The BARC
BEACON
Shining the Light of Hope and Freedom

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Traditionally, the holiday season is when we tend to stop and take the time to reflect upon our lives...a time for remembering those who've made a difference in our world. So as we approach this blessed Christmas season, those of us lucky enough to be involved in BARC would be remiss if we did not take time to stop and recognize the incredible dedication and efforts of those who selflessly work on behalf of this organization and these precious Berner babies.

If these babies, themselves, could talk, they'd be lined up to say "thank you" and give you all a "Berner hug" or a "puppy kiss." So as their caretakers, we stand in their stead and take our hats off to you, the BARC Board, the incredible foster families, those involved in transport, as well as those involved in fundraising, and those who spend hours searching the Internet and other sources to find these precious souls in need of saving. It doesn't matter how much or how little you've contributed, if you've taken of your time and resources on behalf of even one of these valiant and noble creatures, this tribute is to you!!



Thank you for helping to rescue these precious souls from darkness and for spreading the Spirit of Christmas all year long by your selfless dedication and good deeds. You teach us, daily, the true meaning of Christmas.

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FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK



Lisa with Bosley

Well, here we are again, entering yet another holiday season with all its busyness and cheer. We hope this Christmas finds you sharing many wonderful times and special memories with family and friends…but please don't forget to include the special animal friends who share your lives and add such warmth and meaning to your daily existence. Be sure to hide bones, treats (try the Peanut Butter Cookie recipe in this issue), and chew toys in their stockings this Christmas morning as a way of saying "thank you" for the daily adoration that they shower upon you. And don't forget those walks in the snow (okay, I'm wishing now…I live in TX!!) as we ALL know how much Berners LOVE snow!! Just remember, in all the craziness of the season, that our beloved canines don't operate on the same playing field that we do. Every day is like the next to them—all about YOU! They don't understand that Christmas is an extra busy/stressful time for people. They just know they didn't get their walk or dinner was late. So please remember to take time to make your beloved BARC babies and their companions continue to feel special even in this busy season. Believe me, it will do YOU as much good as it does them!

I think our wonderful animal companions teach us so many lessons in life. One of them is to take pleasure in the simple things like a walk or 10 minutes on the floor of good snuggle time. It's amazing, when I'm stressed out and frustrated, how coming home to my beloved BARC boyz, Bosley and Bernie, reminds me to BREATHE…and how just being in their presence helps me to de-stress. So as we enter this wildly busy and often chaotic season, remember to take pleasure in the simple things…and to hug your BARC baby(s) and realize how extraordinary they think you are!! Everything else is just "gravy"!!

Along with all the other "things" on your to-do list, we hope that you'll squeeze out a few minutes at some point to curl up with your BARC baby(s), relax, and read this holiday issue of the newsletter. We hope you'll find it interesting and enjoyable, and that it might give you some ideas for ways to help you and your canine friends have a more blissful holiday. If in doubt, be sure to contact Tracy Werner, our Family Spotlight and special doggy business entrepreneur/BARC mom in this issue, as I'm sure she will have tons of great ideas to help you out this holiday season. I'm sure Tracy has ideas for *all* the animals on your Christmas shopping list!! And be sure to notice our new Berner-Garde announcement which, by the way, includes a lovely photo of our own Beth McNeal's BARC baby, Isabelle!! THANK YOU, Dan Sernicola, for putting this announcement/reminder together for our newsletter.

As always, heartfelt thanks to each and every person involved in making not only this issue, but this entire year a success. This is a huge group effort, and it's all for the love of our BARC babies! So to BARC babies everywhere and their loving families: MERRY CHRISTMAS and blessings in the New Year!!

Lisa Hawes, editor

BARC mom to Bosley (almost 5 now!!) and Bernie (who just turned 4)

In Dallas, TX



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BERNESE AUCTION RESCUE COALITION

BARC, INC.

Lending a paw to those in need

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NEXT NEWSLETTER DEADLINE:

Deadline for submissions for the March issue of the BARC Beacon is Friday, February 6, 2009.

All submissions to be sent to the Editor, Lisa Hawes by email at lkhawes@yahoo.com.

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Bernese Mountain Dog illustrations in this issue © 1990-2008 Argostar.com

BARC FAMILY SPOTLIGHT

"THE WERNER FAMILY"



Carolyn's visit to Tracy's shop

I've loved animals ever since I can remember. Growing up, my family pets were my friends, confidants, and entertainment. Mom was always taking in dogs and cats that needed a home, and I learned early on the satisfaction of adopting and rescuing animals.

That's why when I finally got my first dog as an adult, I was so excited. He was a wonderful Golden Retriever named AJ, and once again I had a best friend, a confidant, and definitely entertainment! I was proud of his care and training - only the best that I could afford for my pal. AJ and I were inseparable. We would go everywhere together that we possibly could: street fairs, window shopping, the beach, and even on my honeymoon! I recall even refusing an invite to a party because I couldn't bring AJ. So when he started slowing down, I thought that it was just his age. He was a 7 year old large breed dog, and everything I read said that he was a senior now. Little did I know that a friend's recommendation of a food change and some glucosamine supplements would make such a huge difference in his energy level and attitude and in my future. It was like the old days! He had spunk and a smile on his face again!

Two years later, AJ was diagnosed with Lymphoma, and he crossed over to the Rainbow Bridge 5 months after his original diagnosis. I was devastated, even though I knew it was coming eventually. He was also the first loved one that I knew who passed away – it was a life changing experience for me. I confronted my own beliefs and life path, asked myself some major questions, and decided that helping animals was what I wanted my life goal to be. I did major research into what can cause cancer and how food and nutrition are a huge part of health and longevity. At that time, I was a computer consultant/graphic designer/web programmer working with my husband in his own company. It seemed only natural to use my existing talents and resources to fulfill my new career path, so we built a web site to see if there was any interest in the types of healthy products that I knew could help many animals and owners who might find themselves in similar situations to me. Apparently the answer was yes because, in 8 months time, I found myself opening up the doors to a new retail store – Natural Pet Market.

During the time of building the site and gathering the resources, I grieved the loss of AJ and knew that I couldn't bring myself to acquire another Golden. I thought it wouldn't be fair to me or the dog because I knew that I would just compare him to AJ. So I set off on a mission to find another breed that would suit me best. I went online and found a very extensive questionnaire – What Breed of Dog is Right for You? I thought, "How perfect, just what I need!" and sat down to fill it out. It was a long survey of about 5 pages, but the end results came up, and guess what the top breed was? Yes, a Golden Retriever! BUT, number two was the Bernese Mountain Dog. "What's that?" I asked, having never seen one or even heard of the breed. So again, off for more research. I was smitten with the breed's good looks and temperament but shocked to read the average life expectancy. I had just lost a dog to cancer and this breed has one of the highest incidents of cancer of all breeds! So I decided to call local breeders and ask questions. I attended the local breed club's meetings and met many wonderful people who were willing to share their stories and knowledge of the breed. I fell in love with Berners and believed that, through my new knowledge, I could get better health and quality of life for my next dog.

