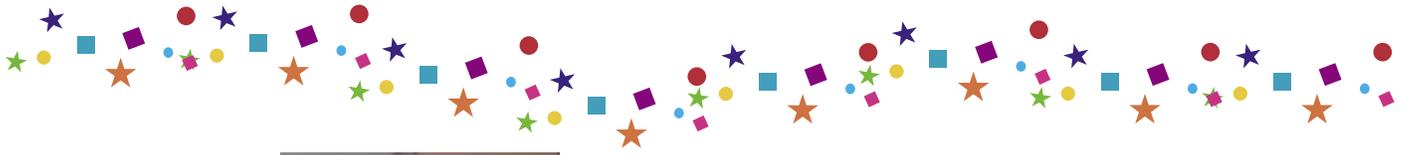
**Melinda Vivian
& Maggie**

Dartmouth



"Ever consider what dogs must think of us? I mean, here we come back from a grocery store with the most amazing haul- chicken, pork, half a cow. They must think we are the greatest hunters on earth!"- Anne Tyler

Welcome New Volunteers!



Debbie Murphy & Percy
Dartmouth



Tanya Kontuk & Tanner
New Glasgow



Tracey Hannigar & Bailey
Halifax



Tom Wall & Chloe
St. Peter's



Jason Quinn & Bailey
Dartmouth



Stephen Hutt & Pepper
Dartmouth



VETERINARIAN DISCOUNTS

As mentioned in the Therapy Dog Program Overview, some veterinarians in the province have been kind enough to offer a 10% discount to St. John Ambulance Therapy Dog volunteers provided they have their dog's Therapy Dog photo ID card with them at the time of their appointment. Some of the veterinarians offering these discounts have placed restrictions on what the discount can be applied to, so please contact them directly for specific details.

Here are the veterinarians that currently offer discounts to our volunteers:

Westwood Hills Veterinary Hospital
3650 Hammonds Plains Road
Upper Tantallon, NS
Ph: 826-1933

Carnegy Animal Hospital Ltd.
7 Langbrae Drive, Suite 5
Halifax, NS
Ph: 457-1575

Chester Basin Animal Hospital
133 Rt. 12
Chester Basin, NS
Ph: 275-3551

Nova Veterinary Clinic
Bridgewater, NS
Ph: 543-7255

Milton Nova Veterinary Clinic
Milton, NS
Ph: 354-4531

Mahone Bay Vet Clinic
16 Pond Street
Mahone Bay, NS
Ph: 624-9736

South Shore Veterinary Services
Bridgewater, NS
Ph: 543-5602

Pinegrove Animal Hospital
173 North Street
Bridgewater, NS
Ph: 543-4247

If you do visit these veterinary offices, please remember to thank them for their support of the St. John Ambulance Therapy Dog Program!



Therapy Dog Program Overview

(as of August 31, 2006)

The Therapy Dog Program continues to grow on a regular basis, not just in the number of new volunteers and facilities, but in program recognition. It has been very exciting to see this develop throughout 2006 as it is something that both key volunteers and the coordinator have been working very hard at. Compared to this time last year, the public's recognition of the program has greatly grown. With this recognition has also come the acceptance and support from many other groups, such as veterinarians, dog sport groups, rescue organizations, etc. This already has, and will continue to increase the public's knowledge of the program, as well as the amount of volunteers participating in the program.

Number of Volunteers: 156
Number of Facilities: 91
Number of Visits: 2,411
Number of Hours: 6,591.5

During this year we have also experienced a decrease in volunteers in the Cape Breton area. While this is a bit of a setback concerning the growth of the program, it is not necessarily a negative. We still have a significant number of volunteers in the area who are dedicated to remain with the program and would like to get "back to basics". This will help build a much stronger program in this area in the future.

ACTIVITIES AND INITIATIVES

- **Promotion**

Therapy Dog has had the opportunity to participate in a number of Dog Shows/ Dog Exhibitions; as well volunteers themselves have been keen on promoting the program in their local areas, by participating in info sessions etc. This has certainly increased the overall interest and knowledge of the program with the general public, resulting in an increased interest in joining the program. Smaller regions have also had great success with media coverage, also assisting them with growth of the program in their particular areas.

