



Pawsitively Speaking

Dear Teoti,

I've just returned home after attending the wonderful Clicker Expo conference (www.clickerexpo.com) in Providence, Rhode Island. Trainers from all over the world gathered at Clicker Expo to learn the latest scientific information about clicker training.

I think it's critical for professional trainers to continue their education, and this was an excellent learning opportunity. I brought home lots of ideas. I was also lucky to have fit everything I bought at the show into my suitcase!

Back at home, we've started our March classes and are already taking registration for April. This next session will feature the exciting Family Manners III. Please check out the schedule below.

I've also included news on an upcoming Delta Society Team Training workshop, tips for visiting dog parks, and cautions against assuming your dog is trying to outrank your authority.

Give your dogs cookies from me!

Teoti Anderson, CPDT
Pawsitive Results, LLC



Southern Living Update

Southern Living magazine was very kind to allow me to post a PDF of the article about Pawsitive Results on my Web site.

If you missed the South Carolina March issue, you can find the article here: [Sit! Stay! Good Dog!](#)

(Please Note: you will need the free Adobe Acrobat Reader software to view the article. You can get it at <http://get.adobe.com/reader/>.)



Class Schedule

Lexington

Tuesday, April 28 at 7:30 p.m. - [Family Manners I](#) - **Now taking registration!**

West Columbia

Thursday, April 30 at 7:30 p.m. - [Family Manners I](#) - **Almost full. Sign up now!**

Thursday, April 30 at 8:30 p.m. - [Family Manners III](#) - **Now taking registration!**

Prerequisites: Family Manners I and II.

IMPORTANT NOTE: This class takes our skills on the road! In order to accommodate field trips, it will not meet on a regular Thursday night basis. Classes will meet Thursdays August 30, May 7 and May 14 and June 4 at Tri-City Leisure Center at 8:30 p.m. Classes will meet Saturdays May 23 and May 30 at 10:00 a.m. at our field trip locations (announced during class).

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Dog Parks, Part I: Are They Right for Your Dog?

Dog parks can be fun places for you and your dog to socialize and exercise. They can also cause serious problems.

This article will help you assess if your dog would be a good candidate for park playtime. In our next issue, we'll examine what makes a quality dog park.

Taking an Honest Look

We all tend to think our dogs are perfect. Before you consider taking your dog to a dog park, it's important to really evaluate your dog objectively. If you don't, you could be putting your dog in danger, behaviorally and physically. So please put aside your bias, and really assess your dog.

The ideal dog park playmate should be friendly, social and confident, but not overbearing. Does that describe your dog?

The Wallflowers

If your dog is very shy around other dogs, a dog park can make that shyness much worse.

Some people think their shy dogs will get better if they are exposed to other dogs at the dog park. Proper socialization, however, needs to be carefully managed in a controlled environment. This does NOT describe a dog park!

What happens is that shy dogs are often overwhelmed at a dog park. Other dogs crowd them. Some dogs will also target fearful dogs. Instead of teaching your wallflower that other dogs are fun, you've now taught her that she was right

Volunteering With Your Dog

Delta Society Team Training Workshop Coming in April

Are you interested in volunteering as a therapy dog team? Teoti will be teaching the Delta Society Team Training workshop April 25 and May 3, 2009 in Northeast Columbia. This is a two-day workshop, and you must attend both full days in order to participate. The training will prepare you to register for the Delta Society Pet Partner program.

Delta Society's Pet Partners program trains volunteers and screens volunteers and their pets for visiting animal programs in hospitals, nursing homes, rehabilitation centers, schools and other facilities. The Pet Partners program was established in 1990 to ensure that "both ends of the leash," people as well as animals, were well-prepared to participate in animal-assisted activity and animal-assisted therapy programs. Pet Partners is the only national registry that requires volunteer training and screening of animal-handler teams.

Dogs must be outgoing, friendly and confident. They must enjoy being touched all over by strangers. They must also have excellent obedience skills. If you still need to work on your training, you should do that before attending the workshop.