So now it came down to choosing a breeder, and that stressed me out like you wouldn't believe. I put too much thought and effort on trying to find a puppy that would never get sick. I researched breeders, lineage, etc., but I knew in the back of my mind that I was reaching for the impossible. One morning I woke up with a realization that I said aloud: "What matters most is helping the dogs already born!" So I decided to see if there were any Bernese rescue groups out there. That fateful decision led me to the BARC web site. I figured that there would be a waiting list, but put in my application anyway just to see what would happen. Well, a few hours later, Amy wrote back and sent pictures of what would become my big sweet Dignan! I was shocked that someone responded so quickly – I had a major decision to make. Even though it was a big decision, it wasn't a difficult one – the answer was YES! I would adopt him. I was suddenly on my way to becoming a proud BARC family member. That was 6 years ago this fall, and I haven't regretted either decision – getting my sweet BARC boy or starting my own business!

Thank you,

Tracy Werner, President
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Tracy's shop: Mojo & Dignan

MORE 2008 ADOPTIONS



Allison Bauman & Greg Cascio	Chicago, IL
Paul Schatz	El Dorado Hills, CA
Genevieve Hannon	Jersey City, NJ
Patti Prato	Florence, MT
Cathy Putman	Houlton, ME
Janet Hughes	Houston, TX
Melanie & Richard Egger	Elkhorn, NE
Eiffat & Evan Karp	Dallas, TX
Cathy Ginsberg	Pittsburgh, PA
Cheryl Buck	Peoria, IL

BOSLEY'S CULINARY CORNER



PEANUT BUTTER, HONEY, & OAT COOKIES

1 cup crunchy (or extra crunchy) natural peanut butter
3 cups quick oats
1/3 cup raw, unfiltered honey
1/3 cup low-sodium chicken or beef bouillon powder
1/3 cup warm water

DIRECTIONS

- Preheat oven to 350 degrees.
- Warm the peanut butter in the microwave for about 1 minute, until it's soft enough to mix with the other ingredients.
- Grind 2 cups of the quick oats in a food processor or blender until it becomes coarse flour.
- In a large bowl, thoroughly mix together all the ingredients.
- Drop the dough onto a breadboard sprinkled with flour or more ground quick oats. Work the dough on the board until you can make a ball. Roll out the dough to about ¼ inch thick.



- Use a 3-inch dog bone shaped cookie cutter to cut the dough into shapes.
- Place the cookies on greased cookie sheets. (The dough is soft and crumbly, so transfer shapes gently.)
- Bake for about 10 minutes or until the bottoms of the cookies are golden brown.
- Remove from the oven, let cool completely, then store in an airtight container.

BARC BOOTH AT NATIONALS

Last May, during the BMDCA's National Specialty in Warwick, Rhode Island, BARC had its first information booth in about four years. The last time BARC had a booth at Nationals was in 2004 when the Specialty was held in the Dallas, TX area, so it was time. BARC mom, Debby Fitch, headed it all up, securing a booth right next to her own Truman Collar booth. She posted to the BARCINC Yahoo! Group list about needing volunteers to help and was met with a flurry of offers for assistance. Below are some quotes from those who helped with the booth in Rhode Island, helping to exemplify their experiences.

"My three Berners were in an x-pen behind the booth and were great conversation starters. Some people mistakenly thought that my BARC babies, Lindsay and Degen, were looking for homes, so I used that opening to give them a BARC brochure and show them the photos of the dogs that did need homes. I also mentioned that BARC is always looking for foster homes to help through the transition stage after the dogs are rescued." -Debby Fitch

"My experience was that there were two types of people who stopped by: those who knew and truly supported rescue, and those who were surprised that there was a Berner rescue. It was nice that people stopped by to buy a button and praise the work of BARC even without active advertising. One lady suggested strongly that BARC needed to get more attention, especially from those actively involved in Berners. She believed that not actively working on behalf of all Berners was an injustice." -Annette Jan



BARC Booth at Nationals 2008
Lori S., Annette J., Carolyn P., Kerry B., and Karen T.



BARC Booth at National Specialty

"Most interesting were those who kept walking by the BARC booth, looking at the information. It seemed as if they needed to keep re-reading it to believe it. After two women kept slowly walking by and doing the 'drive-by reading', I pointed out that Debby Fitch's Degen & Lindsay were BARC babies, and that opened up to a good conversation." -Annette Jan

"Meeting & talking with attendees about BARC and the plight of puppy mill dogs in general was very rewarding. The most memorable encounter for me was one between myself and a BMD breeder. We were talking about BARC and the March rescues. I was telling her about Jack, Zoe, and Charlie...the three very young puppies that were purchased along with their mothers at an Oklahoma dog auction. I explained to her that eleven puppies from the two litters didn't survive to be rescued by us. Eight from the one litter froze to death, and three from the other litter were smothered by their mother who was trying to keep them warm. The breeder's emotional reaction to this news touched my heart and set off a chain of tears between the two of us." -Karen Thompson

"Many people were not aware of BARC, and were very willing to listen and help if they could. Others shared their own rescue experiences or grief from the loss of their canines. All the brochures we had were given out, and we accepted donations in exchange for "Break the Chain" pins. Somebody even took a copy of ***The BARC Beacon*** *newsletter that was meant for display only."* - Debby Fitch

Continued on next page

"Other than being thrilled to help in the education process, being at the BARC booth meant meeting the most awesome Berner people in the world—BARC families!! Having been dogless for this trip, it was nice to know that cuddling a Berner was always an option with BARC families." -Annette Jan

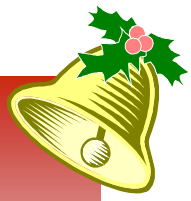
"I think that if those people in the "Berner world" who have doubts about the mission of BARC could hear about cases like these March rescue puppies, they'd quickly realize the importance of what BARC does and the wonderful accomplishments we've achieved. I was very proud to spread BARC's message at the Specialty and hope that some of you get the same chance when a Specialty is held in your neck of the woods." -Karen Thompson

"As Karen and Annette have said, it was a great week, and I think we made a difference. It was very easy to set up the booth—the photos and information spoke volumes. It also became a home-base for BARC moms & dads to meet and greet one another. It was very fulfilling to meet face to face with people I had only communicated with through the computer. It was like we were long time friends. How awesome it is that in this day & age of modern technology to be able to share a common goal—love for these wonderful dogs." -Debby Fitch

BARC is already gearing up to have another information booth at the BMDCA National Specialty in Portland, Oregon this next year. As you've read, this is an important networking opportunity for BARC that makes a huge difference. We will be needing volunteers to help set up and man the booth again next year. So if you're interested in attending Specialty, having a wonderful time with Berners and the wonderful people who love them, and helping BARC with this important endeavor, please e-mail Karen Thompson at nebraskabernermom@yahoo.com and let her know, so she can keep you abreast of what is happening and get you plugged in to convenient times for you to serve. The 2009 National Specialty in Portland will be held the week of April 27th-May 2nd, so contact Karen, get involved, and be prepared to make some wonderful new friends and come away with some incredible memories!!



