



# familydog™

*2024 Photo  
Contest winners*

*A proud parkour-  
loving Frenchie*

*Tips for summer  
canine care*

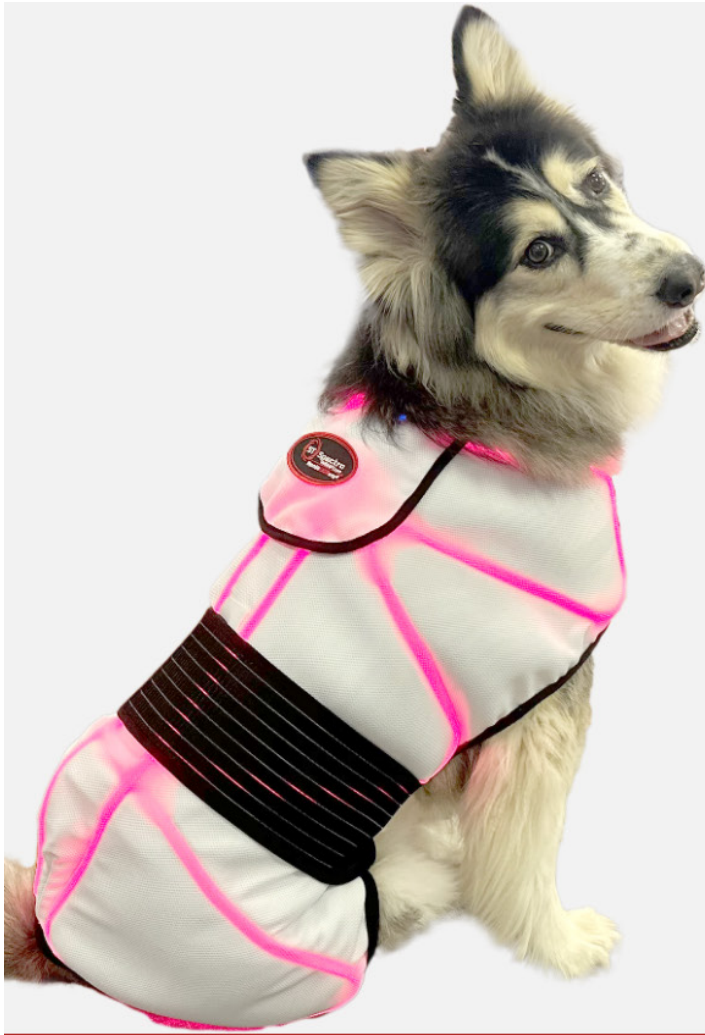
the  
summer  
fun  
issue



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# the summer fun issue



On the Cover: French Bulldog  
Photographer: F1online digitale Bildagentur GmbH /  
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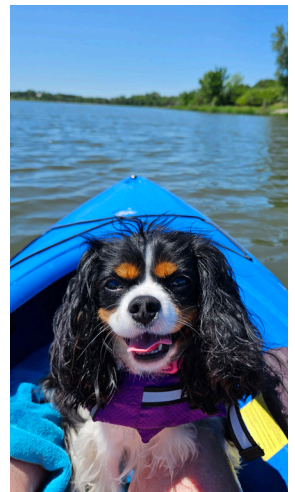
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# Summer Scenes

**F**or many dog owners, summers are particularly special. As the weather warms up, it's time for a dog to get out and stay busy. Whether you take your dog swimming, hiking—or if you're simply taking longer walks—this is a time to shine with your canine.

Summer antics for my Pug Nadia often led to more baths. And more baths led to more zoomies. Some of my favorite memories were getting her dried off after a bath before letting her fly—visions of a fluffed-up Pug running as fast as her little legs could manage, with no particular place to go. Sometimes that meant dashing back outside and into the summer sun once more.

In this issue, we've got more summery stories than you can shake a stick at. We've got dogs doing activities. Parkour ([page 24](#))! Fast CAT ([page 44](#))! Dock diving ([page 48](#))! Parachuting and more ([page 15](#))!

But more than that, we've got summer tips. How can you help your dog handle the summer heat ([page 21](#))? What's the best way to deal with dogs at picnics and parties ([page 12](#))? And how do you keep your dog looking and feeling their best when things get sunny—or wet ([page 18](#))?

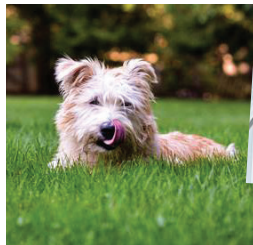
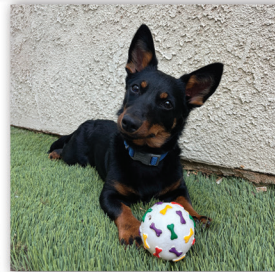
Finally, this issue has our annual AKC Photo Contest ([page 33](#)). We received hundreds of submissions and sorted through all of them to pick the absolute best of the best. We hope you enjoy them as much as we do.



