



Save a Life

April 2007
6th Edition

The *pet chat!*

Mississauga Humane Society Newsletter

PO Box 152, 3353 Credit Woodlands, Mississauga, ON L5C 2K1 Tel: **905-271-0883**

Visit: www.mississaugahumanesociety.com Email: info@mississaugahumanesociety.com

President's Message



Faith



Kitia

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 1 President's Message
- 2 Rescue & Adoption
- 3 Rescue Story
- 5 Cat Corner
- 6 My Pride & Joy
- 8 Kitty LOVE Story
- 9 Puppy LOVE Story
- 10 Doggie School

MISSION STATEMENT:

"We strive to SAVE as many Homeless Companion Animals as possible, regardless of age, health and behavioral issues, and find them FOREVER HOMES."

Yes, it's finally spring! A "paw-and-tail" count of the animals we took in for the last 3 months shows a total of 150 – an average of 50 pets rescued every month. This is the teamwork of all of our foster parents and volunteers. **THANK YOU VERY MUCH.**

From time to time people say to me: "There are so many humans in this world that need help. Why are you spending all those resources on animals?" Well, first of all, probably 99% of the charities are for humans. Secondly, even a starving child in Africa can speak up for himself and ask for help but an animal cannot! They cannot tell us that they are hungry, cold, lonely, fearful, sad, in pain - all those feelings which we humans have too! Animals do need us humans to help them as they cannot help themselves.

There is also this one important point that many people may not realize. **Many times, when we rescue a pet, we are also helping a human, or even indirectly saving his or her life!** Often we receive calls/emails from a frantic and heart-broken woman who is going through a separation/divorce and has to move out of her home or go to a shelter. She can no longer keep her beloved dog or cat, who is regarded as a family member. Knowing that her pet is living in a loving foster home of ours (rather than killed in the city pound) would help the owner a lot emotionally in the turmoil of her life, or even save her from the brink of suicide.

For a very sick owner with a terminal illness who can no longer take care of his or her pet of many years, our taking in of the pet would give him or her peace of mind. Knowing that the pet is in our good hands would probably extend the owner's life a bit longer!

Consider the family who has to give up their cat because of their child's allergy to the pet. We could not imagine the trauma the child would go through if the cat has to be brought to the pound to be killed. This kind of trauma to a child can have a life long impact. With our help, however, the child can visit his or her cat and watch it running around freely at our Adoption Centre. The child then knows another loving home will be found for the cat. Actually, if the ex-owners of the pet request it, we try our best to arrange for them to talk to the new owners (subject to their approval) so the ex-owners can have a closure and go on with their life.

These few words, written on a Christmas card I received from a senior who lives by herself, and who adopted one of our feline AIDs cats, shows how our rescue work helped a lonely person out there:

"King" Azor is doing really well. He enjoys being the only pet who gets all my attention. Thanks to you, he has enriched my life enormously.

I better not continue or people will start to question whether we are an animal or a human rescue charity! Have a great spring and summer! *Hugs and kisses from our animals.*

Lily Chan, President

Rescue & Adoption

Statistics

(January to March 2007)



*Ricky
Adopted*

Number of Dogs Rescued	37
Number of Dogs Adopted	17
Number of Cats Rescued	113
Number of Cats Adopted	75



*Bruce
Adopted*



HOME SWEET HOME

"Some of our adopted pets in their new loving homes"



*Erin (right) and her
buddy Tasha*



Milo/Mondavous



Sal & Serene



*Sidney (Front) &
Ruby her buddy*



*Pepsi &
her proud parents*



Sooke & Evan

RESCUE STORY

It's a long, long road to FREEDOM...

- A Story of 18 QUEBEC dogs, finally FREE, after YEARS of CONFINEMENT

By Lily Chan



Sammy

It all started with an email I received on Jan 13, 2007 about a dog called **Sammy**. This email from Quebec almost slipped by with the many email requests for rescues had I not spotted these few words:

“SAMMY - ‘Born 1998, a very loveable guy, good with other dogs. He has bone cancer. He has been at the shelter his whole life.’”

