



To walk with a dog... is to share his world. What sights and sounds he encounters. What past and present smells he reads. To stretch his legs, to bask in the sun, to discover and wind his way through this brave new human world.

# cheerfuldogs chronicles

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Issue 46

## A World of Dogs: Who Tamed Whom?

Current scientific consensus is that dogs have been our companions for at least 15,000 years. It has long been thought that humans domesticated the dog. We've imagined that perhaps a hunting-gathering ancestor came across abandoned wolf pups, raised them, bred their offspring, and eventually found him or herself with reliable companions.

But now, many scientists are questioning this theory, considering another in its place. Called the "domestication hypothesis", it goes like this: Some wolves began skirting human encampments to take advantage of

scraps. Over time more individuals grew bolder and less fearful, and



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## Dog Sports Around the World: Earthdog Tests

As the name suggests, earthdog work tests a dog's natural instinct to delve underground in search of small game (foxes) or vermin (rats, rabbits). One step at a time, dogs are introduced to the quarry, encouraged to follow a scent trail, and finally learn to negotiate underground tunnels until the quarry is found. (No need to worry – no animals are harmed or harassed in this sport – only non-live quarry are used.) In advanced tests, problems like side tunnels and hidden entry points are introduced to challenge the dogs. Besides being exciting and satisfying for the dogs, earthdog work is designed to be fun for the handler too. It's another example of a sport created as an outlet for the innate skills of a specific group of dogs. For anyone

sharing his life with a small terrier or Dachshund, this is potentially a great pastime.



cont.

## ... who tamed whom?

they learnt to respond socially to, and communicate better with, the two-legged species they had come to rely on. In short, they self-domesticated.

Several threads of the self-domestication hypothesis are under investigation. One aspect of study is dogs' social intelligence - understanding their ability to read and understand human body language, and to make their own body language understood by us. Another is the emotional connection dogs are able to forge with humans, and the role this may have played in early dog-human relationships. A third point of study is referred to as conflict-management strategy, the idea being that humans would likely have chased off more aggressive wolves, while tolerating those who were more sociable and less fearful.

Regardless of who tamed whom, the rest, as they say, is history. We've shared a mutually beneficial relationship ever since, one that in recent generations has begun to transform even our notion of family. Dogs have moved from table scraps to their own gourmet diets. We provide them with specialised health care, a place in our homes, their own toys and plush beds – or invite them to share ours. If the wolf ancestors of dogs did indeed instigate domestication, it was certainly a clever move on their part!

Scientists are studying this question not only to better understand dogs, but humans as well. By looking at the processes of domestication and its effects on genes and the brain, scientists hope to gain insight into how we humans came to be as unique from our own hominid relatives as dogs are from their wolf ancestors.

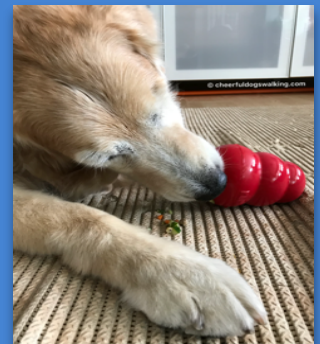


## Tips & Tools: When You Can't Get Fido Out

The difference between a dog that has been well-enriched and exercised outdoors, and one who hasn't gotten out for a few days can be striking. A dog cooped up for long periods indoors may get bored or agitated. But sometimes we just can't get the dog out. Inclement weather, personal or public health conditions, dog injury or medical treatment can all mean that Fido can't get a chance to frolic outside. If you're faced with any of these situations, try these measures to channel your dog's excess energy:

**Play games.** A rousing round of hide-and-seek, fetch, tug, or chase can provide physical exercise when a walk isn't in the cards. Learning and practising fitness games together are also a great way to deepen your bond, too.

**Make Fido think.** Homemade or purchased canine puzzle toys that require Fido to figure out how to get at a tasty treat can replace physical exercise with mental exertion.



Search "dog puzzle toys", "canine enrichment" or "dog fitness games" online for endless ideas.



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