Phil Dzikiy  
Managing Editor

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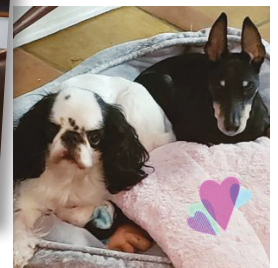
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## SEQUEL

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# Out and About

*Our readers' dogs are experts when it comes to making the most of the sunny summer weather.*

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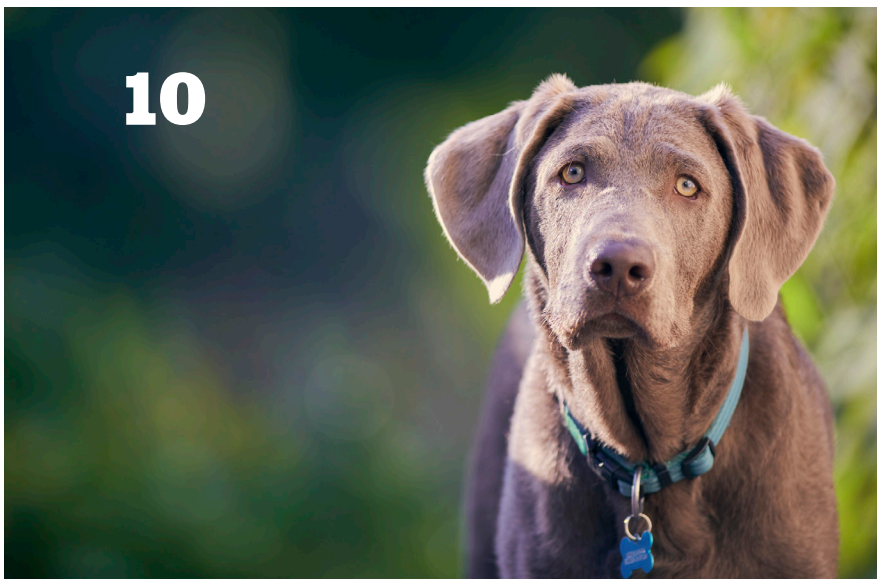
- 1. MAIZIE, Omaha, NE
- 2. CHARLEY, Berkeley, CA
- 3. SCUTCH, Gate City, VA
- 4. NALA PAISLEY, Johnstown, PA
- 5. GUNTER, Magnolia, DE
- 6. ZUZU, Gate City, VA
- 7. BANJO, Seattle, WA
- 8. LEO AND OCEAN, Long Island, NY

- 9. MAGGIE, Denham Springs, LA
- 10. PABLO, Oakland, CA
- 11. HUNTER DOUGLAS, Springfield, MA
- 12. RAS, Edcouch, TX
- 13. MURPHY AND SULLIVAN, Charleston, SC
- 14. ROCCO AND FRANCO, Marco Island, FL
- 15. RAVEN, Alpharetta, GA



6

YOUR FAMILY DOG





**Send Us Your Snaps!**

We'd love to see *your* family dog. Email your digital photos (high-resolution, please) to [familydog@akc.org](mailto:familydog@akc.org). Please include "Your Family Dog Photo" in the subject line, as well as your dog's name and city and state of residence.

Only previously unpublished photos will be selected for publication. All photos become the property of the American Kennel Club. The AKC reserves the right to use the photos for any other purpose without compensation.

## They're Listening

*Recent study probes dogs' understanding of monotone speech*

**W**hile dog owners have their own ways of speaking to their dogs—through direct commands or “exaggerated” tones—a recent study found that dogs’ understanding of human speech goes beyond these specific instances.

The study, published in April by *Animal Cognition*, reveals that dogs can understand context in basic, monotonous human speech. In other words, a dog can listen to your normal, ordinary conversation and recognize the meaningful content within it.

As the study notes—and many dog owners know—humans often interact with dogs through a different kind of speech, referred to within the study as “dog-directed speech” (DDS). The study compares this “exaggerated prosody” to the same speech that’s directed at infants. In other words, we have a sort of “baby talk” for our dogs. There is some evidence that dogs prefer this sort of talk.

But this study shows that, preferences aside, dogs were found to still recognize meaningful inclusions in a “neutral” speech pattern.

Our [Canine Mind](#) columnist Mary Burch, Ph.D., says the findings aren’t surprising if one considers how dogs learn words through repetition and constant association.

“For example,” Burch says, “If every time you say ‘car’ you pick up the keys and take the dog for a ride, you will eventually be able to say in a neutral tone, ‘I need to go to the car and get my sweater,’ and the dog will get excited about going for a ride.”

Regardless of your level of surprise at the findings, it’s good to know that dog language is being studied to such an extent, as many dog owners often seek a greater understanding of communication with their canines. From the study’s introduction: “Dogs constitute an excellent model for comparative research into speech perception and heterospecific listening due to their near-constant exposure to human speech and their own interest in following our cues.”