It had to be a typo. No shelter would keep a dog for 9 years. I could not imagine the life of a dog living in a pound for so many years. I called Debra, the contact person in Quebec, who confirmed that sad truth. My heart sank as I learned that Sammy was not the only dog that had lived in that shelter for years. There were 17 in total; some had been there since they were puppies, and this, in turn, **meant that there were dogs who had been in the pound for up to 12 years.**

This is a no-kill shelter. Sadly, the homeless dog situation in Quebec is much worse than Ontario. **It is estimated that there are some 1,800 puppy mills in Quebec.** It is always very difficult to find homes, especially for big dogs. Days turned into years, years turned into lifetimes, and the manager did not have the heart to put them down, or the way to get them adopted out. Debra, a rescuer in Quebec, convinced the manager to let her find rescuers for these dogs. This would allow the shelter to be renovated to accommodate new homeless dogs.

After my conversation with Debra, the plight of these 17 Quebec dogs weighed heavily on my mind. **“I want them to know what a HOME is like.”** I always think that one of the saddest things on earth for any living being is to be deprived of freedom. **“How I want to see all of them released from this prison!”** While we usually rescue dogs within only Ontario, I decided to make an exception this time. If any dogs deserved to be rescued, it was these. That afternoon 17 emails arrived with the information and picture of each of these dogs. Their age ranges from 6 to 13 years, all are of medium to large size!



Brandy & Petuni



Bela



“Let me start with Sammy and the 3 oldest ones, and maybe other rescue groups can help”. Within a few days I was able to find 4 foster homes. I also sent out an email to the network of rescue groups appealing for help. Still, the thought of 13 depressed dogs in a pen lay on my mind. **“Maybe I should help a couple more. I just have to work harder.”** My hard work paid off - 2 more families agreed to foster. So, now I have 6 foster spaces!

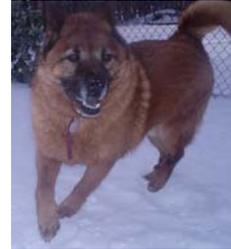
Now came the difficult task of picking the ones to be rescued. Besides the 4 oldest ones, the next group was another 4 who had been there 5-6 years. Which 2 should I take? I took the easy (or harder) way out – I decided to take all 4! This would mean I have to find 2 more foster homes. More phone calls, more emails, more begging, more threatening... This really strained my brain to its limit!



Speedy & Foster Mom

Wow, I could not believe it, now I have 8 foster homes lined up. **“This is the best you can do, Lily, don’t overburden yourself. 8 dogs is the limit.”**

Then I got some more updates - some of these dogs I was going to rescue had lived with another dog in the same pen for YEARS. **“To take one out and leave behind its companion of years would be cruel. I have to take its roommate out too”**. The diligent quest for foster homes continued. So, 10 days after receiving the 1st email, foster homes have been lined up for 12 dogs; 3 pairs would be placed in the same foster home so that they would not be separated from their life-long cellmate. **“OK, 12 dogs, that is it. You really have to stop here, Lily.”**



Rouki enjoying the snow

Transportation was then scheduled to bring these 12 dogs from Quebec to Mississauga. Since these dogs have lived in a shelter for so many years, they are different from the average rescued dogs. I prepared an information sheet for all foster parents as to some “dos” and “don’ts”. The night before their rescue, I had my van loaded up with food & supplies for 12 dogs! Everything was set, I thought.



Jack with foster daddy

Then another email came: “Charlie’s roommate of years just got adopted and he is now alone.” **“What the heck, bring Charlie over too!”** This brought the total up to 13 dogs now. **“Well, lets make it an even number”**. I told Debra I would also take Jack (had been in the shelter for ‘just 3 years’). *Jack is afflicted with crooked legs due to his confinement in a very small cage in his puppyhood.* In the meantime I continued to make more calls and emails for 2 more foster spaces. *Somehow I believed that things for the foster placements would work out.*

Two weeks after I received the email on Sammy, on Saturday, Jan 27, 2007, after more than 8 hours’ drive, around 6 pm, in 2 vans, these **14 dogs ARRIVED, FREED, finally, after spending almost their entire lives in a shelter.** I have never seen so many dogs in someone’s backyard! A big thank you to Ms Linda Campbell, our dear foster parent, who kindly let us use her backyard as the ‘drop off point’ for the 14 dogs. It was a chaotic scene (it had to be with some 14 dogs and a bunch of volunteers in her backyard). These are all friendly and well-behaved dogs. Believe it or not, not one dog was barking! By 11 pm, all of these dogs were picked up by their foster parents and volunteers. From that night on, **Sammy, Blossom, Rouki, Jessie1, Jessie2, Batman, Charlie, Alfie, Jack, Bela, Champ, Speedy, Brandy and Petuni all have LOVING HOMES,** most for the first time in their lives.



