

## **Walking Dogs, Lifting and Carrying Dogs, and Placing Dogs in Cages and Runs**

Our topics for this week are:

- How to walk dogs
- Weight limits on lifting and carrying dogs
- Placement and removal of dogs in cages and runs
- Trimming a dog's nails

### **Walking Dogs**

Dogs are traditionally walked on the handler's left side. The command for trained dogs is to "heel." This is an advantage for a handler leading a horse at the same time as a dog, for a right-handed person carrying a hunting rifle, and to position the handler between the dog and traffic when walking along a road on the left side facing traffic. A dog should always be on a short leash when in crowded surroundings.

Dogs trained to heel are taught to walk off with the handler if the handler steps off with his left foot, the nearest foot to the dog. If the handler wishes the dog to remain still, the handler steps off with his right foot. Signals to stay in place are done with the handler's left hand and signals to heel are reinforced with moving the right hand.

Whenever small dogs do not follow on a leash, it should be picked up and carried. Dogs should never be dragged by a leash.

### **Lifting and Carrying Dogs**

Lifting of all sized dogs from the floor should be done with knees bent and back straight. One person in good health and physically fit can lift dogs up to 50 lb.

#### **Under 50 Pounds**

When picking up a small dog, a slip leash should be applied first. The leash is pulled forward slightly to prevent the dog from being able to turn its head to the side quickly. The other hand then reaches under the dog's chest and abdomen and supports the body while being lifted. Although common practice in dog shows, small dogs should never be picked up by their tail and a hand under the chest due to risk of injuring the tail.

When carrying a small dog, its head should be held next to the right side of the handler's body with a left hand under the neck, fingers on the side of the neck just behind the jaw, and its body supported with the right forearm and wrist under the chest while grasping dog's left foreleg (the one nearest the handler's body) so that it cannot climb up the handler's chest or wiggle away.

To lift larger dogs in this group (35 to 50 lb.), the left arm is wrapped around the front of the chest and under the neck while the handler's right arm is placed around and behind the dog's hindlegs. The left arm can be angled upward on the side of the neck to restrain the head if needed. Alternatively, the dog can be lifted under and around the neck with the left hand and under the abdomen with the right arm, the "forklift" method. This latter method is the only method that provides control of the dog's head while it is being lifted. For fractious dogs, an assistant is needed to hold the leash while the handler wraps a rolled towel around the dog's neck or places a muzzle on the dog before lifting it.

## **50-80 Pounds**

Two people should lift or carry larger dogs. One handler restrains the dog's head by his right arm around the dog's neck and the left arm is placed under and around its chest. The dog's shoulders are pressed against the handler's body or the handler holds the outside front leg firmly. The second handler lifts the dog's rear portion by grasping both thighs or with an arm under the abdomen and holding the outside thigh. Lift tables are also available to assist in lifting a larger dog to table height.

## **Over 80 Pounds**

If necessary, a larger dog can be lifted as with 50 to 80 lb. dogs. However, most procedures are better done on the floor rather than on a table.

## **Cages and Runs**

### ***Placement of Non-Aggressive Dogs in Cages and Runs***

Dogs should be placed in cages head first. One hand should have control of the cage door. Closure of the door should begin before release of the dog with the other hand so that when the restraint hand is removed there is insufficient room for the dog to escape.

Release should be as smooth and quiet as possible since this will be the predominant memory of being handled. The dog's behavior will be influenced primarily by how it was released from the last handling when it must be next removed from the cage. Struggling during the release will result in greater struggling when recapture is later needed. Removal of a slip lead prior to placing the dog in the cage prevents struggling with the dog in the cage to remove the lead. Control of a small dog when placing it in the cage can be done with the restraint hand under its chest.

Dominant aggressive dogs should be kept in lower cages to avoid direct eye contact needed in lifting it and to prevent providing the dog with a more elevated (dominant) position.

### ***Removal of Non-Aggressive Dogs from Cages and Runs***

The handler should approach the cage in a friendly manner while speaking to the dog in a calm cheerful voice. Removal should begin with using one hand to open the cage door only enough to be able to get the other hand and a slip lead in. The slip lead is then placed over the dog's head. After the dog's head is controllable with the slip lead, the cage door can be opened wider and the dog assisted by picking it up, or if in a lower cage, leading it out.

When removing a dog from a lower cage, the handler's leg can aid in blocking an escape through the partially opened door while attempting to apply the slip lead. If picking it up, the neck should first be lifted by raising the slip lead and gently pull forward so there is some control of the head before reaching under the dog to lift the body.

## **Trimming Nails**

Dogs that do not frequently walk and run on abrasive surfaces must have their toenails trimmed on a regular basis, generally every six weeks. If dog nails touch the floor when the dog is walking, the nails are too long. An important part of puppies early education should include desensitization to handling of their feet by counterconditioning with food treats. This is a gentle stepwise process involving a few seconds of handling the upper aspects of each leg and rewarding lack of struggling after each leg being handled. Subsequent sessions on following days consist of handling slightly lower aspects of each leg until the foot and nails can be handled without a struggle. After handling

the feet is accepted, one nail on one foot should be trimmed and the dog should be rewarded with a treat. The next session should involve trimming 2 or 3 nails. The eventual goal is for the dog to tolerate trimming all nails on all feet in one session. Success may take a couple of days to months.

Small dogs can be trimmed using the aid of an assistant who holds the dog in their lap. Large dogs should tolerate trimming in a sitting or standing position. Some may roll on their back and lay still while being trimmed.

Dogs that need immediate trimming to protect them from injury from their long nails and do not tolerate trimming with mild to no restraint can be restrained by an assistant who holds the dog in lateral recumbency (held on their side). However, lateral recumbency should not be a routine restraint for nail trimming.

Now, let's recap the key points to remember from today's episode:

- Dogs should be walked on the handler's left side
- How dogs are lifted and carried depend on their bodyweight
- A dog's uninvited exit from a cage or run must be blocked by a handler's body when placing the dog into or removing it from a cage or run
- Dogs should be gradually trained to relax when trimming their nails beginning during their critical socialization period between 8 weeks to 3 months of age.

More information on animal handling is available in my book, *Animal Handling and Physical Restraint* published by CRC Press. It is also available on Amazon and from many other fine book supply sources.

Don't forget serious injury or death can result from handling and restraining some animals. Safe and effective handling and restraint requires experience and continual practice. Acquisition of the needed skills should be under the supervision of an experienced animal handler.