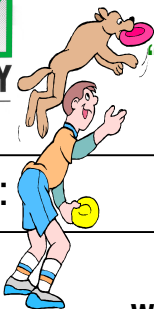




# August Newsletter

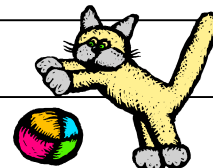
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"You and Your Pets Are Part Of Our Family"



## In This Issue:

## Pet Sports and Fitness!



In an age of sports and fitness craze,  
who's to say that our pets can't participate too.

Obesity, just as in humans, is a serious disease and poses many health threats to your pets life. There are many sports for dog owners to participate in: Flyball, Agility, Sheep Herding, Frisbee, Lure Coursing and many more. For our cat owners out there, there are many people who have clicker trained their cats, but most are happy to ensure their cats fitness with a rousing game with a laser pointer!

### Dogs



### Common Dog sports and Activities at a Glance

**Agility:** Obstacle courses including jumps weave poles and obedience, scored by a judge

**Flyball:** Timed team competition which dogs run a relay race

**Obedience:** Dogs are judged on a pre-set course demonstrating their willingness to comply with the handler's precise commands.

**Freestyle:** Handler created obedience routines set to music

**Schutshund:** Obedience, combined with protection training at higher levels.

**Ring Sport:** Obedience, protection, guarding and some obstacle work

**Flying Disk (Frisbee):** Judged competitions in which dogs catch flying disks featuring athletic tricks.

**Weight Pulling:** Dogs in various weight categories compete against one another to determine who can pull the most weight. ( one medium dog can pull up to 5000pounds!!!)

**Sledding:** Dog sled competitions for individuals and teams

**Skijoring:** cross-country skiing while being pulled by (a) dog(s)

**Field Trails, Tracking, Herding, Coursing:** Competitions all judge dogs on their ability to perform the various tasks ( usually what they were originally bred to do )

### Getting started: Preparing your dog for sports training...The key = Motivation and Basic obedience



So how do you get started? Before getting your dog into sports classes, you should hone his basic obedience skills, which will facilitate teaching him new exercises. For example, when you're teaching him jump over a low jump, you'll want him to wait on the other side of it. Make sure he knows "down" and will do it on a number of surfaces. This will help when you teach him to lie down on a pause table in agility. Keep in mind having a dog focused on you and not other dogs, will be a huge asset to your future in sports. There are many attention exercises to help foster that attention focus. Its one thing to teach your dog to walk across a set of planks or jump over a jump, but its another thing when playing sports to play the best game you can. You can do this with any breed. You may not get Border Collie intensity in your Spaniel but you can certainly make sure your Spaniel is playing to the best of his ability.

Motivation usually comes in one of two ways...Tug or Food. Because Flyball is a high-intensity sport, some handlers get their dog in an almost frenzied state to knock seconds off their time. A colorful tuggie is also a highly visible target. Owners whose dogs are prone to chasing universally use tug, since it provides a stronger visual cue. Finally for some dogs, tug itself is a huge motivator. They'd rather do tug than anything else in the world!

Not all dogs are turned on by tugging. It's also a lot easier to have a couple of types of motivators on you if you're using food. If one isn't working, it's simple to up-grade mid-race. Another advantage of food is that it can calm down your dog between runs and help to reactivate his brain. With food, you can flip a few seconds of obedience to focus your dog and get some self control before he's running again. Remember when you're dealing with dogs, you may have to rethink your pre-conceived notions about training and rewards. The dog determines the motivators, not you. Where the skill lies as a handle is in knowing how to manipulate the payoffs to keep them strong.





## Running with your dog!

The sight of runners accompanying their animals on their daily run is a relatively commonplace phenomenon in Vancouver and surrounding areas. Many breeds like Dalmatians were bred for long distance travel, and helps to motivate many owners to keep to their running schedule.

**Do** bear in mind the breed you have before starting a running program. Not every dog is bred for endurance. **Do** put on the leash when approaching other dogs and pedestrians. **Do** consult a veterinarian before your start running with your dog. **Do** carry water for you and your dog.

**Do Not** expect the dog to run great distances immediately. Build the distance up over time. **Do Not** let you dog off leash along roads if He's not obedient. **Do Not** run you dog in the summer heat Early morning or late evening are the best times in hot summer months.



**Cats**- ok its not all about the dogs! Indoor cats , in particular, need to be encouraged to keep up some level of activity and ensure fitness and lack of weight gain. For many a rousing game with a string once a day is all they need. For others, they enjoy a good romp on their cat tree, or a vigorous attack at their scratching post. A laser pointer ( careful of the eyes) is also know to elicit their predatory instincts and amuse owners at the same time. Some cats are even known to allow a harness to be applied and go for a jaunty walk with their owners. Activity at any age ensures a healthy long living companion!



BUT....You can train you cat .....and participate in agility too!!!!

Clicker training is a marker based system of teaching that uses a clicking sound to teach cats to perform certain behaviors. Think about the cats on a movie set....this is how its done. The click ( bought at any pet store) which is always followed by a treat, teaches the cat to associate the sound with something desirable. By positively reinforcing the click, the cat will eventually try to elicit a click and treat from you. There is no scolding, correction or punishment. The process of clicker training a cat requires a lot of patience. If your cat makes a mistake ignore the behaviour and start again. Wait for the cat to do something, such a take a step, lift its head or move a paw. Take this opportunity to click when your cat moves, each time providing a treat for this behaviour. Keep in mind the click must occur at the exact time the kitty performs the movement. A few short sessions may be required before he associates his movement with the reward. Add a verbal cue to ingrain the movement into your cat. For example..."Fluffy paw"...then when she moves her paw, click immediately and offer a treat. In order for this to work, every time the cat hears a click he must receive a treat...to establish trust. Vary the rewards for each session to ensure interest and excitement. Be patient! Keep sessions short, no more than 5 minutes at first and best of luck!!!!



## **And for those of you with Ferrets or Rabbits**

...don't feel left out!

Clicker training works for them as well, and rabbits excel in agility. England is known for their rabbit sports and many train them for steeplechase-like events!



## Next Month....

### **Obesity and nutritional awareness**



September is nutritional awareness month here at Abby Vet, and our focus will be on age, breed and weight specific food.

For all our chubby friends, we have a great new computer program that assists us with creating an easy weight loss plan for our clients. Everyone that signs up and makes an effort in the weight loss of their pets will be entered in a draw for awesome prizes!!!



## Sports organizations and websites:

Check out these website for information, future events and local clubs.

BC StockDog Association

[www.stockdog.bc.ca](http://www.stockdog.bc.ca)

Agility Association of Canada

[www.aac.ca](http://www.aac.ca)

North American Flyball Association

[www.flyball.org](http://www.flyball.org)

Canadian Sighthound Field Assoc.

[www.csfa.info](http://www.csfa.info)

International Weight Pull Assoc

[www.iwpa.net](http://www.iwpa.net)

International Cat Agility

[www.catagility.com](http://www.catagility.com)