BARC Fundraiser, Huge Success!!



This year's BARC Fundraiser was a huge success thanks to the hard work of Joye Neff and some of her friends. The fundraiser was able to raise $7,953.97 for BARC, and hundreds of fabulous items were won by many of the contributors. Heartfelt thanks go to the many folks who contributed items to the fundraiser, and extra-special thanks are as follows:

Joye Neff - for selfless service above & beyond the call of duty in fundraising organization, implementation, and oversight

Jean Cheeseman – for managing the fundraiser's website

Took Vidudtibhan – for helping Joye pack up prizes for mailing

Bill Neff & David Bussard – for mailing of packages

CHRISTMAS PUPPIES

BY AMY KESSLER, BARC PRESIDENT

Thinking back over the years, it is amazing how many wonderful Christmas stories have mom and dad wrapping that new puppy to give to the kids on Christmas morning....watching their eyes as they open the box...the joy and happiness everyone felt as they were watching the kids play with that new puppy under the tree.

Having a dog is a big responsibility, and a decision to have one should be a well thought out, researched, and planned event, not a spontaneous purchase on a whimsical thought of "how thrilled" the kids will be with this. Oh, believe me, I understand how tempting it might be! What could be cuter than a puppy under the Christmas tree?

Think about this instead....picture in your mind a happy, well adjusted dog that has been a member of your family for a very long time...and for under the tree, think of a gift of a donation made in their name to a shelter that has taken in hundreds of those "Christmas gifts" of the past. Or how about a gift basket full of items for a puppy with a card saying, "After the holidays and with further investigation and research into the right breed, this card is good for one puppy."

Many people think of giving puppies as gifts to their kids, friends, or spouses, but what these people are not thinking about are the ramifications of their actions.

First, do these recipients WANT the responsibility of a puppy? Young children are not capable of being responsible for a living being without the help of their parents, so YOU had better be willing to be responsible for that puppy, mom and dad. Older kids are coming into new areas of their lives–dating, dances, driving, hanging out with friends, etc. They are not going to have time to devote to a puppy like you would like to believe they would. How fair is that to a puppy?

Friends and spouses—do they really want that pup, or is this just something you think they want? Is this the breed they should have?? Do they know about the breed? Do you so that you can make an educated decision about which one is right for them? These are all things you should be considering prior to purchasing a puppy. You must research the breed, the breeders, or the shelters where you plan to get the pup from as well.

Buying a puppy from a pet store is a BIG no-no. These are puppy mill dogs that many millers produce strictly for the spontaneous Christmas purchase! Do you know where those puppies come from? They come from puppy farms where thousands and thousands of dogs suffer constant pain, hunger, and torment. They are kept in tiny little cages to mass produce puppies for purchases just like these. Buying a puppy from a pet store or person like this only supports and reinforces the cruelty they inflict daily. Most reputable breeders don't even allow puppies to go home during the holidays for a variety of reasons.

If you are considering a puppy as a "Christmas surprise", please resist the temptation! Wait until after the holidays – for the puppy's sake! The Christmas season is filled with activity and stress. Dogs can sense that anxiety, and that can be especially harmful to puppies that are coming into a new home, away from the security of their mothers and siblings. The initial separation from the litter is hard enough for a puppy, but add to that the excitement of the holidays, and your pup might become quite stressed. The lights, sounds, and presents—all the stimulation of the senses—can become too much for a puppy. And remember that puppies are beginning to develop socially during 8 to 10 weeks of age, so too much stimulation can lead to a nervous and under confident dog in later years.

Also keep in mind the many dangers lurking at Christmastime for a puppy.....extra cords plugged in and exposed, Christmas ornaments that can shatter, lots of chaos, extra goodies available including chocolate, and, of course, gifts accessible for teething.

While having a new puppy at Christmas may seem like a happy time, are you keeping in mind what puppies do and do a lot??? They chew, they poo, and they piddle. Why are adorable, pure-bred puppies brought to the pound after the newness wears off? Because puppies are a lot of work! Puppies are infant dogs, and they need constant

Continued on next page

care. Do you have the extra time needed to clean up the messes, take the puppy out, and spend time house training it? Are you okay with the necessary adjustments that will have to be made in your home when guests or family are coming to visit? What about the new Christmas items that are used for teething–is everyone in the home okay with that...or at least keeping their stuff put up so that the pup cannot get it?

Puppies do not understand that, "Hey, there is company coming, so you have to make sure you behave," speech.

CHRISTMAS REMEMBERED

Santa comes quietly long before dawn,
While shops are still busy and lights are still on;
While dinners are cooking and kitchens are warm,
And children count presents they'll open by morn.
He slips past the trees in windows aglow,
Through the gate to the backyard, as icy winds blow;
To find the pup he brought last year chained up in the snow.
And, kneeling, he whispers, "Are you ready to go?"
There are too many stops like this one tonight,
Before the beginning of his regular flight.
He leaves not a note or footprint in sight,
Just an unbuckled collar on a cold Christmas night

Purchasing a puppy should be a life-long commitment to that puppy, NOT just through the holidays or until the cuteness wears off. It should be a commitment for many, many years.

Many people also don't take into consideration the financial commitment involved in owning a dog. Too many people treat dogs as a disposable item. What happens when that puppy is no longer cute, life becomes hectic, or dad is upset about the dog messes? Many will be banished to the backyard or go to shelters where they are put to sleep or kept in a cage until someone comes along and feels the need to give them a good home.

I have no idea how many people have provided puppies as Christmas gift to their kids, but I do know that many, many of those Christmas gifts are now sitting in shelters all over the world, being euthanized or chained out in a backyard somewhere long since forgotten and replaced with a new gift.