Bernese Mountain Dog puppy. Life on White / Alamy Stock Photo

# Dog Days of Summer Camp

## AKC Public Education introduces Dog Adventures Kids Camp

This summer, the American Kennel Club is inviting kids across the country to unleash their curiosity and explore the exciting world of dogs through its brand-new Dog Adventures Kids Camp.

Created by AKC Public Education, this five-part lesson series is designed especially for campers ages 9–12 and offers a dynamic blend of learning and hands-on fun centered around canines.

Campers will explore everything from the history of dogs and purebred dog groups to AKC dog sports and careers working with dogs. Each lesson sparks curiosity and encourages kids to explore the many ways dogs enrich our lives as athletes, workers, and irreplaceable companions.

Every lesson includes a scripted lesson plan, materials list, structured schedule, printable handouts, step-by-step directions for games and activities, and links to additional resources, providing camp leaders with all the tools needed to deliver a well-organized and engaging series. The curriculum features interactive lessons, group activities, and engaging projects that make learning about dogs both fun and meaningful.

While the curriculum is designed to teach kids all about the world of purebred dogs, the camp also follows the rhythms of a traditional day camp—with time built in for games, sports, creative projects, field trip opportunities, lunch, and opportunities to relax. Whether campers are discovering the unique traits of different breeds or imagining their future in a dog-related career, they'll gain a deeper appreciation for the human-canine bond.

A key feature to the Dog Adventures Kids Camp is its flexibility and accessibility. The curriculum is designed for easy use by AKC clubs, community organizations, youth programs, and camps across the country. It can be run as a weeklong camp or spread out over several sessions—whatever best fits the group's needs.

Best of all, the materials are completely free to download and implement, making it a budget-friendly option for organizations of all sizes. Designed to be low-tech and easy to implement, the curriculum ensures that once you've printed and gathered the materials, you won't need to worry about anything else.

The Dog Adventures Kids Camp also supports youth



involvement in the AKC Juniors program and encourages stronger connections between local dog clubs and the community—planting the seeds for lifelong learning and active participation in the dog world.

[Click to learn more](#) about how to bring this tail-wagging experience to your community, and to download the curriculum materials. For more information, contact AKC Public Education at [publiced@akc.org](mailto:publiced@akc.org).

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## Scholarship Season

*AKC awards Junior Scholarships*

The AKC announced the award of three types of junior scholarships in April—the 2025 AKC Junior Scholarships, 2025 AKC Performance Events Junior Scholarships, and 2025 Junior Companion Events Scholarships.

AKC Junior Scholarships are awarded to applicants who are junior club members or volunteer for a club and are involved in the fancy, in addition to other academic and financial criteria considered.

AKC Junior Scholarships totaling \$22,500 were awarded to recipients. The winners were:

- **Catherine Eychaner** — Anchorage, AK
- **O'Malley McGee** — Simpsonville, SC
- **Kaitlynn Myers** — Leslie, MO
- **Isabella Ruffoni** — Gilroy, CA
- **Carly Satterfield** — Bowdoinham, ME
- **Brielle Villarreal** — Elk Grove, CA
- **Mya Welling** — Cincinnati, OH
- **Kelly Williams** — Vista, CA
- **Ashley Yoho** — Stillwater, MN

The AKC Performance Events Junior Scholarships are awarded specifically to those juniors who compete in performance events. Scholarships totaling \$10,000 were awarded to the following recipients:

- **Xochitl Berns** — Portland, OR
- **Michelle Hartman** — Walnut Cove, NC
- **Cadence Manno** — Ashland City, TN
- **Ryan Markey** — Kensington, CT
- **O'Malley McGee** — Simpsonville, SC
- **Kaitlyn Myers** — Leslie, MO
- **Allyson Palmer** — Franklin, MA

The AKC Junior Companion Events Scholarships are awarded to those juniors who compete in companion events such as agility, obedience, rally, or tracking. Scholarships totaling \$10,000 were awarded to the following recipients:

- **Catherine Eychaner** — Anchorage, AK
- **Carly Kreiser** — Robeson, PA
- **Isabelle McKee** — Waunakee, WI
- **Calum Morgan** — Buhler, KS
- **Kaitlyn Myers** — Leslie, MO
- **Ashlyn Navis** — Piedmont, SC
- **Danielle Wagner** — Savage, MN



Catherine Eychaner



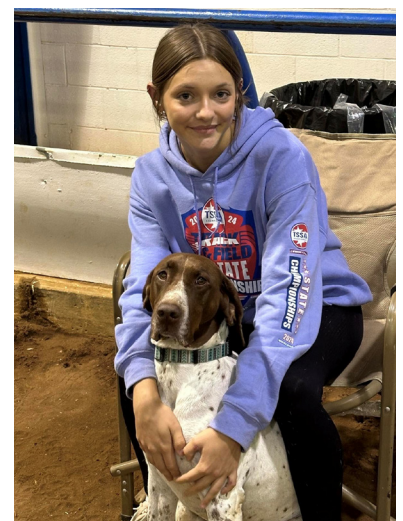
Carly Satterfield



O'Malley McGee



Isabelle McKee



Cadence Manno

Catherine Eychaner courtesy; Chloé Eychaner; O'Malley McGee courtesy; Nikki Caldwell; Cadence Manno courtesy; Elizabeth Manno; Isabelle McKee courtesy; Deborah McKee; Carly Satterfield by ShowCanine