The Night of Rescue

About 2 weeks later, on Feb. 10 we took in 4 more “prison” dogs from this pound in Quebec. Anakine, Billy, Ricky and Jelly also have a HOME now.

All of these precious souls are good-natured dogs. Most of them were overweight and a few with arthritis, due to lack of activity and old age. Their health problems have been looked after. They have settled down nicely in their foster homes. As of the day of this writing, 10 of them have already been adopted!



*Charlie & Jessie1
& their proud parents*

THANK YOU VERY MUCH to the foster parents and volunteers who helped with this big rescue. **Together we have made a difference to the lives of these 18 dogs,** who otherwise might have lived out their entire lives in a pen at the shelter.

From Quebec, with LOVE



Jessie2



CAT CORNER

You Are What You Eat

By Tina Kendall, Vice President

In an old television commercial, three siblings are gathered around a bowl of cereal. One says to another, "Let Mikey try it – he hates everything!" The spoon goes in and, by the magic of advertising; Mikey turns out to love it instead! The message is clear: feed your child this because he or she will like the taste and will eat it willingly. No one ever asks if the cereal is healthy for the child. After all, "Mikey likes it!"

Likewise, with a host of pet food ads, picky eaters, hesitant felines, and spoiled pets are magically reformed by the taste of whatever pet food is being pitched at the moment. The question of quality is never raised and the truth is never pointed out: Advertisers care about you buying the food not whether or not it has **any** nutritional value at all.

Quality and cost are two on going rivals in the pet food world. Often the "popular" cat food will be cheaper. The cat will like it better but, as is the case of junk food with people, cost and taste should not be the primary concern. For every short term gain in cost, a long term loss will be realized. You can concern yourself with a few pennies a can now or with large vet bills later.

So, what do you buy, why, and how? First of all, and most importantly, read the ingredients on the label! Cats are carnivores. Where you or your dog can eat a variety of carbohydrates and meats, cats **must** eat meat. When you read the list of ingredients, meat should be the first item on the list. By this, "chicken, beef, chicken meal or beef meal" are the preferred terms. Beef or chicken "meal" refers to meat that has been ground up. "Meat by – products" does not mean the same thing. Often there is no meat at all in "Meat by – products"! This term can refer to a list of items that might include: intestines, feet, feather, beaks, horns, etc. Think of it this way, what would you prefer: a steak or a plate of beaks and horns?

Although poorer quality cat foods do have some meat in them, the contents are primarily vegetable matter. A vegetable diet can be responsible for both blindness and heart problems. Corn, especially, is difficult for a cat to digest and has been linked to food allergies. Here then, is the general rule: although many cat foods have carbohydrates in them, including some very good foods, carbohydrates should not be the first item on the list.

"Fish", you ask, "Don't cats love fish?" The cartoon world seems to think so. Actually, a "fish only" diet might lead to kidney problems. A diet composed of tuna isn't great for a cat – a little can go a long way! Fish should be thought of as a treat – not a meal. "What about milk?" you ask. Again, this is a common idea and it has a mixed truth. Milk is not a substitute for cat food. While some cats might care for and drink milk, some have an intolerance for it. Intolerance means, most likely that the cat will develop diarrhea and you will become more intolerant of the cat!

Of all of the "milk" misconceptions, Whiska's brand "Cat Milk" stands out as the foremost marketing success to date. The name suggests that the product is especially formulated for cat use. In reality, if you read the labels, you will see that the three main ingredients are: "milk, water, and dry milk". Note "milk is first on the list. This is cow's milk, that we all drink and is repackaged and sold at a higher price.