T'WAS THE NIGHT BEFORE CHRISTMAS

Christmas Puppy Poem

T'was the night before Christmas,
when all through the house
Not a creature was stirring, not even a mouse;
The stockings were hung by the chimney with care,
In hopes that St. Nicholas soon would be there;
The children were nestled all snug in their beds,
With no thought of doggy filling their heads.
And mamma in her 'kerchief', and I in my cap,
Knew he was cold, but didn't care about that.
When out on the lawn there arose such a clatter,
I sprang from the bed to see what was the matter.
Away to the window I flew like a flash,
Figuring the dog was again in the trash.
The moon on the breast of the new-fallen snow
Gave the luster of midday to objects below,
When, what to my wondering eyes should appear,
But Santa Claus - with his eyes full of tears.
He unchained the dog, once so lively and quick,
Last year's Christmas present, now thin and sick.
More rapid than eagles he called the dog's name.
And then the dog ran to him, despite all his pain;
"Now, Dasher! Now, Dancer! Now, Prancer and Vixen!
On, Comet! On Cupid! On, Donner and Blitzen!
To the top of the porch! To the top of the wall!
Let's find this dog a home where he'll be loved by all!"
I knew in an instant there would be no gifts this year,
For Santa Claus had made one thing quite clear,
The gift of a dog is not just for the season,
We had gotten the pup for all the wrong reasons.
In our haste to think of giving the kids a gift
There was one important thing we had missed:
A dog should be family, and cared for the same!
You don't give a gift, then put it on a chain.
And I heard him exclaim as he rode out of sight,
"You weren't given a gift! You were given a life!"

So I urge you all to consider toys that are expendable as gifts for the kids, and put a lot of thought, time, and discussion into bringing home a new family member... remembering that Christmas and holidays are a time of giving, and there are a lot of dogs in need of someone to give them the gift of a chance and a home.

A NATURAL SUCCESS STORY

NATURAL PET MARKET IN WHEATON, ILL., HAS BUILT AN EVER-GROWING CUSTOMER BASE BY OFFERING PRODUCTS AND SERVICES THAT APPEAL TO THE NATURAL-MINDED PET OWNER.

BY PAMELA MILLS-SENN

Massage therapy, dietary consultations, herbal remedies and supplements designed to treat conditions from bad skin to liver disorders–a typical service menu for health-conscious consumers, right? Yes, except in this case the consumers–so to speak– are dogs and cats.

Just as people every where are gravitating towards natural/organic foods and other products, and expressing more interest in holistic approaches to maintaining health, they appear to be doing the same for their pets. A quick Google search of "natural/organic pet stores" reveals a surprising number of online retailers and brick-and-mortar stores across the country. Tracy Werner, president of Natural Pet Market, in Wheaton Ill., owns one of them.



"I'd been working at home as a computer consultant when my dog became sick with arthritis," says Werner, recalling how she first became interested in natural pet products seven years ago. "I had a dog walker who recommended a massage therapist and a change of food. I looked into it, and within two weeks of start-ing my dog on glucosamine supplements and changing his diet, he was a new dog."

Later, when her dog developed cancer, Werner again began searching for natural products and herbal remedies. After her dog died, she decided to open a store dedicated entirely to these kinds of products, focused strictly on dogs and cats. Werner started with an online store.

"I looked at the online site as a learning curve," she explains. "I was a computer consultant, so building the site was easy. But I had to learn about developing and establishing relationships with vendors, as well as other aspects of doing business.

And I wanted to measure the level of interest in these products."

Six months later, in February 2003, encouraged by the results, she opened her first store. But she quickly outgrew the 750-square-foot shop, and in 2005, she moved to her current address. Business is so good, Werner is considering expanding to the space next door.

A Natural Draw

Werner doesn't offer acupuncture, but massage therapy for dogs is available. Store manager Susan Brammer, a certified animal massage therapist, serves her canine clients in a quiet room located at the back of the store. The music played is soft and soothing; the massage is gentle muscle manipulation. This service is relatively new, says Werner.

"We're trying to get the word out, but people still aren't sure about the benefit," she explains. "But we do get a lot of sports dogs, agility dogs and older dogs with arthritis."

Sometimes, behavioral problems are a manifestation of physical pain, she adds. Werner had one customer with an older dog who suddenly began biting at the owner whenever she would pick her up. After doing a consultation, back tension was suspected. A couple of massage sessions later, the dog was much improved.

Although massages are fee-based, costing around $40 for a 30-to-40-minute session, Werner provides nutritional and behavioral counseling at no charge. She also holds regular seminars in the store, inviting holistic vets, nutritional experts and animal communicators as speakers. Some are free, some come at a cost.

But the inventory she carries is the main draw. Like her website, the product mix is strictly dogs and cats (the ratio is about 70/30 in favor of dogs). Food has to be human-grade, with no artificial colors, byproducts or chemical preservatives.

She also carries treats, frozen food (merchandised in six glass-front freezers and one chest freezer), baked goods, toys–made from hemp, grown without pesticides and completely digestible, and also from recycled soda bottles or rubber, among other materials–supplements and remedies, herbal flea and tick products, and beds. In total, the store carries around 3,000 items.

Continued on next page

The supplements and herbal remedies are also strong sellers, Werner says. She offers 40 to 50 different types, like slippery elm, a fiber source and an anti-inflammatory for the digestive tract; milk thistle, for detoxing the liver; and Burdock Root, a blood purifier and remedy for liver issues, cancer and sensitive skin.

Werner also takes a natural approach when it comes to store operations. She uses natural cleaning products, reuses boxes, prints on both sides of paper and recycles, keeping her store as "green" as possible. She'd like to do more, especially in terms of energy choices–for example, going with a company that runs on wind power–but there are restrictions because of mall management.

The Power of Personal

Werner is also working with mall management on the previously mentioned expansion, although this is still in the "baby-steps stage." If she is able to expand (and the economy factors into this decision), she wants to add more products, and services like grooming and home-delivery.

"The important thing is, there's such a demand for these products that I'm continuing to grow," says Werner, who describes her business growth from year one to present as "exponential" (last year's sales were up 50 percent over those of the previous year, which were up 45 percent from the year before).

And in spite of the current economic doldrums and having to increase her prices by three to five percent so far this year, business remains steady. Around 75 customers cross her threshold daily during the week; on weekends that number doubles. These figures, which she expects to grow, come as a relief, given the fact that six months after moving to this location, a big-box pet retailer opened just doors away.

"I didn't know this when I signed the lease, and I definitely wasn't happy that first week when they moved in," she says. "But it really hasn't hurt. My one concern is that I see the big retailers getting into natural products, but they don't have the quality or the employee training and education that I do. They basically put the products on the shelves to see if they sell themselves. But I'm focused on the personal touch, and staying connected to my customers."

Werner does this in a variety of ways. She sends out a monthly newsletter–there are approximately 4,300 addresses in her database–that always contains coupons to drive customers back to her store. She also advertises in local magazines with a pet or health focus and runs ads once a week on a pet-related radio talk show. And Werner and her staff of three full-timers keep the store interesting by changing displays and signage, bringing in new products (like doggie yogurt during summer) and regularly reconfiguring the layout. And they never forget the power of personal involvement in their customers, she says.

