The WAG

Paws 2 Dance Newsletter January 2016 Volume 20



Coach's Corner - Ray Underwood



A Lesson on Style

Ray has been teaching us about style for years. At *Dance the Skies 2015,* he showed us exactly what he meant. With Magic (left) he entered the ring as a nerd . . . shoulders rounded, limbs straight or hyper-extended, leg and arm actions jerky and stiff – basically, everything he teaches us not to do. His exaggeration of awkward movement had us all in stitches. The next day he was elegance personified as he and Merlin performed their *Shindler's List* routine that brought people to tears. Check out the difference in carriage, arm position and costume detail in these two photographs.

Calendar of Events

Competitions

WCFO: March 5 & 6. Arlington

Prancing Paws: April 30, May 1, Langley

Island Fling: Saturday, June 11. Nanoose Place

Dance the Skies WCFO: July 30, 31. Langley

Boot Scootin' Boogie: September 10 or 11. Arlington

Fun Matches:

Island K9 Freestylers, March 19th, 10 am - 3 pm, Nanoose Place. Details to follow

Judges' workshop

March 26th, Langley. Details to follow

From the Judges' Handbook

TIPS FOR SENDING MUSIC

This isn't really from the judges' handbook, but judges hate to see competitors frustrated by music problems. Having all competition music on computer makes life much easier for the "music" person at each competition and it means organizers need find only one person for music instead of a couple to deal with the CD's and a timer. At the WCFO event in July, we had a few glitches, all easily preventable with the following tips.

1. Send your music well in advance.
2. Ensure digital music file is labeled with song title
3. In the Email, indicate your division and the song title (just in case it's needed)
4. If you cannot Email the song and you take a CD to the event, make sure the labeled CD has only one song on it and hand it to the music person as early as possible.
5. Make sure you do a sound-check.

Unsure of how to send music?

- From within your Email program, choose "Attach."
- Locate the music file on your drive and choose it (usually in *My Music* for PC's, *iTunes* for Macs)

Common Audio Formats: .mp3 .wma .m4a .wav

Note: .m4p files are iTunes Store protected so may not play on another machine.

Notes From the WCFO Conference Workshops – with permission from the trainers

Many Paws 2 Dance members made the journey down to Federal Way to participate in the WCFO International. Besides two days of competition and two banquets, attendees had the opportunity to participate in a weekend of workshops conducted by six international trainers. Each day, attendees rotated from one trainer to the next for a total of 12 workshops. Here is just a taste of what was presented.

Kathy Clayton from South Africa

Selection of Music

Kathy suggests we expose ourselves to music we wouldn't normally listen to. Each broad genre – rock, blues, children's music, classical, country, dance, inspirational, instrumental, and world music has many sub-genres worth exploring. Listen to music, narrow your choices down to 3 or 4, put those on and walk, play, and train to them till you feel that one of them is right for you and your dog. Play your choice over and over till you know the music well and feel it. To help you learn your routine more effectively, plan your routine and draw a labelled floor pattern.

How Fit is Your Dog

On day two, Kathy talked about the importance of our dog's health and fitness. Fitness includes stamina, flexibility, strength, balance, and body awareness. Handlers can build each of these elements through thoughtful training practices. She gave us several examples of activities, but some of the key ones were for flexibility (side stretch by moving head to the left and right, alternate between stretching up and bowing) balance (having dog balance on gym peanuts, wobble boards, hedgehogs) body awareness (having dog put front feet then back feet then all four feet into a box, walk along a ladder, walk along narrow beams, walk backwards up stairs). Kathy also believes we should always warm our dog up with 5 minutes of brisk walking or trotting, stretching, and a few moves such as spins, weaves, and begs. After a routine, always give some time for the dog to walk and stretch before putting it back in the crate.

Attila Szkukalek from the UK

Using "Continue" Signals

For stationary duration elements such as a long hold or an traveling duration move such as a side pass, dogs may be uncertain if they are performing correctly as there is a long time between cue and the secondary reinforcer (the "yes" or click or whatever you use to mark successful execution of the move) and the primary reinforcer (the treat or play). Attila suggests a tertiary reinforcer that lets the dog know that what it is doing is correct and that it should continue with that behavior. For traveling moves, Attila suggests "T, T, T" as it is a high-energy sound. When the movement is over, give your regular mark sound. He uses "Tick." For stationary elements, he suggests something more mellow, such as "La, la, la" as the continue signal. When Attila uses a clicker, he clicks for the continue signal and double-clicks to mark the successful completion. This technique has the advantage of reducing the dog's anxiety. He warns that if used incorrectly, it could demotivate the dog.