Sirius: Right on the nose, according to one 19th-century illustrator

# Sirius *and the* Dog Days of Summer

**T**he Latin term *caniculares dies*, literally translated as “dog days,” was coined nearly 2,000 years ago by the Romans to describe the hottest weeks of summer.

It alludes to the period when Sirius, the Dog Star, rises and sets with the sun.

Sirius resides at the head of the constellation Canis Major, meaning “big dog.” Look southward just after the summer sky gets dark, and you will be sure to see Sirius shining brightly. “If Sirius is the Dog’s eye,” [space.com](https://www.space.com) says,

“the constellation’s nose is marked by the star Mirzam, just to its right. Below Sirius is a triangle of stars marking the Dog’s hindquarters.”

Sidney Hall’s fanciful 1824 rendering of the constellation, depicted as a coursing hound, places Sirius not in the dog’s eye but the nose, with Mirzam as one of the paws. (The adjoining constellation is Lepus the Hare, the hound’s natural prey.)

The Romans theorized that the dog days bore the combined heat of the Dog

Star and the sun, and thus were the warmest days of the year. The exact span of the dog days varies from source to source, but in modern usage we generally think of them as mid-July through August.

Folk wisdom has it that the dog days bring on not only intense heat but also madness in dogs and humans. As Natalie Babbitt wrote in her popular children’s book *Tuck Everlasting*: “These are strange and breathless days, the dog days, when people are led to do things they are sure to be sorry for after.” **FD**



# Pools, Picnics, and Parties

*What to do with your dog in common summer situations*

**S**ummer is a favorite time of year for many, but it also brings unique risks for dogs if owners aren't properly informed and prepared. Each year, I help my students get ready to face the season's specific challenges with confidence. The key areas we focus on include:

- Pool and beach safety
- Cookouts and picnics
- Travel and transportation
- Fireworks and noise desensitization

Here are some of my best tips and tricks so that you and your dog can enjoy a safe and fun summer together.

## **POOL AND BEACH SAFETY**

### ***"Come back!"***

It goes without saying that a reliable recall is your best friend in most situations, whether on land or in the water. That one command, when taught properly, gives you the ability to call your dog out of the water when you see

he's getting tired, or away from the pool because you don't want him to jump in, or when he gets the zoomies on the beach!

If your dog does not have a reliable recall, then make sure you have control of him. A BioThane long line is one of the best leashes you can use when there's water involved. Unlike a cotton web leash, it won't absorb water and it floats!

Speaking of the water—a lot of dog owners don't realize just how important



Top: Luz/Alamy / Alamy Stock Photo; JLBvdWOLF / Alamy Stock Photo

life vests are for keeping their pups safe.

I'm a big fan of life vests because they're helpful in more ways than one. They can give dogs confidence while learning to swim (not all dogs take to swimming naturally), and they also keep experienced swimmers safe.

Dogs can still drown for several reasons—like exhaustion, injury, seizures, or even heat stroke! Yes, heat stroke (see [page 21](#) for more) can happen in the water too, especially when the water is 75 degrees or warmer and the

dog is swimming hard.

The good news is, getting your dog used to wearing a vest is usually pretty easy with some treats and short training sessions. With a little practice, your dog might even get excited when they see the vest, because they'll know it means it's time for some fun in the water!

### **BARBECUES, PICNICS, AND PARTIES, OH MY!**

Since summer is a time where people typically get together outdoors, you can imagine the ways that dogs can get into trouble!

Personally, I think most dogs don't belong at parties. Obviously, if you have a trained service dog, they can go wherever you go, but my experience with pet owners is that during an event, whether it's in their backyard or someone else's, they don't pay enough attention to their dog to make sure he's safe. You probably know people who are the same way with their kids.

Throughout the decades of my career, the disastrous stories from students are endless and revolve around the same

themes (because dog behavior problems are timeless):

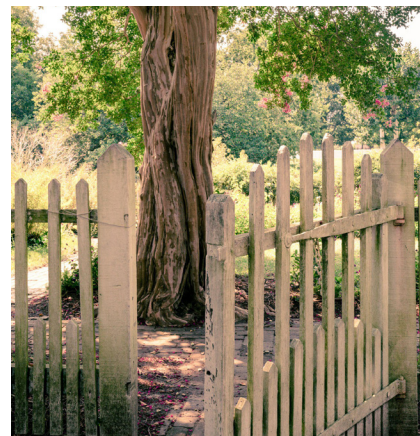
#### ***“My dog jumps on guests.”***

This is remedied by preparing a quiet room for your dog with white noise and a few safe chew toys to keep him occupied. If you'd like your dog to be part of the festivities, hold your dog's leash. If you've done training, then your dog already knows how to properly greet someone, or you can send your trained dog to their bed using the *place* command.