"SILENT AUCTION"

Proceeds go to our animals

**BRAND NEW
Heated Wellness
Bed™**

(LARGE SIZE)
34" x 48" x3" thick

Bid Price: \$60

RETAIL PRICE:

\$120

(Price goes up by
\$5 each time)

TO BID

Call 905-271-0883

or email

lchan3@rogers.com

*Helps Your Pet Feel
His Best Every Day*



- *Low Level Therapeutic Heat*
- *Vibrating Massage*
- *Orthopedic Foam Core*
- *Detachable Chew Resistant Cxxord*
- *Removable and Washable Cover*
- *Uses Low-Voltage Power Adapter*
- *Vibrating Massage Unit*

THANK YOU

*Petsafe and The Pet
Comfort Company*

1-800-232-4901

*For the donation
of the Pet Bed*

Other ingredients are "Trisodium Phosphate" [TSP – a cleaner used as a thickening agent]. Go to Home Depot, buy some TSP, and use whatever is left to clean your walls to prepare them for painting. Guar gum, carrageenan, mono and di – glycerides, [used as stabilizers] and corn syrup are also added. Although Taurine and sodium caseinate are present, they can be found in any commercial cat food. [Taurine, an amino acid, is present in meat and allows cats to maintain their sight. Virtually, all cat foods incorporate it.] Any milk you buy for yourself and your tap can produce "Cat's Milk" at a far cheaper price. Use only the milk and water. The rest is unnecessary. {Of course, we do not want you to feel pressured. About one fifth of a litre of "Cat Milk" sells for \$1.50 or \$7.50 per litre. A four litre bag of milk, at any grocery store, is less than \$4.00 (as opposed to what works out to be \$30.00 for a four litre bag of "Cat Milk"). You may choose for yourselves.}



GARFIELD WISDOM

We all get heavier as we get older because there's a lot more information in our heads. So I'm not fat, I'm just really intelligent and my head couldn't hold any more so it started filling up the rest of me!

That's my story and I'm sticking to it!

Finally, people always ask, "What should I buy?" In my opinion, here are the best choices:

Best

Innova, Natural Balance, Wellness, Evolve, Felidae, Nutram

2nd Best

Nutro (Preferably "Natural Choice" President's Choice (Nutrition First)

3rd Best

Science Diet, Eukanuba, Iams, Proplan

*Available from Endless Tail Pet Nutrition
Ratuburn Rd E, Mississauga 905-290-0378*

*Available from Petsmart or Petcetera
Available from Loblaws Grocery stores*

Available from Petsmart or Petcetera



MY PRIDE & JOY

By Sue Gaskell, Foster Parent of many dogs (Special ed teacher for little problematic dogs!)

This story is dedicated for all pets and to all volunteers who open their hearts and homes. I have met so many wonderful loving people! The pets? These guys took me on an unending roller-coaster ride! -- for **Kacy, Petey, Zeus, Rex, Dora, Hardy, Sash, Mickey, Lacey, Max, Nikki, Maggie Muffin, Fitzy, Nike, Scotia, Benji,**



Austin and, of course, Little Big Man (formerly Hydro).

When I was looking for a dog a couple of years ago, fostering animals didn't even cross my mind. I wanted to adopt! As time went by, I realized that many pets were euthanized because 'there was no room at the inn', and no one wanted them. When I contacted Lily in February 2005, she immediately had 2 dogs for me!! Oh My! I picked up 2 sad-looking fellows who had spent months languishing in a pound. Thus began an adventure I would never regret!!

Kacy and Petey were as anxious as I was! Oscar and Felix, my cats, had eyes as BIG as saucers! We all looked at each other afraid to move. Then Petey broke the tension and flopped on the living room rug -- aaahhh, home at last! Kacy, a beautiful loving border collie was easy to adopt out. My girl friend came over, fell in love with her, and she just moved into her house. I saw her often. Petey, a senior spaniel with serious medical issues, never left. This is his story.