"It's invaluable," says Werner. "It's the whole reason why I'm here. I want to make sure the dogs and cats win."

Reprinted with permission from:

Pet Business magazine ● www.petbusiness.com ● Guide to Buying, Selling and Marketing—Natural Products

SEPTEMBER'S PHOTO CAPTION CHALLENGE RESULTS



Top 5 captions in order of votes

1. "The trees aren't numbered...I hope Mom can remember where she left me!!" (Debby Fitch)
2. "This game of hide and seek is fun. They'll never find me here!" (Elaine and Jamie Florack—owners of Bailey)
3. "All these colors are almost as beautiful as mine!" (Mike Stone)
4. "You are coming back, aren't you?" (Mary Ann Monte)
5. "What is a snipe anyway?" (Deanna Bradley)

What's Your Name?

BARC's Dignan, Dave & Lilu



Dignan was Barkley when he was at BARC - we couldn't decide between Barkus (my ex's idea) or Dignan (my idea from a character in the movie Bottle Rocket) so when we got back to the hotel we tried out both names and he totally ignored Barkus and looked right away when we called Dignan. He basically picked that out. He is now known as BARC's Bottle Rocket aka Dignan, Big Man, Big, Diggy and on St. Patty's Day he is Dignan O' Wiggly...Dignan and I a few years ago talked to an animal communicator and he had to bring up how much he likes his name and that it is so different. I thought that was too funny.

My loveable All-American (lab, hound, rott, whatever mix) Dave came to me with the name Davie. It turns out he was found as a stray by a local (Chicago) news personality Janet Davies so the rescue named him after her. One of her local entertainment shows is called 190 North for the address where the studio is, I guess. So he is registered as Furry Friends' 190 North aka Dave, Doodle Bug, Poodle, Poops, Dude. I even have his name (Dave) tattooed on ME! Even though we haven't competed in a while Dave has 8 agility titles and keeps asking when we can go back and play with the fun stuff!!

My oldest rescue (rott/shep mix) was a sad story. She was my neighbor's dog as a puppy and they had no right having a dog. They kept her tied up outside, neglected, with no shelter, etc. etc. etc. Her original name was Nutty but with all of her energy I decide to call her LiLu after the character in the Movie the 5th Element. OK, I spell it differently but she is now known as Zulu's 5th Element aka LiLu, Wee Woo, Lou, LuLi Girl, The Girl, Lee Lee, and I'm sure there are a dozen or so more!

Tracy Werner
Wheaton, IL

BARC's Mikki & BARC's Izzy

Ok, Mikki got his name from my dad....my maiden name is Mickelson, which is Scandanavian and my dad's nickname was Micky....so in light of the fact that BMD's started in one of those Scandanavian countries I thought it was fitting to honor my father, who died when I was in college, by naming Mikki after him.

Izzy, I think many of you know how she got her name. We helped transport 6 puppies to BARC, and on the way, we named them after the Grey's Anatomy TV characters. Izzy was my favorite...she had these long legs like the Izzy on the TV show. We, of course, kept that name when we adopted her....she was adopted before we got her, and I don't know if they gave her another name or not, but when they returned her to BARC we knew we wanted her.

Forgot to add our nicknames for our dogs....sometimes we call Izzy, "IzzyBELLA". Gary will call her "Busy Izzy" as she is always very busy...getting into the toy box and bringing them out one toy at a time...and sometimes she gets called Izzard; not sure where that comes from.



Mikki is sometimes called "Mikki-Wikki" and sometimes "Stinky-Mikki."

Cheryl Thorton in OKC

Does your BARC baby have a special name? If so, email your story to our Editor, Lisa Hawes (lkhawes@yahoo.com)

PAWSITIVELY THE BEST CARE FOR WINTER PAWS



Andrea with Woofit

The winter months can be hard on Berners' paws. Dryness, cold, ice, and ice melters can play havoc with the surface of the paws. The best care is preventative. Here are some things to keep in mind this winter:

- Start with diet, make sure you are including essential fatty acids in the diet.
- Wipe off feet after going outside.
- Keep a humidifier running in your home.
- Examine the paws for cracks and roughness. Use a pumice stone on really rough uneven surfaces.
- Use a moisturizer on the paws. Look for one that uses all essential oils and is edible. My favorite contains lavender and other oils. You will need to determine what texture and flavor is least appealing to your dog. The one that may work best may be the one that the dog wants to lick off.
- Aloe is always a good healer as is vitamin e.



- Consider using boots. PAWZ makes rubber boots sold in a package of twelve. They are semi-disposable; we reuse them until they fall apart. I also use them for eating messy raw meaty bones.



- Our favorite boots are by Ruffwear, they have a vibram sole and a flex point.
- Be careful not to walk your dog anywhere there is salt or a commercial ice melter.
- Try using a dog-safe variety of ice melter at home, or, better still, use sand.
- Check paws for cuts caused by ice. If a pad becomes cut, clean it, compress it, and use a liquid bandage on it. Paws bleed a lot!
- If you notice that your dog's paws are in very bad condition, consult your vet. Many autoimmune issues show up as paw pad problems.

Andrea is skilled in canine massage and has completed course work in acupressure for dogs. Animal wellness comes naturally to Andrea, who has spent the last six years on a quest to create a holistic health environment for her two Bernese Mountain Dogs, Chi and Karma. Andrea also works as a nutritionist and wellness consultant. Her journey with her own dogs led her to bring services to the canine community that had previously only been available to their owners. She has chosen to step out of the box, think critically about their care and listen to their needs. She was instrumental in the development of Berner University and presents at the BMDCA National Specialty each year. Currently, Andrea is working with The Rabies Challenge Fund and other wellness projects.

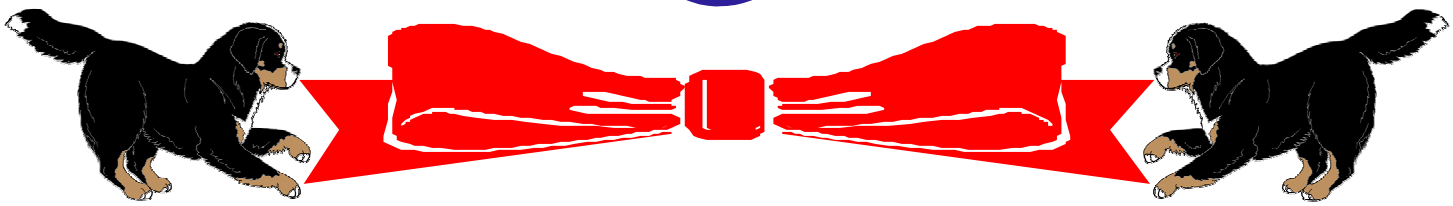
BARC BRAGS



At the BMDCW Regional, Misha got her last leg in Rally Advanced w/a 2nd place for the title. Not bad for a 7 3/4 year old girl!