#### ***“My dog runs wildly around the yard, and we can't catch him.”***

This is when that recall command comes in handy. But even better, don't give your dog that much freedom! Consider using a long line to give him the ability to run around the yard, but *not* if your guests are out there! In my yard, there's a “paddock” area where my dogs still can be out and part of the event (but not the chaos), while guests are in a gated, adjoining yard.

Whether you're the host or the guest,



if interactions with friends and family are the priority, then watching your dog will be a lower priority—and that is what leads to unexpected and unwanted situations. Be realistic with your expectations and consider options besides having your dog be a guest at your party.

**“Someone left the gate open and now my dog is lost!”**

This is the most frequent problem dog owners experience during summer events. Whether it’s because someone left the gate open, or the dog jumped the fence, or there were fireworks that frightened the dog, getting out of a yard during a party happens *all the time*.

Many times, it doesn’t matter how well trained your dog is—he doesn’t have the same moral code that we have. He doesn’t look at a situation and think to himself, “My owner told me I shouldn’t jump this fence, so even though I really want to chase that dog who’s walking by, I won’t, because I don’t want to upset him.” Nope. Most kids don’t even have that reaction!

Instead, your dog will think, “There’s that dog I want to chase!” and hop

right over the fence without regret or remorse—both of which are the human emotions you’ll be feeling as soon as you realize your dog is missing.

You already know what I’m going to say the solution is: Keep your dog safely confined, and if they *are* going to join the party, make sure they’re on a leash and being properly supervised at all times. Escapes can and will happen, so make sure your dog’s ID is current. In addition to a tag, make sure your dog is microchipped.

**“My dog stole food off the table, or grill, or out of someone’s hands!”**

Please review the prior issue. If your dog isn’t trained to *not* do these things, and if he’s not being constantly supervised to manage his behavior, you can expect situations like these to happen.

**THE ‘DO’ LIST**

**Now that you know the “do not” list, here’s what to do:**

- Decide if your dog should be at the party or not.
- Teach doorway protocol—make sure gates and doors are closed.

- All dogs should be supervised while they’re out and about with guests.
- Make sure your dog has water available when he’s outside and watch for overheating.
- Keep your dog away from tables with food on them, and “train” your guests not to feed your dog.
- Keep your dog away from the grill.
- Ask your vet if sunscreen is something your dog needs. (For more info on dog sunscreen, see [page 18](#).)
- If you have a pool, put your dog in a life vest or keep him away from the pool entirely.

So, there you have it. Summer fun doesn’t have to mean summer chaos (or emergency vet visits). With a little planning and a lot of common sense, you can keep your dog from belly-flopping into the pool uninvited, stealing a burger off a guest’s plate, or disappearing into the night at the first sound of fireworks.

Remember: Leashes and swim vests are your friend, gates should be closed like Fort Knox, and sometimes your dog would be happier not being invited to the party. Here’s hoping your summer is full of tail wags and zero regrets. **FD**

*Kathy Santo has trained dogs and their families for over 35 years and competed in AKC obedience and agility. She has a training school in Waldwick, New Jersey, and online courses. For more information, visit [kathysantodogtraining.com](http://kathysantodogtraining.com).*



# Get Out, Get Fit

## *Unique summer activities for AKC FIT DOG*

**W**hen I was a child and school was out for the summer, my parents had the bright idea that I needed to have some “summer fun.” One year, long before the character Katniss graced the screen with her bow and arrows in *The Hunger Games* and inspired young girls everywhere to take up archery, my parents decided to enroll me in archery camp. The bows we had were substandard, and by this, I mean they were plastic and cheap. We had no arm guards—when an arrow was released, the string would snap and make huge red welts on one’s arm.

Another year, my parents unapologetically announced that for fun in the summer, I was going to swim camp. The instructor, Patty, was a tall, long-legged 16-year-old who had clearly never taught anything to anyone. The first day of camp, Patty conducted a swimming pretest. It went like this—with everyone out of the water, she asked each of us if we could swim.

“Can you swim?”

“Nope.”

“Not at all?”

“Nope.”

“OK,” she declared. “You’re in the Minnows group.”

As Minnows, we held onto the side of the pool, put our faces in the water, and kicked our feet. With our heads partially submerged, we could hear Patty periodically shouting, “Don’t let go!” And that was the “swimming” we did for weeks while the Sharks and Flying Fish learned to dive from the diving board.

Fortunately, these days, it’s much better for the many dogs whose owners are looking for something to do with their canine companions in the summer. AKC FIT DOG fits the summertime perfectly—FIT DOG titles are fitness titles designed around healthy activities



*Epic, exhibiting parachuting for dogs*

for both you and your dog.

