



We continually update our skills and knowledge so that we stay current with the best practices that can help you and your dog.

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Issue 58

A World of Dogs: We Can't All Be Social Butterflies

We all want our dogs to play nicely with other dogs – and shouldn't it come naturally? Dogs are social, after all. So why does an otherwise sweet-natured canine buddy turn into a killjoy at the park? Well, dogs can be introverts, too. Like humans, they can have bad days and they occasionally form instant dislikes to new dogs. But where we get to choose our friends and are free to avoid anyone we can't stand, dogs pretty much have to go wherever we take them. What's more, they are territorial creatures, sometimes protective of their favourite things, their home turf, and us. Adding another dog to the equation, familiar or not, always holds the potential for fireworks. Why are some dogs more social than others? Genetics plays a role, and so does early socialisation. Here, too, the human analogy is apt. Some of us come out of the womb gregarious, others are born shy and unsure of how to negotiate the dynamics of social groups. We also are greatly affected by our earliest experiences. An otherwise confident and social child finding herself the target of bullies on the playground could be forever changed as a result.



Similarly, dogs are the sum of their parts: DNA and experiences thrown into a pot. Some herding or hunting breeds, for example, were bred for the ability



Dog quotes

“Don't expect all dogs to grow up to behave like Lassie. *Lassie* was, in fact, several highly trained dogs.” -Dr. Ian Dunbar

cont.

... social butterflies

to work independently and might find playtime at the park a monumental waste of time; and many dogs raised during the pandemic missed out on their chance to build early social skills.

If a dog's "anti-social tendencies" go beyond polite disinterest, positive training is an option. Working through a programme to build positive associations to other dogs using rewards and comfortable distances can greatly improve relations between a dog and her peers. But if a dog is civil to most dogs, but doesn't play or gets grumpy when approached by bouncy youngsters, a bit of situational awareness might be all that's needed: favouring open spaces and less-busy trails for walks, crossing the street if there isn't room to circumnavigate another dog on a sidewalk, etc. After all, why shouldn't dogs be allowed to be who they really are?



Healthy Dog: What's That Bump?

Few things are more unsettling than giving your dog a good scratch and finding a growth under your fingers. Conditioned as we are to think "cancer," the experience can be quite a scare. Take a breath and take heart: Lumps and bumps should always be taken seriously, but there's no need to panic right away. Growths are common on dogs and thankfully the vast majority are benign. Two common types of lumps are lipomas (fat deposits just under the skin), and sebaceous cysts (caused by obstructed oil glands). Other types of cysts are also frequent, as are infected hair follicles.

The only way to know for sure if your dog's bump is nothing to worry over is to consult your veterinarian - who in many cases will turn to a veterinary pathologist for a microscopic examination of a cell sample. Also, even benign lumps can become problematic if left alone, so best to make that appointment.



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