"For 4 months, I lay despondently in my cage at the pound. Enthusiastic people & kids looking for the perfect dog passed me by every day. Nobody wanted an old black spaniel with medical problems. I developed mange. I was scheduled to be put down. My guardian angel swooped down, and MHS took me in! -- from the pound, to a house, to the vet's, to Mom Sue's with dizzying speed! Here was home. I wiggled my way into Mom Sue's heart. I was her constant trusting companion -- visited friends, went on vacations together -- and she took good care of me. We communicated as only trusted companions can. Best of all, I had a job -- a purpose in life. I was the dog-sitter! I comforted and settled all the new, disconsolate and displaced pets who didn't have a home. Mom Sue and I guided these sad, angry, inconsolable dogs into their new life. We were a team! As my heart was giving out, and my legs kept collapsing, Mom Sue picked me up and kept me going through that spring -- my favourite time of the year. I loved to stop and smell the flowers!! In spirit I'm still at home, flopped on the living room rug (Mom Sue often sees me there). This spring, I'll again, stop and smell the flowers. (Gone, but not forgotten, August, 2006)." [LOVE - PITEY](#)



Nike

All 'my' dogs have a place in my heart. For some, their stories are very moving. I fostered Sash twice, after the family situations changed and they no longer had room for her. She was so true to her family, and so inconsolable when she lost them, that she went on a hunger strike both times -- wouldn't eat for 3 days!! **Nike** was traumatized, sick, injured, and had feces glued to his raw red hind end, when I rescued him out of a pound. They were going to put him down because they couldn't do anything with him -- a 7-lb bundle of fluff!! He's still here.

Mickey and **Nikki** are 'my Christmas dogs' -- arriving just before Christmas, and finding a home by New Years!! -- people are wonderful!! **Hardy** was a sweet small, but blind, German Shepherd -- some crazy guy phoned up and wanted him for a guard dog!! Another family phoned up and just wanted a sweet dog - they didn't care that he couldn't see with his eyes. He 'saw' in other ways.

And then that **Maggie** -- such an angry, aggressive little Chihuahua who just wanted her original family to take her home!! Bounced through several foster and adoptive situations, and the kennel!! (she was sooo bad), she finally found her forever home. As an adoption officer for MHS, I went to visit her, and asked her, "Is this where you want to be?" She put her paws up on my knee, her tail wagged her whole body furiously, and her brown eyes shone with such joy, that I knew this would be her forever home. Her new parents love her. What a 'high' on my roller coaster ride! **Little Big Man (Hydro)**, found tied to a pole in a hydro field, also only wanted his original family to take him home. Like Maggie, he was an angry, aggressive biter, and was bounced through several foster and adoptive homes. We made a connection -- I adopted him!! He's been working really hard at the dog-sitter job -- filling Petey's big paws is tough for him, but he's doing it!



Hydro

I love fostering!! I'd do it all again in a heartbeat!! I've had wonderful dogs, some rather challenging, though, and some heartbreakers. It's been quite a ride, but I'm not getting off this roller coaster anytime soon!!

[Luv, Mom Sue](#)



THANK YOU

**Endless Tails
Pet Nutrition**
For hosting a
Pet Party
on
March 17, 2007
to raise funds for
our animals



*Pictured here
is
lovely LOVEY
(adopted
in 2003)
and
her dear family*

KITTY LOVE STORY

DICKINS

By Betty McConnell



Dickins

After I had been retired for about a year, I decided to become a volunteer. I called the Mississauga Humane society and arranged through Lily to visit the cats at their adoption center at Petcetera. Of course, one of the first things Lily asked me was would I be willing to foster one of the cats! I told her I didn't think so because I already had two cats of my own, Dandy, a 5 year-old tuxedo and Dazzle, a 4 year-old black & brown DMH. They had pretty well grown up together even though they were not littermates. To bring another cat into the mix might not work too well I thought. But the Angels who look after our furry feline friends had other ideas!

A few months after I started, I met a big handsome tabby named Dickins. One day I watched as a very shy young cat crept out of her hiding spot and crossed the room to where Dickins was lying. She snuggled up to him and he never moved or hissed at her, even though quite a lot of that was going on around him—a natural state of affairs with several cats who were unfamiliar with each other. I was very impressed with his gentleness.



A short time later when I made my usual visit, Dickins was no longer there. A nice family had fostered him and I was happy for him even though I knew I would miss him.