Dogs and their owners can earn points toward AKC FIT DOG titles in several categories, including runs, walks and hikes, and through other fitness-related AKC titles.

But there's also a category called "Unique to You and Your Dog." This category can involve swimming, parkour (more about that [here](#)), or, as the FIT DOG title checklist notes, "other."

That "other" section opens a variety of possible activities that are "Unique to You and Your Dog." Here are just a few options.

### PARACHUTING FOR DOGS

One activity that is truly unique is parachuting, which is often referred to as chuting, or dog-chute. When we say, "parachuting for dogs," people often get big eyes. Then we explain that this does not involve having the dog jump from a plane.

A parachute—about the size of an umbrella for a medium- to large-sized dog—is attached to a harness. The dog runs, and the chute fills with air. Used by many dock dog and lure coursing trainers, parachuting provides a form of resistance training and strength building.

Nora Terrell and her dogs, Epic, Secret, and Mimir, have done parachuting. Terrell is convinced that her Chesapeake

Bay Retriever, Secret, did better in dock diving and was able to earn her title due to training with the chutes. With pride, Terrell describes one of Secret's runs: "Into the wind she went with joy!"

### TREIBBALL

Rosemary Badger and her Australian Shepherd, Otter, enjoy Treibball as a unique summer fun activity. Treibball,



*Australian Shepherd Otter plays Treibball.*



Tibetan Terrier Rika getting involved in Rodeo Dog

which now has both in-person and virtual titles, is sometimes called “urban herding.” Think of herding sheep, but the animals are replaced with large inflatable balls. Badger on why she and Otter enjoy Treibball:

“Treibball is a fantastic activity for my Aussie, Otter, because it channels his natural herding instincts into a fun and structured game. It provides both physical exercise and mental stimulation, which are two things Otter thrives on,

and it helps keep him in great shape. Treibball also strengthens our bond and sharpens his focus and obedience in a playful, rewarding way. Otter absolutely loves pushing those big balls around, and seeing his excitement makes it just as fun for me!”

### RODEO DOGS

Mary Frances Martin and her Tibetan Terrier, Rika, have enjoyed participating in a relatively new sport called Rodeo

Dog, which is like barrel racing for horses. Participants earn certificates and ribbons, and there are various levels from beginner to championship. There is an on-leash beginner level.

“For Rika,” Martin says, “the sport is so enjoyable because it is laid-back, allows accommodations for differently abled dogs and handlers, and is a great way to get people engaged in starting on their dog sport journey. Rika truly enjoys working on her Rodeo Dog skills.”

### DOG SCOUTS

Complete with a uniform and patches for dogs like those earned by Scouts BSA and Girl Scouts, Dog Scouts offers fun in several areas.

“We found out about Dog Scouts at a ‘dog days’ event in the park,” says Kathy Tucker. “The Dog Scout troop had a booth with information. I didn’t officially join the troop for a few years since I was busy participating in dog agility trials, but eventually, all our dogs became Dog Scouts.”

To earn Dog Scout badges, the dog and handler must pass the Dog Scout test, which has some similarity to the AKC’s Canine Good Citizen test.

“I really enjoy the many activities you and your dog can participate in to earn badges,” Tucker says. “Our troop has a monthly meeting that usually begins with a short hike. Some of the meetings will (feature) games or have a speaker with relevant information to dogs. ... You can submit badge criteria via video or in person at the troop meeting or at a Dog Scout camp. The ability to earn badges virtually is great for people that don’t have a troop in their area.”

If you would like to have fun with your dog, check out [AKC FIT DOG](#).

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*Mary R. Burch, Ph.D., is a Certified Applied Animal Behaviorist through the Animal Behavior Society. She is the director of the [AKC Family Dog program](#).*



Westen the Dog Scout

Top: Photo by Tess Costo of Book the Bark Photos; bottom: Courtesy Kathleen Tucker



# Summer Shine

*Grooming tips for the hottest months of the year*

**A**s you enjoy outdoor fun with your dog this summer, plan for a surge in situations that require a more strategic approach to grooming. We'll look at some of the trickier issues that may arise, and how to handle them.

**WATCH THOSE EYES**

Some dogs develop eye issues that lead to staining, which is more noticeable on lighter-colored coats.

Allergies remain the most obvious cause, but dogs can also develop dry eyes or inflammation. They can sometimes

suffer corneal ulcerations from bumping their eyes during adventures. Dogs with structural abnormalities to their eyelids also may develop more tear staining.

“Any dog who has chronic or acute ocular discharge should be evaluated by a veterinarian for a more serious underlying ocular condition. Conjunctivitis is a symptom, but it’s not a clinical diagnosis. Sometimes ocular discharge isn’t a serious condition, but it certainly can be an early sign of a more worrisome disease,” says Jaycie Riesberg, a board-certified veterinary ophthalmologist in Utah.