Pet Partner benefits include:

- \$1 million primary liability insurance
- Delta Society membership and Interactions magazine
- Identification badge for the handler and ID tag for the animal
- And more, including the chance to help patients in your community!

If you live in the SC Midlands area, once you become a Pet Partner you would be eligible to join our local affiliate group, Prescription Paws. For more information on how to become a Pet Partner, find out [how to volunteer](#).



The Dangers of Dominance

"My dog is dominant, and growling at the children. Can you help me?" the caller asked. When I met the dog and took a complete case history, what I found wasn't a dog that wanted to rule the house. I found a dog scared out of its wits.

Lately, it seems I'm hearing more and more from people who think their dogs are "trying to be alpha" or "dominant." This was popular thinking in the 50s, but modern science has debunked many of those ideas. Unfortunately, it seems the old "dominance" theories are making a comeback. I'm not sure it was a good idea to bring bellbottoms back again, and I'm positive it wasn't for dominance theory.

The American Veterinary Society of Animal Behavior is also concerned. It has released a [position statement on the use of dominance theory in behavior modification of animals](#). A key point is "The AVSAB recommends that veterinarians not refer clients to trainers or behavior consultants who coach and advocate dominance hierarchy theory and the subsequent confrontational training that follows from it."

Let's take the dog growling at the children. Turns out the dog was terrified of the children, because they played rough with him, and often picked him up under his front legs and toted him around the house.

While the children loved their playmate, they were not playing with him in a safe and appropriate manner. The dog was now afraid of them, and growled at them to tell them he was afraid and wanted to be left alone. His owners mistook this for "dominance," since they had heard dogs can try to be "alpha" to children. They had tried holding him upside down on his back so the children could pet him, to "prove they were alpha." The problem just got worse, which is when they called me.



to be afraid all along! She may start to growl or snap to try and protect herself.

The Bullies

Does your dog play really roughly with other dogs so they try to escape or avoid him? Does he like to be on top of them all the time, or back them into corners? This is bully behavior.

With normal dog play, dogs take turns being "top dog." Dogs who don't want to relinquish the title are just like bullies in a schoolyard. Dog parks are not ideal outlets for these dogs.

A bully can get worse by picking on dogs who are less assertive than he is. The more he succeeds at being a bully, the more he does it. This is not polite or appropriate behavior. Bullies also teach other dogs to be afraid of dogs, which is not fair to them.

What also can happen is the bully finally meets his match. This can lead to a serious dog fight.

The Guarders

Does your dog growl over you, toys or food? If so, then you should not take him to a dog park until you fix this issue.

There are lots of things that dogs can find intriguing at a dog park. If there is a chance your dog could guard something, then there's a chance for a dog fight.

To Visit or Not?

It can be embarrassing to admit your dog is a wallflower or bully, or that he guards objects. It's important to recognize problems, though, so you can get help to solve them. They will not go away on their own. If your dog has these issues, get professional help from a reward-based trainer.

What if you don't know if your dog plays well with others? If you're not sure, don't find out at a dog park. Find some friends with safe, compatible dogs and arrange for a dog playdate on a smaller scale first. Then work up to visiting the dog park.

If your dog doesn't have any of these issues, then your next step is to find a quality dog park. In our next issue, we'll cover what to look for to make sure your visits are safe and enjoyable for you and your dog.

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About Pawsitive

The reason this relationship was breaking down was because the family was using improper techniques, and the issue was misdiagnosed. They were actually taking a frightened dog and holding him upside down, forcing him to face his fears. If you were terrified of spiders, and I held you down and dropped big juicy tarantulas all over you, would your fear disappear? Not at all! You also probably wouldn't like me very much!

I worked with the family to help teach the children how to interact appropriately with the dog. We worked with the dog to help him become more comfortable around the children. As his fear lessened, so did the growling.

Before falling for an old myth, get the modern facts. Leave dominance theory in the past!

Results, LLC

Pawsitive Results, LLC offers reward-based group dog training classes in Lexington and West Columbia. Owner Teoti Anderson is a Certified Pet Dog Trainer (CPDT), author and public speaker.

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