Social Learning Tools for Speedy Learning

A dog learns to go to the door when he wants to go out because he has read social cues of others leaving by the door. The same principle can be applied to learning wanted behaviors for freestyle. Teaching phase: patiently teach the dog the concept of "copy" with 3 exercises that the dog performs on verbal cue. Generalization Phase: use three additional exercises. Dog learns that when you say "copy" he should reproduce the exercise you have demonstrated. Application Phase: Teach new exercises by demonstrating and then asking dog to reproduce the new exercise when you say "Copy." Eventually put the new exercise on verbal cue. This is too complicated a process to fully describe in this small space but it certainly bears considering.

Donelda Guy from the UK

Wow tricks

As each group was composed of different dogs, Donelda tailored each session to what the handlers wanted to learn. To teach a tap dance have dog scratch a piece of tape on the floor. Once the dog is performing the behavior without the tape, give it a name. If you have your dog moving side to side, periodically cue "scratch" and the dog will appear to be performing a tap-dance step. To teach looking from side to side, have someone make a noise to one side. When the dog turns to look, Click-Treat. Gradually build duration and name the movement. To teach Big Circle, use a cluster of chairs or a table in the middle and lure dog around it with a toy. Gradually make the circle bigger. If the dog creeps in, firmly tell it to "Get out!"

Ray Underwood from Canada

Professional Presentation

In his first workshop, Ray had handlers focus on their posture, alignment, arm and hand movements, and foot placement. Keep your core tight while relaxing the rest of your body. Keep knees flexed and feet at a 45° for good stability. When walking forward, imagine walking along a line or tight-rope. When weaving, also walk along a line to give the dog less distance to travel. Raise arms no higher than slightly below shoulder level and slightly in front of midline. Use the full count of the music for the movement rather than moving quickly and stopping. Be conscious of every part of the body and pause at each spot within the movement to check on alignment and posture. Practice in front of a mirror to improve and perfect movement.

Adding the Dog to the Mix

Perhaps the most important move to train is the "Wait" time between moves. It is during this transition time that the handler can build the dog's excitement and energy by whispering things such as "Ready, steady, watch" before cueing the next move. During training, frequently break right after the "wait," and play vigorously with the dog. Make play more important than treats. Play time should actually exceed work time. When playing, make sure the dog is chasing you. Choreograph thoughtfully for the "Wait" time. It is here that handlers can use their bodies to convey emotion.

Andy Shimada

Gentle Habituation Training - of 192 basic movements!

Andy identifies 16 basic positions: heel left side and right side; reverse heel left side and right side; In front- T facing right and left; behind-T facing right and left; in front facing handler and facing away from handler; behind facing handler and facing away from handler; on the right side facing handler and facing away; on the left side facing handler and facing away. In each position, the handler can be moving in four directions: forward, backward, left or right. And, in each position, the dog can be standing on four feet, crawling, or standing on two feet. The math: 16 positions x 4 directions x 3 alignments = 192. And, that's not even counting between the leg positions and circular motions. Andy's training method is to first calmly and slowly make the dog comfortable – habituated – with each of the 16 basic positions. This involves gently stroking and speaking quietly to the dog while it is in one position and then moving to another position and repeating the process. From there, add movement to each position. This method habituates the dog to being touched in all positions and strengthens muscle memory. Ultimately, the dog becomes less anxious and moves in position more readily.

Misa Sagiyama

Three Rules of Training

1. Dog must know why it being rewarded. Be precise! Is it for eye-contact or for a sit? Work one at a time.
2. Timing of click or "yes" must be precise. Must immediately follow desired behavior.
3. Manner of delivering treat is important. Don't reach for food before treat. With sit, treat comes down from above. With stand, treat comes in from in front. With front positions, centre the treat before delivering it.

Strengthening Positions and Creating Smooth Movement

Using the basic positions outlined by Andy, Misa demonstrated some fun movement exercises that strengthen the positions and create smooth movement.

First, stand your dog in heel position. For the entire exercise, the dog will be facing and moving in the same direction. (i.e. heading north) The handler, however, will be adjusting position while also always moving in the same direction. Each movement is done to an 8-count. (4 if space is limited). Start in heel position. Handler - 1. forward 2. pivot toward the dog. 3. side step, facing the dog, 4. pivot toward dog tail. 5. walk backward (reverse heel) 6. pivot away from the dog 7. side step with back to the dog. 8. Repeat, starting with right-side heeling.

Misa suggests adding music right away to movement exercises. Using the same exercise, use samba steps (right, close, right; left, close left) for the forward and back movements; use swaying motions for the side step.