She explains that staining comes

from normal bacteria around the eye or iron-containing molecules called porphyrins, which are found in normal saliva, tears, or feces.



Riesberg says, “Typically, a preservative-free, over-the-counter eye wash can be safely used to clean around the eyes. Ideally, avoid using washcloths as they can be hard to clean, and detergents can be irritating.”

### ATTENTION TO EARS

While dogs sometimes get debris in their ears that causes irritation, food or environmental allergies remain the most common reasons for red, inflamed, and painful ears.

Sonja Zabel, a board-certified veterinary dermatologist in Oregon, adds that veterinarians sometimes see new ear issues in dogs diagnosed with hypothyroidism. As metabolism decreases, a dog’s body protects vital functions, leaving the skin vulnerable.

Zabel explains that ear cleaners come in two varieties—some contain a drying agent (helpful for dogs who swim a lot), and others feature ceramide precursors to protect inflamed or damaged skin inside the ear. Her favorites include Virbac EPIOTIC Advanced Ear Cleanser and DOUXO Micellar Solution.

To clean your dog’s ears, Zabel recommends this process:

- Drape a towel around the dog’s neck, especially if cleaning ears indoors.
- Fill the ear canal with ear cleaner.
- Cover the ear canal hole with a cotton ball.
- Gently massage with an upward motion.
- Remove the cotton ball.
- Let the dog shake their head.

“Depending on how much debris you get out of there, you can repeat the process one to three times,” Zabel says. “The last time, you use a cotton ball to clean the outside area. You should never stick anything into the ear canal because it will damage the epithelium (and) create a micro-trauma, which can cause recurrent infections.”

She also warns that ear infections are incredibly painful and often go unrecognized. Especially for dogs with allergies,



it’s important to clean and check the ears regularly and to seek veterinary help right away if you notice redness, discharge, scratching, or head shaking.

### PROPER SUN PROTECTION

Sunscreens made for people typically contain one of two categories of ingredients toxic to dogs. Weird as it seems, some contain aspirin derivatives (salicylic acids) that increase bleeding risks and, at higher doses, can affect dogs’ breathing. The other troublesome ingredients show up in mineral-based sunscreens like zinc oxide. Zinc toxicity causes blood cell damage. Typically, though, ingestion of sunscreen

ingredients initially causes vomiting.

Renee Schmid, director of veterinary medicine and a senior veterinary toxicologist for Pet Poison Helpline, explains that the most common sunscreen poisoning scenario is dogs chewing on the bottle and consuming way more than you’d ever apply to their nose, hairless areas along the ears, bald patches, or bellies. Be extra careful, though, with puppies and small-breed dogs because even licking sunscreen off you may be enough to cause toxicity.

“What’s important for pet parents to remember is that dogs and cats, alike, when you apply something to their skin, their hair, coat ... they want to lick it





and groom it off,” Schmid says.

Look for veterinary-formulated sunscreens for animals such as Dermoscent SunFREE. For larger areas needing protection, consider UV-blocking clothes such as Goldpaw’s Sun Shield Tee.

**TO AIR-DRY OR NOT?**

With summer sun and winds, many feel tempted to let dogs air-dry after baths. Mitch Puerling, a groomer with Grooming @ Golden Paws in Colorado, says, “Personally, I’d prefer to only ever air-dry the really shorthaired breeds, like Boxers, pit bulls, smooth-coated Chihuahuas, and the like. Any dog with more hair than that likely either has enough shed to get out that blow-drying is going to be the best way to remove it, or they have a coat that gets the hair cut, in which case a full blowout is how to achieve an even cut.”

Puerling cautions about wind causing tangles and sun damaging hair follicles if the coat or skin gets overheated in the sun. “In some dogs, this damage may cause the hair to change color or texture,” she says. “If this does happen, it is completely painless for the dog

and eventually reverts to normal as the follicles heal.”

Puerling recommends towel drying while still in the tub, with slow motions that “allow the towel to soak the excess water.” She also suggests wrapping another dry towel around the body and securing it with a clip for 30 minutes to draw out more moisture and speed air-drying time.

For dogs who don’t like their heads dried, she suggests putting a Happy Hoodie over the dog’s head and ears after lightly combing through the wet hairs to separate them for better air



flow—breaking the rule about only brushing fully dry dogs.

Keep in mind that puppies and small-breed dogs struggle more to maintain their body temperature, so don’t leave them wet too long.

**INSECT AND PARASITE PROTECTION PITFALLS**

Before you race off for more summertime fun, consider these parasite and insect protection mistakes, too.

■ **Topicals:** If you use topical products for external parasite protection, check the packaging for the time required for drying and overall effectiveness before allowing dogs to get wet. That timeline could be a day or two, or even more. If your dog counts among the relentless swimmers or lovers of water, ask about an oral parasite preventive option instead.

■ **Fly bait:** Be extra careful about using fly bait. Schmid warns they often contain organophosphates or carbamates that can be fatal to pets.