Two weeks later he was back! It seems that he was very shy with his new family and was hiding most of the time. I was sorry it hadn't worked out for Dickins but in my heart I was glad to see him again.

Throughout my next several visits Dickins came out to greet me—even when I wasn't dishing out treats! One wonderful day I was sitting when he approached me so I patted my lap inviting him to jump up but never thinking he would. He was a “big boy” after all and didn't look like jumping anywhere would appeal to him. But surprisingly he did just that—jumped up on my lap, then stood on his hind legs to put his forepaws on my shoulders and nibbled lovingly on my chin! That was the day I fell head over heels in love with Dickins!

Over the course of time, I saw that cats were being adopted and fostered. I didn't want to “lose” Dickins again so I told Lily I would foster him, hoping like crazy that it would work out between him and my other two cats.

I brought Dickins home and went through the process of sequestering him for a couple of days till all three cats got used to each other's scent. Then I let him loose to make his own way with the resident “boys”. After some initial hissing and smacking, they have settled into a routine where they tolerate each other (most of the time and as long as there's some space!)

Dickins is a non-aggressive big guy—apparently that is Dazzle's job. But he has his own way of getting what he wants. If Daz or Dandy is lying on my lap, Dickins sits just close enough to bother them. Then when his target gets edgy enough to run away, Dickins climbs aboard! He is a very affectionate cat who gives loving head-butts. Unfortunately I appreciate them more than Daz or Dandy who think it's some kind of aggression!

All three cats sleep on my bed at night and each has his own favourite spot. Dandy has to be near my head or face, Dazzle will march up and down till he settles either near Dandy or at my feet and Dickins snuggles on what would be my lap if I were sitting—he's still my lap-cat!

Living with cats has many benefits: companionship, laughter at their antics, heart-warming affection and the pleasure of being lulled to sleep by three-part harmony purring!

Finally, at Christmas, I decided I needed to give myself a present so I adopted Dickins. He now has a Forever Home with his “brothers” and me and we plan to live happily ever after!



Meow!
Betty, Dandy, Dazzle and Dickins

Puppy LOVE Story

HAPPIE

By Staysea Johnston-McLeod

I've wanted to write a Success Story for the MHS about Happie for a long while. I read through the success stories on their website every time I need something to put my life in perspective.

We fostered and rescued quite a number of the dogs whose new families have posted pictures and stories about them and I am very grateful to them for sharing those "after-shots" of their lives. Seeing pictures of Duncan all groomed and looking sharp is such a relief, his new family adopted him from us (we were his foster home) and we had shaved him down to the skin to get rid of the matting, he looked horrible but they saw past it and gave him a wonderful new life! Seeing Goober looking all shiny and healthy is really excellent too, he cost me a new backseat to my car, had to get the whole thing replaced after his rescue, but its water under the bridge when I get to see him looking happy and healthy and know he's in a loving home. Seeing such a gorgeous picture of Tyson warms my heart too, we actually rescued him for ourselves we were going to adopt him, I'm so happy to see him with his big sister and looking so fine....which brings us to Happie (finally)...



In the early spring of 2004 Lily got info from Kennel Inn, a pound in Aurora that they had a dog that had been with them a long time and there was really no hope of them adopting him out. I'm sure they used nicer words but the best way to describe him was "unhinged". She sent me out to pick him and bring him to a lovely new foster home in Mississauga who had agreed to foster him, Virginia. I went up there and met the most catastrophically damaged dog I had ever encountered. He was horribly underweight (35 pounds), nothing but skin and bones covered in filthy fur matted to his body. His eyes told the whole story though, he couldn't focus, he was so deranged his mind couldn't concentrate on people or object, he just wanted away from there. I thought to myself "what have we gotten ourselves into".

Unfortunately for Happie his condition didn't improve much back in Mississauga, he was terribly ill, he had multiple surgeries to correct a hernia as well as being treated for ear and eye infections and malnutrition. He was also destructive and was finally asked to leave by his foster mom who was understandably at her wit's end as she also had a few other dogs to look after.