Another exercise begins in the front position. This time, as you pivot or side step, the dog moves to remain in front of you. 1. dog comes toward you as you step back. 2. pivot to the left. 3. side pass. 4. pivot right. 5. dog backs up as you move forward.

Next, Misa suggests adding arm motions (raise, lower, snake arms, etc.) and transition moves.

How to Tips for Roll-Over Variations

Boy oh boy, capturing clear pictures of roll-overs has proven pretty tough. Consequently, a video of roll-over variations. Click here https://youtu.be/cy7qVHIxidw for a video featuring Merlin, Marty, Jake, Casey, Benny, Barkley and Ali. We had fun working on variations and trying to capture them.

Getting Started. Check with your vet to make certain roll-overs are safe for your breed. Most dogs roll over naturally so if you're really attentive, you might be able to catch and reward your dog when it is rolling over. If not, observe dog to see if it naturally relaxes to one side since an even "down" position is really stable and a difficult position from which to start. With dog on one side, hold lure so that the dog's head is tucked toward its chest. Move the lure in the direction you want the dog to roll. Assist as needed. Reward assisted completion and gradually fade assists.



Jake rolls and then self-adjusts

Rolling over in front of handler - both sides: Give two very different verbal cues to the rolls in opposite directions. If you call one "roll over" and the other "roll back" your dog might respond to the start of the command and roll in the wrong direction. If dog is out of alignment, have dog find correct position before rewarding. Add distance. From a distant crawl, add roll; roll then have dog scoot away.

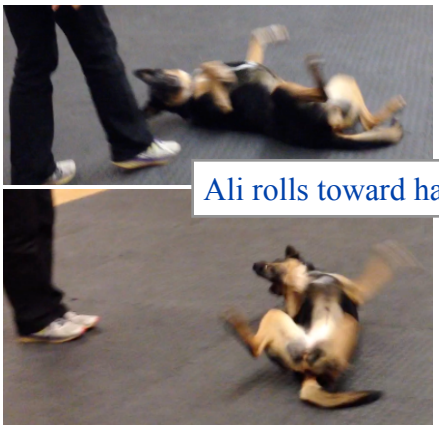


Casey starts in heel position

Rolling over beside handler and and staying in heel position: Cue the dog with a "Ready" while stepping away with the foot furthest from the dog, leaving the close foot near the dog. Then, give verbal command for the rollover and as the dog is rolling toward you, slide your foot till it closes to your other foot, thereby keeping the dog always just a few inches from your foot – heel position.

Rolling Away from Handler: Start this toward the front of the dog and gradually move to the side. If your dog is on your left, a good physical cue is crossing your right foot over your left as you give the command.

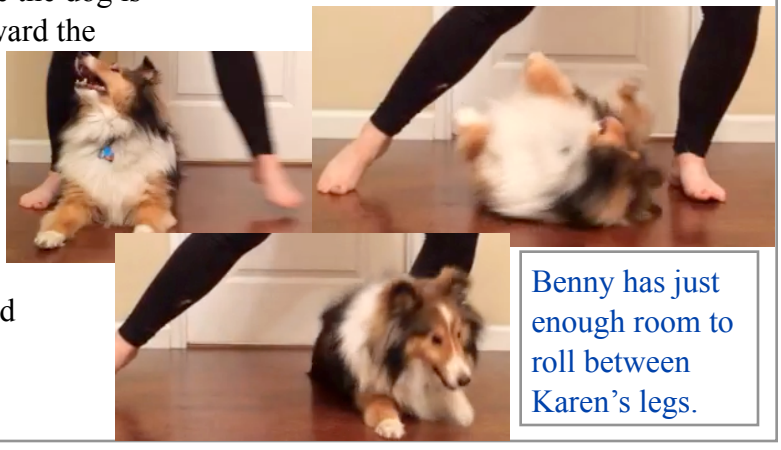
Rolling toward handler (T-alignment) Put dog in a down and move to the side of the dog, facing the dog. To start, stand close to the dog's head and gradually move to the middle of the dog's body. As you give the verbal cue, back up. Once you've mastered individual rolls, do two or three consecutive rolls. You'll notice that the dog may go out of line. Experiment with standing closer to the head or tail. Have the dog self-adjust between rolls.



Ali rolls toward handler

T From a distance. Once the dog can execute consecutive rolls with you right beside it, step away two or three feet and cue the roll. Gradually increase the distance and ask for two, then three rolls toward you as you stand still.

Rolling away from handler in T-alignment Make sure the dog is solid on the roll to a verbal cue. As with the rolling toward the handler, start with one and move with the dog before having the dog roll away from you while you stay still.

