



Dog Talk Weekly

Where we talk about dogs, share stories, solve problems

Issue 10.6.1 – June 5, 2010

Welcome back to another issue of Dog Talk Weekly. I hope you are enjoying the content that I've been sending you. This week, I have several things to tell you that I hope you can use.

I'd also like to make a special request.

Would you let me know what breed of dog you have, or will be getting? I'd like to focus some articles on specific breeds so that they are more relevant to what you need.

And... if you have any questions about dogs that you'd like me to answer, simply send them to me via my contact form here:

<http://sylviadickens.com/contactform/contactus.php>

Thank you.

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Don't forget to drop by the blog for more helpful articles, tips and fun topics. <http://dogtalkweekly.com/dogblog/>

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**Feature: Your Dog's 5 Senses**

How much do you really know about your dog's 5 senses? No doubt, you are aware that they have an excellent sniffer for tracking those elusive odors that they find everywhere. But what about the other senses?

**Sight:**

I bet you've heard the old wives tale that dogs only see in black and white. This is a question that has been on the minds of dog owners for centuries. And the debate continues.

I just came across some information that spills the beans, and since it comes from a veterinarian, I'd have to assume that it is correct.

If you or anyone you know is color blind, that you will have an idea what dogs can see. Dogs have sight that is similar to red-green colorblindness. This means that they can tell yellows and blues reasonably well, but reds look yellow, and green looks white.

This will explain why your dog cannot find a red ball in the green grass. Next time your dog seems blind to a toy, consider its color and the background. Also consider the shape against the background. Your dog might recognize the shape before it recognizes the actual color. Of course, if the wind is coming from the right direction, he'll find it by its scent.

Another interesting thing is that while our vision is perfect at 20/20, a dog's vision sits between 20/50 and 20/100. This is, in large part, because they are designed for dusk and dawn hunting, when prey is most active. Their eyes are built to work best in this environment.

Which means that in daylight, your dog will not be able to distinguish your facial features as well as you might expect. But the colors that he can see gives him exactly what he needs to spot small prey, like rats, mice and other creatures in dim light.

A dog's eye structure gives him a huge advantage over us in dim light and darkness, whereas we have the advantage in daylight when multi-colors help us to see well.

### **Hearing:**

Here's another myth you've probably heard: Dogs have amazing hearing and can hear things at great distances. The fact is, their hearing isn't much better than ours. Their "superior hearing" comes from their ability to hear certain pitches that we cannot detect.

They can hear ultra-high frequencies – those at around 65,000 cycles per second, whereas we can only hear up to 20,000 cycles per second.

Now, you might wonder how this can benefit the dog.

Interestingly, many of its prey make noises in the high frequency ranges, so this talent benefits them tremendously when they have to rely on rodents for dinner.

Also interesting is that dogs can separate out sounds much better than we can. If there are 5 noises going on at the same time, they can pick out just one – obviously, the one that has some meaning to them, or affects them in some way.

This is why you might be baffled when your dog seems super-attentive or super-submissive, even fearful, for no apparent reason. It's very likely your dog has heard something that scares him, such as loud drilling off in the distance. It's more about how a dog's brain decodes and translates sounds than it is about his acute hearing.

But, those huge rotating ears help a lot, too, enabling him to turn them towards the sounds. Have you ever seen your dog turn one ear back and one forward? The one that is pointing to the back twists and bends to try to pick up the direction of a specific sound so that he can identify it.

Imagine how helpful this can be when a dog is on guard. It's not easy sneaking up on an attentive dog. Try it and see how close you can get before he turns to check you out.

### **Touch:**

Have you ever wondered how a dog can walk on rough terrain without feeling any pain? That's because they have tough pads and the sensors in their feet are nowhere near as sensitive as those in our fingers and feet.

A dog satisfies the sense of touch through his muzzle. It's where he gains a tremendous amount of information. When mouthing his prey, for instance, he needs to know that it is okay to go ahead and eat it. How it feels, smells and tastes will give him that answer.

Surprisingly, the base of the dog's neck is least sensitive, which explains why he is able to pull so harshly on the leash. He just doesn't feel it and will pull until he starts to choke and cough.