That's how he came to live with us, Lily was smart enough not to send him to another foster home and his other option was back into a cage at a boarding facility. My husband and I braced ourselves for a challenge and brought Happie to live with us. I won't say it was easy or fun, but we could see as he got healthier the light in his eyes got brighter, he started to connect with us and finally we became his family.

Happie has been with us for 3 years now and as far as we're concerned his past is ancient history. He's everyone's favorite dog, he loves children and is often invited to play with the neighbourhood kids. His favorite things are running with me while I'm biking, hiking, playing in the water, and his friends. His training is impeccable and he's often praised for it. He's also turned out to be an absolutely beautiful dog, a complete mutt, but they don't make dogs any better than him. He lives a full life, we treat him like our child more than our dog and he deserves every joyful minute of it.

WISH LIST

- Foster or Adoptive Homes
- Donations of Cash
- Canadian Tire Money
- Volunteer Drivers
- Dog Walkers
- Cat Litter
- Boston Pizza receipts

DOGGIE SCHOOL

ESTABLISHING, MAINTAINING, AND RETAINING "PACK HARMONY"

By Dorothy Avery

Mother Knows Best Dog Obedience School



*Lucky (adopted in 2001)
celebrating her 14th birthday*

Living with multiple dogs is great if the dogs all get along. I've enjoyed the luxury of a three-dog pack harmony for a number of years. That was not always the case. At one point in time, one of my dogs habitually tried to eat the other two. It was scary and I can report it was a living nightmare!!!

Fortunately, we understand more and more about inter-dog aggression and dog aggression in general. Basically, you and your dog(s) form a pack, and every dog knows where he/she stands in the pack hierarchy. It is critically important that YOU, as a member of that pack, also know where you stand, and it had best be first (alpha dog), or you are going to end up working for "puppy chows" at the very least and possibly you could be in need of many stitches.

Problems often arise when humans try to interfere with the pack order. In the canine world, there is no such thing as democracy or "fair". A pack has a dominant dog (alpha), a second in command dog (beta), and on and on, ending in the least ranking dog of all (omega). **Dogs themselves determine pack order.** The order generally hinges on personality, age, time in the pack, sex, and size. For example, my dog "Heather" is the dominant dog – she's the largest, been here the longest, and female. Next, and probably a surprise to you, comes the newest member of the pack, a young 11 month female, Hailey, medium in size, but larger than the dog who one would expect to be second in command and that is Simba – a male, been here much longer than Hailey, but much smaller in size and a "child of peace" as I lovingly refer to him. He ranks last (omega) in our pack and loves his position.

What we humans don't understand is that to retain pack harmony, we need to do two things. One is that we should be ULTRA ALPHA. Even the most dominant dog needs to respect you as the ultimate leader of the pack. Getting respect from the alpha dog certainly is not about dominating the dog in any mean or physical way. Instead, you always make the dog "work" for any desired result, and sometimes can be as simple as making the dog obey the command "sit" before being petted or being fed. The second thing we should be doing is to reinforce the pack hierarchy. If we cuddle the omega (least ranking) dog, the alpha (top ranking) dog may view this as competition. With humans, there is a tendency to "root for the underdog" by consoling the omega dog when things don't go his/her way. Ignoring the alpha or dominant dog in favour of the omega or least ranking dog destabilizes the pack and can be the source of fights, as the alpha will take matters into his/her own hands/paws.

When adding a new dog to your household, you should consider how the new pack order will play out. Think about compatibility. If you have a very elderly dog, bringing home a boisterous dog is probably not a good idea. Always introduce the new dog to the old dog on neutral territory. Many times the dogs will immediately figure out that they like each other. Or not.

Even if the dogs seem to basically get along, be prepared for a few squabbles especially in the initial phase until the hierarchy is completely settled. **DON'T INTERFERE AS THEY SORT THINGS OUT.** Generally, the pack order will re-stabilize. Remember, supporting the "loser" can have a destabilizing effect. Feed the dominant dog first and pay special attention to him/her to reinforce the hierarchy.

 *Thank you* 

Thank you to all of the people who contributed articles for this edition. A big vote of thanks to all of our dedicated foster parents, volunteers, adoptors, donors and sponsors. Without your support, the Mississauga Humane Society would not be able to achieve its mission of rescuing animals.