Beth Schmoyer & Misha BARC's Alot, CD, RN, NDD, DD, CGC, TDIA





Every Berner can make a difference



Every dog has a story to tell. Have you shared your dog's story?

With the Berner-Garde Foundation, sharing your dog's story has never been easier. Throughout your dog's life, you can add and update health records and other important information to ensure that your dog's legacy lives on and impacts the future of the breed. Berner-Garde will be happy to assist you with getting started. Please visit our website at www.BernerGarde.org for more information.

Berner-Garde Foundation
Incorporated 1995

DEVELOPING A RELATIONSHIP WITH SHY DOGS



Helen & Paxil

When we bring a newly adopted dog into our homes, our natural reaction is to smother the dog with love and affection. Most puppies adore the attention. So do many well-balanced adult dogs. But what happens when you bring home your puppy/dog and quickly realize he/she wants nothing to do with you?

There is no question that trying to work with a fearful/shy dog can be very frustrating. Most fearful/shy dogs won't interact with us, so how are we expected to develop a *reinforcement relationship*? If we don't have something they want, then how in the world do we begin to build any form of a bond or even mutual trust between us?

Here are some suggestions that will help. This protocol usually takes just under a week. Some dogs may take longer though. Don't be in a hurry! Although some of the steps in the beginning appear contrary to what we instinctively want to do (shower them with "love") they are critical for any success. Although this protocol is used frequently in shelters and foster "kennel" set-ups, you can adapt it to your private home. If you are using a crate, have a large one that is enclosed by an x-pen.

To begin, leave the dog in their kennel, x-pen, or cage for at least 3-4 days, basically ignoring it. During this time, only bring them food and water. Place their food in their pen and leave. (Remember, these frightened animals DON'T want your hugs and kisses.) In addition, make no eye contact, and don't talk or interact in any way. (For safety and handling purposes, do leave a short leash or tag line attached to a safety buckle collar for the first two weeks and have no tags on the collar for safety.)

By the end of the 3-4 days you should see that the dog is moving around its kennel/ large crate or x-pen. He is beginning to appear perhaps even curious. This is when the fun part begins.

Now, every time you pass by their kennel or x-pen, toss in some tasty treats (like hot dogs, bits of meat, string cheese), but keep on walking by. Soon you should notice the dog peeking out to see where you are. At this point you are going to "double reward" your dog.

Walk over to the crate or pen area, pause for a second and then toss the treat, hopefully before the animal backs away. (This is the *first* reward) Keep moving after you've tossed the treat. Your *moving away* is the *second* reward. (The first reward—food--is for coming out to get the treat, and the second reward is having the scary human leave.) You never want to face the animal directly - this is all done with your side presented to the animal.

Remember: It is the action of tossing the food that is important. It does NOT matter whether or not the dog eats it. Having the person leave is the best reward for this type of animal.

Keep in mind that when you work with shy and fearful dogs, direct eye contact is extremely threatening, so please don't look at them in the eye...just toss a treat as you pass. You may even want to put a sign on their kennel area as a reminder for visitors or other family members. After some time, when the dog is beginning to understand you are the bearer of "only good things", you can say" hi", give a treat, and keep moving.

When the animal is looking and standing still, pause for a second and then move away. The animal thinks that if it moves towards us, it will get something good & we will eventually move on. Gradually, the pause can be lengthened and your dog most probably will stand still and take something from you. They begin to tolerate and accept our handing food to them because they have learned to expect us to move on.

As you begin to increase the amount of time that you stand and pause by the dog (you are now taking longer to walk away after giving the treat) you have slowly conditioned the dog to feel comfortable enough to tolerate your standing in front of the cage. At this point, the dog should walk up and take something from you and you don't have to leave immediately. The next step to take when the dog tolerates your looking at him/her, is for you to squat down sideways and toss a treat as you say its name.

When your dog finally allows you to approach, pause/squatting down by his crate, and takes food

Continued on next page

from your hand, you may try slowly *opening the cage* and letting the dog take food from our hand. You can then try picking up the leash and hopefully taking the dog out for a walk.

BE PATIENT! Timing, as with any kind of training or counter conditioning, is crucial. Allow the dog to tell you how much of "you" they can tolerate before you need to leave. If the dog backslides a bit, you are moving too fast in the progression, so go back to the point where the dog appeared comfortable.

Having patience and good timing are the two key factors in this protocol… but it works, and in less than four-five days, with 50 repetitions give or take, you will have a fearful/shy animal looking forward to you approaching them. Let the relationship begin!

Only good things~ Helen



HELEN HOLLANDER, CPDT—*Helen graduated from Hofstra University with a degree in Psychology and later worked in the field of Special Education. Canine Behavior and training has always been Helen's hobby. Upon her children's graduation from High School, Helen switched professions to that of working with dogs on a professional level and furthering her education in Canine Behavior.*

Helen is a Certified Pet Dog Trainer and member of the Certification Council of Pet Dog Trainers, a Professional member of the Association of Pet Dog Trainers (APDT), a Certified Behavior Counselor through the Animal Behavior Center of New York. In addition, Helen serves as a Board member of the Nassau/Suffolk Owners Handlers Association and is a member of the Bernese Mountain Dog Club of America. In 2006, she became an AKC certified Evaluator for the CGC. Helen is a proactive advocate of dog-friendly, reward based training and is the owner of THE EDUCATED PUP, LLC, a private training and behavior counseling practice, located on Long Island, NY. In addition, Helen moderates an E-List that offers help for those people who own Shy/Aggressive Bernese Mt. Dogs. Email BerneseAggressiveandShy-subscribe@yahoogroups.com to join.

Helen presently shares her life with her well trained and understanding husband and two Bernese Mt. Dogs and one Iraqi rescue pup, Dusty. When not counseling other people's pets, you can find Helen ringside handling one of her Bernese in conformation.

The Ears Have It!



Did you know that dog ears with flaps are more prone to ear infections?? Well, it's true! The ear flaps can hold in moisture and dampness causing dogs with floppy ears to be more prone to ear infections. So being lovers of Bernese Mountain Dogs who have the pendulum-shaped ears, it behooves us to be diligent to care properly for their ears. This is especially important for those sweet BARC babies who have been rescued as adults and spent years of their lives having the most basic hygiene/care withheld from them. Many BARC babies come to BARC with ear infections and ongoing ear problems, the least of which are ears filled with that icky dark brown yeasty gunk. These serious issues MUST be seen by a veterinarian and taken proper care of, but once the ears are in good shape—free of infection--here is a recipe for homemade ear cleaner that can be used about every 2-4 weeks to keep their ears sparkling clean and in the best of shape.