This knowledge can benefit you when you are training your dog to heel. Switching to a different type of collar is not the solution. A halter, which fits over the muzzle, is the best method because it applies pressure without pain, much the same way his mother would have done when he was doing something she didn't want him to do.

### **Taste:**

I bet you think your dog will absolutely love to get a variety of flavors in his meals and treats. Nothing could be further from the truth. In fact, dogs only have about 2,000 taste buds, compared to about 9,000 in humans. This means that they cannot tell that many flavors, including sugar.

Dogs could care less about flavor. They just want to fill their bellies, which explains why they gulp their food, rather than savor it as we do. Still, they will eat almost anything they think is edible, or at least try to, especially as puppies. Humans, on the other hand, are not so quick to try something new.

Clearly, this willingness to try new things is strictly a survival instinct. When prey is elusive, a dog must eat something. Knowing what he can eat is crucial to his existence. He can't afford to be finicky. That only happens when humans spoil them.

### **Smell:**

Ok. Let's revisit this one. Just how well can a dog smell?

This is where dogs rule supreme over humans. They have almost 20 times more smell receptors cells than we do.

They can detect the slightest concentration of an odor at least 100 times better than humans. For example, a dog can pick up the scent from the light touch of a human fingerprint on an object that has been sitting outside in all types of weather for 2 weeks.

A dog's olfactory lobes can distinguish one scent from another far better than ours can. They can separate confusing smells to get to the ones that make sense. That is why they excel at tracking criminals. They can pick out the scented footprint of the criminal from all the others that cross the same path.

Of course, some dogs are better at this than others, simply because they are designed for tracking, bloodhounds for instance.

Now that you have a better insight into a dog's 5 senses, you might have a better understanding of why your dog does what he does.

## **Summer Travels and Your Dog**

I wrote about this before, but it cannot be stressed enough that dogs are at risk when they are traveling. It is important to know when your dog is distressed and how to prevent it from happening in the first place.

Probably the highest concern is leaving your dog in the car or other vehicle. It takes little time for a dog to feel the heat, even with windows open, and even if it's not all that hot to you. Their response to heat will magnify if they are left in a vehicle. If you think 2 minutes is okay, you'd be wrong.

Imagine what it feels like in a greenhouse, with the sun pouring in and little air circulating. That's similar to how the heat will build up in a vehicle, which can happen very quickly. Now, here's a number that might shock you...

If a dog is in an environment with temperatures in the high 70s or low 80s, your dog can die. That's all it takes. And it doesn't take but a few minutes. This includes being left in a kennel in the hot sun, under a tarped run with no other shade, and, of course, in a vehicle.

Whenever possible, use a sunshade to help block the sun's rays from entering your vehicle. It will still get extremely hot, but it will help. Use it any time you are sitting in the parked car (eating takeout, for example) to block the sun from the windshield, side window or back window to protect your dog. Even better, get out of the vehicle and sit under the shade of a tree with your dog.

Leaving a sunshade over the sunny window while you take your dog on a walk will help to keep the vehicle's interior a bit cooler for when you return. Crank up the air conditioner before putting your dog inside the vehicle. If it's not working, open the doors to air it out.

Another idea is to have your windows tinted a darker shade if you spend a lot of time in the vehicle with your dog.

Always park the car in the shade to minimize heat build-up during your absence.

If you travel frequently with your dog, consider getting a minivan, which tends to stay cooler than cars.

NEVER let your dog ride in the open back of a truck. It is extremely dangerous. The dog might be quite adept at riding in an open truck, but consider these scenarios: you have a sudden stop, you get hit by another vehicle, your dog suddenly decides to jump out into traffic. Every one of those situations can cause your dog severe injury or death. It's just not worth the risk, is it?

### **The Danger Signs of Heat Stress**

Watch for these symptoms whenever you are in a hot or warm environment with your dog.

Heavy panting, deep red or purple tongue, glazed eyes, rapid pulse, dizziness, vomiting, brain damage followed by death (imagine how it must feel to explode internally from the heat build-up).

When traveling or sitting idle in the car (or if your dog is fastened outside somewhere), check on him frequently to make sure the sun has not moved and that he is able to stay cool. Always give him fresh water. He can quickly dehydrate from panting.