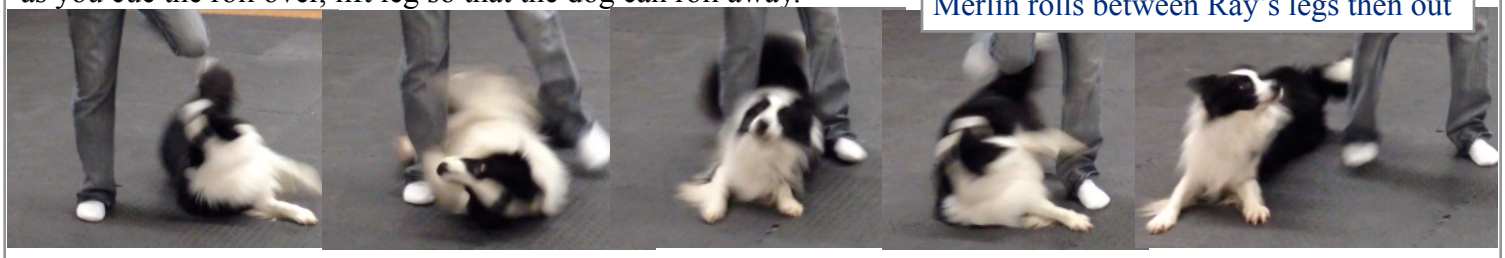


Benny has just enough room to roll between Karen's legs.

Rolling between legs: Disclaimer: don't try this with a Great Dane, if you have a groin injury, or while wearing socks on a slippery floor. Stand with your feet wide apart with the dog between your legs but close to one foot – say right foot. Cue the roll. Dog rolls toward your left foot and winds up close to your left foot. Cue the roll back to the other foot.

Rolling into "between-the-leg" position. As you cue the roll, lift your leg so that the dog can roll freely. Then put your foot down so that your dog is between your legs.

Rolling out of "between-the-leg" position. Dog must be solid on verbal cue. From "between-the-leg" position, as you cue the roll over, lift leg so that the dog can roll away.



Merlin rolls between Ray's legs then out

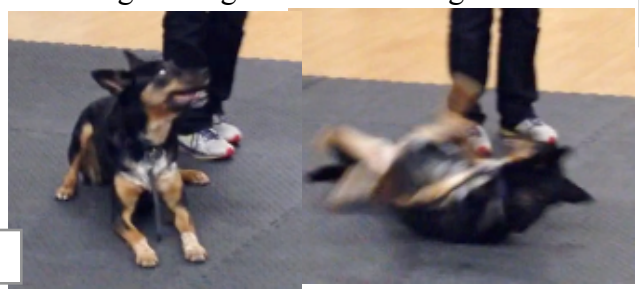
Handler jumping over a rolling dog. Cue the roll and jump over your dog. Start just beyond the head incase the dog stops half way. Make sure the dog is used to this movement before moving to the middle of the dog's body.

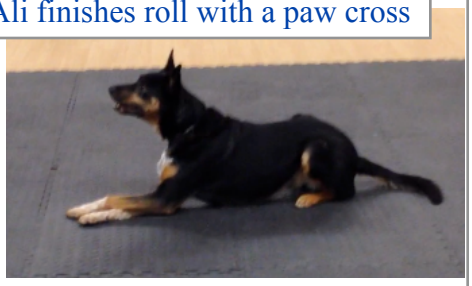
Rolling while with dog facing away: put dog in "down" position and stand behind dog, slightly to the side you want it to roll toward. Cue the roll over. Eventually, stand directly behind dog, cue the down, and then the roll. Once you have that solid, face away from the dog as the dog rolls.

Adding a crossed paw: Teach the roll-over and the crossed paw separately. It looks good to have the dog cross the paw in the same direction as the roll. The handler can assist by crossing over her foot as part of the choreography. You can do this facing the dog or beside the dog.



Annette jumps





Ali finishes roll with a paw cross

Rolling up in a blanket. Teach your dog to pick up and hold the blanket in its mouth while in a down position. When that is solid, add the roll.



Barkley clearly enjoys wrapping himself up

Meanwhile, what can the handler do?

Handler rolling with dog face to face. Keep in mind that small and even medium-sized dogs will take up less space than a handler to roll so if you do three in a row, you and your dog won't be lined up.

Handler rolling beside dog. If your timing is a little off and your dog hits you as it rolls toward you, it may put the dog off the move. So, give it a little space.



Here, Lucas pivots while Marty rolls in a big circle around him.



Handler doing dance moves. Hide the cues with movements that suit the music.

