



Fetching Facts & Noseworthy Notes

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Upcoming Classes

Puppy Class:

March 12 – April 16

Doggy Manners:

March 12 – April 16

March 13 – April 17



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Dog Talk...

Dogs may not communicate the same way as humans, but they definitely “talk” to us with their expressions, body language and vocalizations. As with human to human communication, observing the entire picture is the key to successfully understanding your dog. For example, a wagging tail does not always mean a dog is happy. Dogs wag their tails different ways for various emotions, including fear and aggression.

A happy dog is fairly easy to see. Soft wagging tail, smiling face, soft eyes, relaxed from head to tail, and often full body wagging while “smooshing” into a familiar person. An angry dog is fairly obvious too; puckered lips, often a growl is being expressed vocally, a forward stiff body posture, hard eyes, and either a stiff or slightly slow twitch to the tail. Also, most people are also able to see sadness in a dog. The photo below shows my dog Kirby watching me get ready to leave for work. It is pretty clear

how he feels about me leaving! He does not have separation anxiety; he would just rather have me be with him!

The confusion often occurs with fear and/or stress based communications from a dog. Fear is often called “aggressive.” Fear *can* lead to aggression, but fear is not always aggressive. Barking and snarling is a distance increasing behavior; meaning the dog wants you (or the scary thing he sees) to go away. Typically, fearful dogs will bark as the move backward; or

have the weight of their body leaning backward and away from the threat – trying to increase the distance between the dog and the threat.

The more subtle indicators of fear and stress are often missed. Dogs send out “calming signals” or subtle signs of fear and stress. These signals are the dog’s way of communicating he is uncomfortable. Yawning, lip licking, looking away or turning away, cowering, backing away, furrowed brows, and pacing are some of these signals. Also, refusal to take food or perform a known basic behavior on cue indicates stress.

Watching your dog for “less obvious” communication will improve your understanding of their behavior in various situations. If you are at Manners class and your dog is looking away, unable to respond easily to a behavior he did well with before, and is not interested in the treats, these are signs he is stressed. It is important to note overstimulation due to unfamiliar or high levels of distraction is a form of stress. Just as with humans, stress comes in many forms: fear, excitement, and lack of familiarity.

Learning about how your dog “talks” to you will improve your ability to know when to push a little more or most important, when to give your dog a break. Your relationship – and thereby your training - will be more successful!

Don't go, Mom...



Q's Views...



Q is learning a lot about life! I am getting pretty good with weird human rules; and interacting successfully with other dogs. When I accidentally forget a rule, my mom says my name all long, low and slow like "Quuiinnnnccccccyyyy..." Most of the time that is the only reminder I need!

Oddly, my big brothers sometimes get tired of playing with me. I do not know why – other than they are boring. If I do not listen to their warnings of a head turn and look away, they will puff and growl at me. That scares me! I am learning not to push them to that point!! Communication is tough, but I'm getting it!!

Koda's Komments...



Canines communicate very clearly; yet with our humans we often need to repeat ourselves or ask several different ways.

For example, sometimes my parents get busy, so I remind them it is dinner time. I tell them by making eye contact, using my best grin, and looking at the kitchen. Occasionally, they just sit there. Then, I must huff and swat their knee with my paw. If they listened to my first request, the second would not be necessary!

Pay close attention and you will see that your dog is "talking" to you every day!

A HAPPY TAILS TALE....

Recently, I have been watching a six hour DVD seminar by Nicole Wilde, "Talk to the Paw." The subject matter is dog communication – both dog to dog and dog to human. Nicole shares several research studies, all of which support theories dog lovers and positive trainers have known for years – dogs communicate very clearly with their bodies, facial expressions and vocalizations. In addition, she breaks down dog communication by body part and types of expressions and vocalizations; what they mean and how to best understand the entire picture the dog is painting.

The challenge is we are not dogs; and some of their signals are so minute and quick. Therefore, humans often miss some communication. Even the most experienced of trainers will miss things simply because we are human. But, Nicole does a perfect job of combining lecture with videos and photos to help us understand our dogs in a much clearer perspective.

Learning more about how dogs communicate is essential for all of us that live and work with dogs. Knowing when we see a slight stiffening of the body, the dog is uncomfortable. Being aware a growl is a GOOD thing is a major factor in preventing a bite. Growls are a signal, a warning; the dog is not ok with something. Fix the CAUSE of the growl, but do not punish the growl itself. In addition, the seminar delves into dogs smiling and laughing!

If you live with dogs, love dogs, and want to better understand what dogs are "saying," Nicole's seminar is both educational and entertaining! Check it out and let me know what you think!!

Kirb's Blurb!



Since I was a baby puppy, my nickname has been "Wiggles." When I get really super happy, I wiggle my whole self! While I wiggle, I like to hold a toy in my mouth – so I don't accidentally try to hold my Mom's hand with my mouth. Plus I make happy noises like my snort purr noise! Kirby is most definitely a talented communicator!

Some humans do not believe that dogs feel emotions such as love. However, new MRI research on dogs has shown the same area of the human brain that "lights up" for love also "lights up" in dogs.

So there is scientific proof that my wiggle snort purr routine is filled with love and happiness – which my Mom and I already knew of course!!