## **My Story: My Dog Bit Me!**

Yep. It's true. Tyler bit me. But I am very impressed.

His jaws have the force of about 250 pounds per square inch, which enables him to break bones easily. A recent dog show demonstrated how a German Shepherd has enough strength in his jaws to bite right through one of those suits the police trainers use to teach their dogs to attack and subdue a fleeing criminal. In fact, this breed can bite right through bullet-proof material.

Now, when Tyler bit me, I knew this could be bad. If he so chose, he could easily crack my bones. But he didn't. He did give me a bruise, though.

Before you get too far ahead of me, let me explain. And this is why you have to really do a thorough examination if your child gets bitten by a dog, especially one that seems friendly and playful.

For the very last time, (I finally fixed the fence he keeps scaling) I went to retrieve him from the neighbor's yard where he was playing with the two boys there. He loves them and playing their games... and a few of his own.

This time, it was a deflated plastic soccer ball that they were kicking around for him to catch. He was having the time of his life, racing around the small yard with that squashed mass in his jaws.

When we are at home, we play a game where I kick what's left of his Kong toy, and he leaps off the deck and chases it. Another version: he goes onto the lawn first and catches the toy as I kick it off the deck. He's amazingly agile and flexible for this game. It always shocks me how high he can jump and kind of hang in the air until he grabs it. It's really something to see.

I also read recently that he can jump 4 times his height, which is second highest of all dogs. He's beat out by the Jack Russell which can jump 5 times its height.

Tyler can be quite impatient and often goes for the toy lying in front of my foot before I have time to kick it. And this is what happened when we were playing with the soccer ball.

As usual, he dropped it in front of me to kick and a second later, dived for it. I stepped on it and say, "Wait!" He understands this command and usually backs off. But he was so excited this day that he lunged for the soccer ball that was under my foot. In his enthusiasm, he latched on to my foot and bit down hard.

One jaw was on the inside of my foot and the other was on the outside, right at the arch. It would not have taken much for him to put full pressure and crunch my foot.

"OW!" I yelled very loudly, because it did hurt. I sure felt what he was capable of.

Now this is where he impressed me.

It was interesting to watch his wheels turn as he tried to figure out what had just happened... the thing in his mouth was not soft, it tasted different from what he expected, it didn't move... and it was somehow familiar by its smell.

When he realized it was my foot and not the ball, he released and stepped back, still eyeing the toy. Later that day, I checked my still sore foot to see a dollar-coin sized bruise on each site of my foot where he had bitten.

I know he didn't mean it, but this is a good example of how children can easily get bitten.

In fact, he nipped one of the boys on the soft tissue inside the top portion of his arm. Again, Tyler was going for the ball that the boy was holding in the air and waving around. It was just a red graze. I'm not even sure it was a bite, but most likely was a scratch from his tremendously powerful nails as he lunged for the ball.

My reason for telling you this is that I've heard too many stories of people jumping to conclusions ("the dog is dangerous"), which never turns out well.

Tyler is the type of dog that can inflict unintentional pain quite easily. He's hurt me numerous times just from ramming me with his noggin' while going for his toy at my feet. Or by hitting me with his hips as he throws himself around. His entire body is solid and bony. He's oblivious to any pain whatsoever.

This could be one of several reasons why his first owners did not retrieve him when he got away. Perhaps one of the children was accidentally hurt in this way. Children don't always understand and can give the wrong impression.

But you know, my neighbor kids told me that day, "Your dog is awesome. When can he come back and play? We should put a door in the fence." ☺

### **Moving Your Dog**

Moving day can be extremely stressful for everyone, especially your dog (and any other animals you might have). They do not understand what the fuss is about. This makes them worry, as they see things slowly disappear from their home. Your coming and going makes them even more worried. Can you imagine what it must be like for them?

Here are some tips that you can use to ease your dog's next move.