EAR CLEANER (all items found at most pharmacies)

4 TBSP. powdered boric acid

10 drops Gentian Violet

16 oz. bottle Witch Hazel

Mix thoroughly and store in the Witch Hazel bottle, keeping tightly closed. Shake vigorously before each use. Use cotton pads or king-sized cotton balls wetted with this solution to thoroughly clean the inside of the ear flaps and down in all the nooks and crannies of the outer ear. **You may need to begin slowly if your BARC baby isn't used to having his/her ears cleaned. You want this to be a pleasant experience, so work into a thorough ear cleaning over time if they seem hesitant.

SPREADING HOLIDAY CHEER!

Letters to Santa Contest Results



We had some wonderful entries in the "Letters to Santa" contest that was announced in the September issue. The judges had such a hard time choosing only one and just couldn't make up their minds, so since the "Santa's Helpers" (those offering to assist in granting these wishes) were so numerous and so generous, we were able to just call it a tie.

So you will find BOTH of the winning letters printed here for your perusal. These fine folks and their foster pooches will have their wishes granted (and probably more since they didn't ask for much) by these "Santa's Helpers" shortly after the holidays, and we will have a write-up with photos of them receiving their gift baskets in the March issue. Enjoy!!



Dear Santa:

Last Christmas I was a poor little boy that was too young (6 weeks) to be taken away from my mommy, but I was. I moved to 5 other houses within 2 weeks. I was a scared little boy that need someone to love me. I asked you last year for a forever mommy and you gave that to me. I thank you so much.

If I had to make a wish list it would be for the foster homes to have puppies to play with, toys to wrestle and play tug with. Lots of good food for the tummies - the food I was given wasn't very good so I only ate it when I got so hungry I just had to eat - that's why I was so underweight for my age. A pretty collar with my name on it so everyone would know who I was - with a nice leash to keep me safe when we went for walks. But most of all I would like a nice warm pillow with someone to cuddle up against and someone that would hold me just as much as I wanted. Someone that would want me in a forever home.

I would wish a for a warm, draft free place to sleep in the winter and cool place in the summer. A safe place to play inside and outside. An understanding mommy that won't yell and scold me if I forget (cause I'm scared and lost) and pee in the house. A mommy that will hold me when I get scared and cuddle me if I'm not feeling well, someone who will comb and brush me and make me look pretty and take away all the knots in my hair. Someone to take me on long walks so I get to meet new people and will take me to the parks where I can play with other dogs like me.

My biggest wish is that no babies would be without a forever home where they are treated like a member of the family not a guest just there for a short time.

My wish list would be for every new foster puppy to have a bag of Nutro's Ultra, a large cuddly soft pillow to sleep on in the winter, a K-9 cooler to keep out the summer heat, a nice metal comb to get rid of the knots, a microfiber towel to dry us with, and lots of durable tug toys - cause puppy's gotta pull. Some home made treats would be especially nice too.

I have been so lucky Santa - I hope you can make some other puppy as lucky as I have been.

Mister Tobias
Calgary, Alberta

Dear Santa,

When my foster mom told me about you, my first thought was that I really did not need anything for Christmas. I have a safe home right now, a full tummy, and a very comfortable bed (I have taken over my mom and dad's bed). Life is good thanks to BARC.

But last night when I went to the dog park, a Bernie puppy named Ivy came in. I immediately ran over to the puppy and sniffed and gave her lots of Bernie kisses. You see, Ivy reminded me of all of my lost puppies. So for Christmas, Santa, what I want is for everyone with a Berner to hug their Berner and give them a good tummy rub as they may be one of my puppies.

Santa, I really don't need any toys. I still don't know how to play with toys although I will chew water bottles when I am excited. If you think I have been good and have extra, I really like Pupperoni snacks.

But Santa, no offense, but could you have Mrs.Claus deliver them? My mom told me that you would wear a bright red suit and shout "ho, ho, ho" and that doesn't sound like something I could handle. I really don't like men yet. The banging of the sled would probably frighten me too. And the thought of big animals with horns called reindeer would probably really scare me, especially one with a flashing nose.

Thanks Santa for thinking of me. Say hello to Mrs. Claus.

Wags,
Lilly

WHAT'S AN OFA, AND IS IT CONTAGIOUS?



Pat Long & Brew

OFA is the Orthopedic Foundation for Animals, and it was founded in 1966 to improve health in companion animals by reducing genetic disease. It began with a focus on hip dysplasia, but it now has a much longer list of diseases. See **www.offa.org** for more information.

When we look for a breeder in order to purchase a puppy, we all look for parents, grandparents, aunts, and uncles that have been tested and found to be clear of as many genetic diseases as possible: hip and elbow dysplasia (HD and ED), progressive retinal atrophy (PRA), sub-aortic stenosis (SAS), osteochondritis dessicans (OCD), von Willebrand's Disease (vWD), thyroiditis, luxating patellas, and so on. We expect good breeders to test for HD and ED at a minimum, and for whatever other diseases might be an issue in their lines. But I have a rescue dog, so why would I need to have him tested for anything?

My boy, Brew, benefits from those tests in a number of ways. If he has vWD, I would know to alert the vet prior to any surgery; I might even put it on his ID tag in case of emergency. If he has ED or HD, I'll want to limit his agility career and keep him well muscled with moderate exercise or swimming. If he has PRA I'll want to learn about how to live with a blind dog and ways to help him adjust to encroaching blindness. In all of these cases, forewarned is forearmed.

The breed as a whole also benefits in several ways. Relatives of my boy may also be used for breeding, and family information helps show potential strengths and weaknesses of genetic make-up in the breeding animals. In addition, claims are often made by commercial breeders about how healthy their lines are. Tracking health information of the small numbers that come into rescue can help provide some facts to refute such claims.

I'll admit that I'm a terrible example, however. I got my first two Berners years before I knew anything about health certifications, and the two I've gotten since then are rescues that were/are extremely vet phobic. If the opportunity presents itself, Brew will be tested from stem to stern. So PLEASE, do NOT use me as a role model on this!

Clinics are an excellent method for getting low-priced testing for PRA and SAS. The National Specialty has hosted ophthalmologists and cardiologists for these two tests. VetGen kits for vWD testing can be acquired at a clinic rate from the BMD Club of the Rockies. You'll find a link to that regional club on the **www.bmdca.org** website. For the rest, check with your vet about hip and elbow x-rays or PennHIP availability, and always remember to update your dogs in Berner-Garde, at **www.bernergarde.org**.