WCFO *Dance the Skies 2015.* Had this event been held a week earlier or a week later, even the liveliest of dogs would have wilted in the heat. Instead, cool weather made for a pleasant environment. WCFO founder Patie Ventrie and Nancy Royce judged the event which saw many competitors qualify and title. Most inspiring dog was Grace (top left) who, despite being completely blind, stayed with Heather throughout the performance and even did some paw moves. Kris and Carolyn organized the special awards and Annette hosted a BBQ dinner. Photos by Shannon Underwood

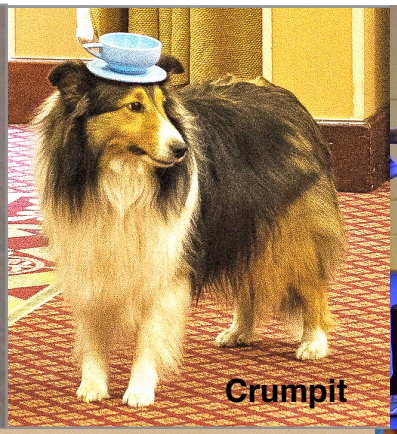




Sam

2016 *WAG* Photo Challenge – Dogs with Props



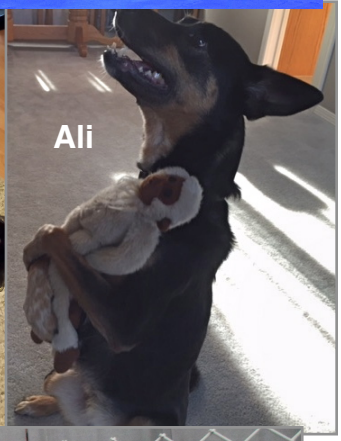




















Artistic Expressions Supporting Cancer Research

For the second year in a row, Artistic Expressions entertained a lively crowd at the BC Cancer Foundation fundraiser *A Night of Hope and Remembrance* at the Surrey Bell Centre. Tristan and Ray performed an animation routine with their canine partners Merlin and Magic. Annette and Jake performed "Come Fly with Me" and Lin and Casey performed to "Let It Go" from *Frozen.* Ray and Tristan also danced solo hip hop routines to an appreciative crowd. The kids were particularly happy to see the dogs after a rather adult-oriented evening of singing and slide shows. One nerve-racking moment: just before the dogs came out to perform, a super-lively Bhangra dance troupe performed – on the interlocking mats set out for the dogs. Several times, the young men all leapt into the air simultaneously, pushing off in one direction. The mats moved about two feet each time they did this. At one point, early in the routine, spin moves caused some of the mats to "unlock." By the end, mats were detached in several places. We all held our breaths hoping no-one would trip. It took Sue a good ten minutes to reconnect all the mats. Sorry, no photos available at this time but here is a photo of a dress rehearsal for the show.











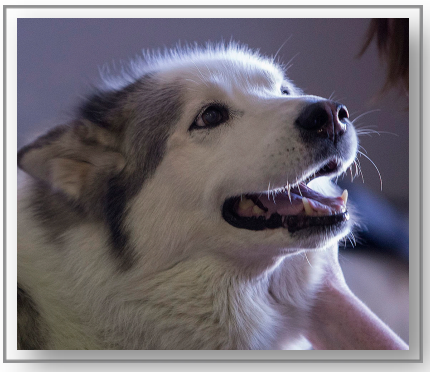
Christmas in Marysville

17 Emerald City Freestylers partied at this year's Christmas gathering at Sharon Colvin's training centre in Marysville. Highlights included impromptu routines to "Have a Holly Jolly Christmas" and a gift exchange. Pippen tried to hit everyone up for treats but it seems Marilyn had the most fun. I want what she's having!



Saying Goodbye

Thank you Spirit, George, and Jonee for the joy, grace, and sense of fun you brought to Freestyle







Speaking of Keeping Your Dog Fit . . .

Sue Sweeney has built a K-9 wellness centre on her property in Abbotsford. The outdoor unit features a number of stations promoting stretching, balance, and body awareness. When I took Ali to check out the site, she couldn't wait to climb onto the tires and balance boards and to stretch on the wall. Inside she found all her favorite Fit Paws devises (wobble board, bone, donut, peanut) and had the chance to work on her core strength, climb backwards up a ramp, and best of all, enjoy a massage from Sue. Coming soon will be a warm-water pool for aqua therapy.

Sue's Massage Therapy focuses on the manipulation of body tissues by manual methods to assist the body in its natural processes of pain reduction, improved health and well-being, stress reduction, and healing of trauma. Check out Sue's site at www.k9wellnesscenter.ca or call her at 604-751-6655. Photos by Mike Sweeney.