- **Volunteer Recognition**

Early in the year a new volunteer recognition program was initiated for all Therapy dog Handlers. This program coincides with the certificates that are currently presented for number of visits completed. A paw print badge was designed to be presented to handler teams once they have completed a particular number of visits (i.e. 50, 100, 175, 250 and 400+). This recognition has been well received by all volunteers. All regions were also encouraged to hold local recognition events for their groups, where volunteers could get together for an informal afternoon, with door prizes, food etc. These events were enjoyed by all, and the dogs were also included as part of the festivities. These will now be an annual event with all regions.

- **New Areas**

The Strait-Richmond area in Cape Breton became their own free standing group earlier this year and continue to strive in that region. We have also rejuvenated the Truro region and are now moving onward into New Glasgow where there has been significant interest in the program.

- **Networking**

Due to the networking of many of our volunteers, Vet offices in many of the regions are now offering 10% discounts to Therapy Dog Volunteers; this has been a most positive perk to the program. We also continue our strong ties with the (GPAC) Greyhound Pets of Atlantic Canada and other animal rescue groups; these organizations are strong supporters of the program and assist in promoting to their membership etc. Partnering and working with other "Dog" organizations will certainly assist us with continued growth and acceptance of the program.

Poetry Corner

MY DOG

T'is the wag of his tail when I come home at night
And the look of fond love in his eyes;
Although to the world a sad failure I've been
To him I am noble and wise.

When I sit by the fire with my pipe and a book
He snuggles up close to my knee.
I am filled with new hope and my faith is renewed
Through the trust that my dog has in me.

And when I am tempted to play sharp with shrewd men
And stage a deal that my conscience would mar;
Then the look in his eyes seems to haunt me and say
Be the person that your dog thinks you are.

-Anonymous



The Gourmet Dog

.... Recipes For Your Best Friend.

Pizza for the Pupperonis

If you're planning to serve these at a puppy party, ask your favorite pizza restaurant for a clean pizza box to serve them in.

1 cup whole wheat pastry flour
1 cup cornmeal
3/4 cup nutritional yeast
1/2 tsp garlic powder
1/2 tsp oregano
1/2 tsp basil
3 tbsp olive oil
1 tbsp tomato paste
3/4 cup water
2 tbsp tomato paste
2 tbsp olive oil

- Preheat oven to 350 degrees
- In a large bowl combine flour, cornmeal, yeast, garlic, oregano, and basil. Mix.
- Add oil, 1 tbsp. tomato paste, and water. Mix.
- Roll dough out to 1/4" thickness on cornmeal dusted surface. Place rounds on a cookie sheet.
- Cut into circles using a cookie cutter or the edge of a drinking glass.
- In a cup, combine the olive oil and 2 tbsp tomato paste.
- With a spoon, spread a teensy bit of the tomato paste mixture onto each round, like pizza sauce.
- For small dogs, cut each "pizza" into 4 wedges.
- Bake 25 minutes.



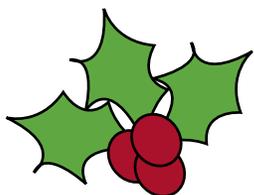
"With eye upraised his master's look to scan/
the joy, the solace, and/ the aid of man:/
The rich man's guardian and the poor man's friend,
The only creature faithful to the end." - Gerge Crabbe

WANTED: *Someone to Love*

Hi, my name is Mocha White. I am an awesome 9 yr old lab (or lab mix?) girl with lots of energy. I get along great with cats and dogs. I don't like to swim but I enjoy having a bath. I love to go for walks. I had an ACL repair last summer and am doing great. I am in very good health. My family had a baby and feel that I am not getting the attention I need so they have decided I would be happier in a home where I can have more attention. I hope you will come and meet me. Smooches, Mocha. Mocha also has a 9 year old lab/shepherd mix (looks like a lab with pointy ears) boyfriend by the name of Dusty who is up for adoption as well. If you are interested in either Mocha or Dusty, please contact Trish Pittman at Lab Rescue Nova Scotia by email: t.viscount@ns.sympatico.ca or phone: 883-4799. You can also check out their website at: www.labrescuens.booi.com/index.php



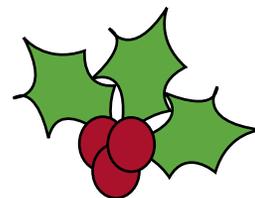
Picture Perfect



Pictured on the left is Santa Claus with Therapy Dog Gilbert Joudrey, proudly owned by Laurel Joudrey of New Germany, NS.



Send in photos of your dog to be featured in "Picture Perfect". See contact information below.



PLEASE CONTACT
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