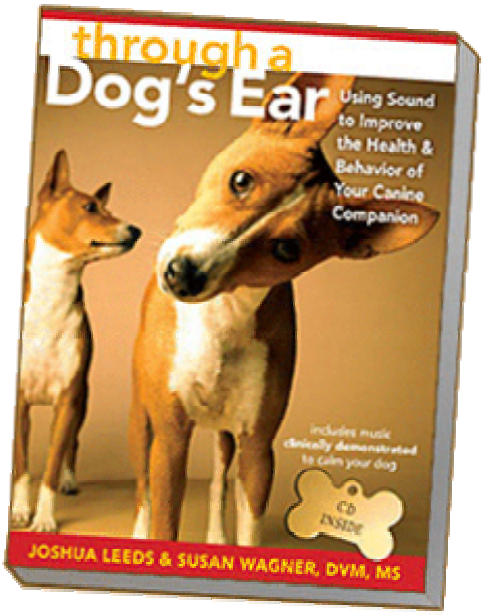
—Pat Long



Pat Long got her first Berner in 1988, and began to get active in the breed when she discovered the Berner-L in 1996. She is the co-owner of the Berner-L, file manager and trustee of Berner-Garde, a member of the BMDCA Health Committee, fundraiser with her Long-Shots portrait photos, and is one of the Vannas each year at the National Specialty Health Fund Auction – an event not to be missed! It's the one time each year she actually wears a dress!

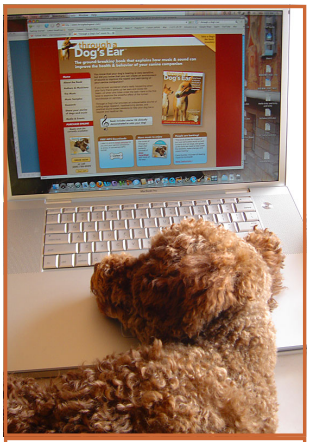
MUSIC TO YOUR DOG'S EARS

As owners of BARC rescues, we are all aware of our dog's special needs and the terrible triggers that may lead to stress or fear. Buster is under the bed trembling at the first clap of thunder; Max has chewed the couch to pieces while you were at work; Sammy has left a puddle on the kitchen rug when your visitors arrive.



As many as 90% of today's dog owners talk about a behavioral issue when visiting the vet—even our very adaptable friends are having a hard time adjusting to modern times. The answering machine, the car alarm, the leaf blower—compelling evidence suggests that sensory overwhelm affects our four-legged best friends at least as much as it does their owners. After all, their ears are far more sensitive than our own. So, just how do they hear the human world?

We, unfortunately, can only imagine the environments from which our rescues have come, but we can take a closer look at home to see if we can help. With the television blaring an average of six hours a day in the American home, kids laughing and screaming, traffic roaring and the phone ringing 24/7, take time to examine your environment to determine whether you've created an uncomfortable sensory space for your pets and yourself. Try to listen with a dog's ears while taking a Sonic Inventory—an assessment of all the sounds inside and outside the home—by doing the following:



Agner can't get enough of the music!

Sit quietly for 30 minutes, pen and pad in hand.

Tune into the sounds you hear inside your home and outside on the street—the hum of the fridge, the cycle prompt of the dishwasher, the beat of a dryer, the alarm clock, hair dryer, vacuum, television, telephones, computers, video games, traffic, car alarms, air traffic, screaming children, stereos, etc.

Notice your dog's behavior. Does he/she actively respond to the sounds? Is there a lack of reaction, or an overreaction to sounds you take in stride? When TV, radio or music is playing, does your dog move closer to the source or away from it?

Rate the sounds from one to ten, ten being the most disturbing, one the least noticeable. Use two columns—one for your pooch and one for yourself.

Ask yourself how you can make your home a calmer, more peaceful place. Which sounds can you change? Which can you avoid, turn down, or mask? Often, just by listening, we become more sonically aware, an important first step.

Now that you have a better idea of your environment; what impact do you think that has on your dog? How can you lessen that impact and create a more soothing home?

Thanks to sound researcher Joshua Leeds and veterinary neurologist Dr. Susan Wagner, help is on hand for anxious dogs and the people who love them. Using psychoacoustic principles of tone, rhythm and pattern identification, Leeds and award-winning concert pianist and Juilliard graduate, Lisa Spector, handpicked, modified, and rearranged traditional classical pieces to create canine music of simplified sound. "In the case of an overwhelmed nervous system," says Leeds, "there's less tolerance for sensory stimuli. Sound must be simple and regulated so that it can be easily processed by the brain." To get the desired results, they changed tempos, removed entire

Continued on next page

melodic sections, and used various arrangement and re-orchestration techniques to regulate the amount of auditory data.

Clinical trials of the music conducted in kennels, shelters, clinics, and in homes produced results that were…well, like music to any dog-lover's ears. Seventy percent of dogs in kennels and 85% in households were noticeably calmer. When the music was played for dogs with specific anxiety disorders—such as separation anxiety, excitement with visitors, thunderstorm and fireworks trembling—over twice as many stressed-out behaviors were reduced compared to standard classical programming on the radio.

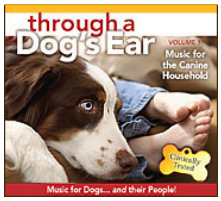
The fantastic result—and valuable resource for all—***Through a Dog's Ear: Using Sound to Improve the Health & Behavior of Your Canine Companion*** is the first book of its kind to take a close-up look at sound and its effect on our loyal friends, shedding new light on the link between modern sensory overload and the uptick of psychological and physiological problems in the canine population. Filled with heartwarming canine tales this book is a pioneering work into the canine auditory world helping our best friends—75 million dogs in the U.S. alone—live healthier lives. The book also includes a 45-minute starter music CD.

A separate 60-minute music CD—psychoacoustically designed to calm dogs—is also available called ***Through a Dog's Ear: Music to Calm Your Canine Companion, Volume 1***.



There are additional titles available, including, ***Driving Edition: Music to Calm your Dog in the Car***. Many dogs love to go for a ride — but traveling in the car can also be extremely stressful. If a canine friend can't settle down for the trip, gets the shakes, or pants excessively, here is a drug-free solution. This psychoacoustically designed music strikes the ideal balance of driver alert and dog relaxed. It includes a 17-page insert with specific sound protocols for varying degrees of canine automobile anxiety.





For additional titles and more information, including the results of clinical research on 150 dogs, visit www.ThroughADogsEar.com.

THE LAST BARC — DECEMBER PHOTO CAPTION CHALLENGE



A new Photo Caption Challenge for December! The picture is randomly chosen out of the BARC Photobucket.

So all you creative, witty people out there, here's your chance to have some fun.

Email your photo caption to Lisa Hawes, Newsletter Editor (lkhawes@yahoo.com) by February 6, 2009.

The top 5 captions as chosen by the Newsletter Staff will be published in the next issue, along with a new challenge.

Enjoy!! Have fun!!