1. Safety first. Find somewhere safe for your dog to wait while you are moving things in and out, in a crate or gated room, for example.
2. Put on his ID. Make sure he keeps his collar on all the time in case he decides to bolt. On it, include a tag with your dog's name, your name and your phone number. A cell phone is best if you will be in and out, and if your home phone will be disconnected. If your dog has any special health issues, include this on the tag (or a separate tag) so that whoever finds him can know what he needs.
3. Pay frequent visits to your dog. Don't just leave him for hours on end while you work. Every 20-30 minutes or so, take a moment to give yourself a break, go to him, talk to him, pet him and reassure him that it's okay. Don't go overboard (i.e.: pick him up, cuddle him) or he will be sure something is wrong. Just a casual walk-by, pat on the head, and "Hey, Charlie. You're being a good boy. Where's your toy?"
4. Make sure he has his blanket and favorite toys at all times, both in the old home and in the new one. Think of these things as representative of "his" home – everything else might be changing, but at least his area is staying the same. This will give him comfort.
5. Let him stay in one home or the other during the move. Don't keep transporting him back and forth as this will confuse him. Of course, it depends on your dog. Some dogs

are happier staying with their owners. Just be sure there's somewhere safe and out of the way for him to wait while you pack/unpack before heading back.

6. During the process, keep up his regular routine. Take him for his usual walks, feed him at the usual time, and play with him at the usual time. You want to keep as much of his life as normal as possible.

7. Move on a long weekend or during your holidays. That way, you can spend time with him in the new home to give him a few days to adjust. I've found this to be extremely beneficial. If you are busy moving one day, finish late at night, crash, only to wake early the next day and go to work, your dog will be stressed.

Your dog will adapt to your new home in a matter of a few days. Some dogs adjust on the first day. It depends on their personality and how readily they adapt to change. It also depends on how dependent they are, as this type tends to be more anxious when their surroundings alter.

When the move is over, take time out for yourself and your dog. Have some play time together. This will help to take his mind off what he might be thinking about the change that just happened. Distraction is a great way to "get over" something stressful. So, have some fun!

### **Regular Sections:**

#### **- Dog Trivia**

Training problems? Maybe it's your fault, too. Dog training is a learning experience for both of you. You're learning how to reach your dog (every dog is different) and gain his or her trust. You're learning what techniques will work best with this particular dog. Your dog is trying to figure out what the heck you're getting at. Remember, dogs are not accustomed to human nature and our method of communication. Dog training involves a huge learning curve. Be patient, give frequent praise, and you both will succeed.

You can't train an old dog new tricks. Boy, talk about an old wives tale. Of course you can train any dog, regardless of its age, as long as it does not have some health issue getting in the way or it needs special care to overcome the effects of abuse. Puppies will learn faster, but if you can motivate your dog, he will learn whatever you want to teach him.

A fun environment is more conducive to dog training. If the training is boring and painful, your dog will take longer to learn. Make it fun, and you'll both enjoy the experience and come out happier in the end.

If you have more than one dog in your household, give the alpha dog his due recognition and things will go much more smoothly between them. Feed and pet him first. That way, he will not see the other dog as a threat. This is especially helpful when you introduce a new dog. Your first dog should be the alpha dog, but it's possible they will decide that for themselves without your help.

#### **- Dog Talk Weekly News**

You might have noticed that Dog Talk Weekly did not publish last week. Rather than doing the newsletter every single week, I've decided to do 4 a month, so there will be a few months over the year that will not get a weekly issue.

I'm still open to receiving your personal dog stories for inclusion in a future issue of Dog Talk Weekly.

- Competitions

Due to the lack of interest in the Dog Photo of the Month competition, I am dropping it for now. I may well bring it back at a later date. If I do, it will be announced in the newsletter and on my blog. However, I will set up a poll shortly to give you an opportunity to pick your favorite from those that were submitted in May. You will be notified when I get that set up.

That's it for this issue. I hope you enjoyed it.

Until next week...

Get out there and have fun with your dog. Take some great photos.  
Collect wonderful memories.

Sylvia

P.S.: Don't forget to send me your stories and ideas for upcoming issues of Dog Talk Weekly. Just send them to me through my contact form here:

<http://sylviadickens.com/contactform/contactus.php>

**Dog Nutrition** is vital to your dog's life expectancy and quality of life. I've written a book on how to make sure your dog gets a healthy, nutritious diet and avoids many of the dangers that come with certain foods. Find out more at  
<http://healthydognutritionsecrets.com/healthydogPP1.htm>

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