■ **Bug sprays:** Be careful where and how you spray topical insect repellants for people. They often feature high concentrations of permethrin, which is particularly dangerous to cats.

■ **Essential oils:** Don’t use concentrated essential oils directly on your dog for parasite protection or to treat skin issues. “Tea tree oil is a big one,” says Schmid. “There are some animal products, like shampoos and things, that have very low concentrations of tea tree oil, but it’s the concentrated form—especially when you put that on an area that’s already kind of damaged skin, it gets absorbed even more readily. You can see body tremors, seizures, and difficulty walking.”

Family fun can get messy, so it’s also a good idea to keep extra dog towels and other quick clean-up supplies in your car or near the doors your dog uses. **FD**

*Roxanne Hawn is a journalist and an award-winning dog blogger. She is the author of Heart Dog: Surviving the Loss of Your Canine Soul Mate.*



# Beat the Heat

*Tips to keep your dog safe and healthy this summer*

**A**s a former emergency veterinarian, our hospital saw many more patients during the summer months.

More people outside means more dogs outside. Prolonged and excessively hot, humid days and nights can take a toll on both man and beast.

Dog fights, accidents, increased exposure to parasites like fleas and ticks, and even heatstroke are not uncommon daily presentations at most veterinary clinics or emergency centers during the summer. Let's look at popular summer activities and how they relate to our canine friends.

## **OUTDOOR EXERCISE**

Dogs, like people, need to get acclimated to both types of exercise and

time spent exercising, and *especially* to working out in high temperatures. At our emergency clinic, we often got a lot of dogs presenting in the early summer months with soreness and eroded, blistered pads after their first day of jogging when the owner decided to take them on a 2-mile run. What could go wrong? Well, a few things.

Before you start any physical activity with your dog, always have your dog examined by your veterinarian at the start of the season to make sure he is physically well enough to accompany you on any physical activity like these jogging sessions.

When your dog is deemed ready to go, never start running or jogging long distances right away. Instead, start with

short distances, like a quarter mile. Even the most athletic dog needs to work up to a distance, and some types of dogs aren't great at running and jogging.

Know your dog! The pads on all dog feet need to get accustomed and hardened to withstand the grueling hot asphalt, and that takes time. The smaller the dog, the closer to the pavement he is, and the hotter he gets. And remember, smaller dogs need to take at least twice as many steps (or more) as you do.

Never force a dog to do a sustained activity like long-distance jogging on hard surfaces like concrete or asphalt until they are physically mature—when their growth plates have fully fused. The long bones of dogs continue to grow until the growth plates fuse.



In small- and medium-sized breeds, these plates usually fuse around 12 months of age. But in some of the large or giant breeds, this may not happen until well over 12 months, or nearly 18 months of age. Pushing these breeds to do these activities before their bodies are ready will harm their developing joints, and this could lead up to problems in their bones and joints earlier in life.

In other words, young puppies should jump, play, twist, and turn on soft surfaces, such as grass, sand, or gravel. Leave the long distances on hard surfaces for a sustained period to the more seasoned and mature dogs.

During hot days, look to run or exercise in the early morning hours or later at night. Keep dogs in cool or shaded areas with plenty of access to cool, fresh water at all times. Remember that the sun and shade will move throughout the day. An area that might have been cooler with shade may become hot and stifling in a couple of hours.

Always watch your dog closely. If they seem slow or are panting excessively, stop, seek shade, and give them some water and time to recuperate.

### BEACH AND POOL TIME

Check local ordinances before heading out with your dog. Not all beaches allow dogs, and some restrict the time they can be there. If the beach is going to be extremely crowded, or if you are going to be preoccupied with friends, wouldn't it be a better and safer idea to just leave your dog at home?

Find a shady spot to rest at the beach. Sand can get extremely hot, even causing burns on your dog's foot pads. Provide plenty of fresh water for your dog and bring ice as well.

Some dogs, especially hairless breeds, those with short hair, white fur, or pink skin can get sunburned. This group includes breeds like Collies, Dalmatians, white Bull Terriers, Whippets, and any dog with light or white pigment on their ears or near their nose. They do make sunscreen lotion specifically for dogs (learn more in our Good Grooming column).

If you're at the beach, don't let your dog eat sand. Some dogs become obsessed with it, and you may finish your day with a bloated dog at a very busy animal hospital. On the same note, don't let your dog drink saltwater, either. The salt can make him sick.

Not all dogs can swim, nor do all dogs like to swim. Dogs can drown. Never force your dog into the water. Follow these [water safety tips](#) and be mindful of your dog's preferences and skills before forcing him into the water.

It makes a lot of sense to purchase a good life vest for your dog, especially if this will be the first time in the water, or if your dog is accompanying you on a boat.



Border Collie: Ekaterina Kobainova / Alamy Stock Photo; bottom: Finlay Buchanan / Alamy Stock Photo

If your dog is going to be in the water, make sure there is an easy way for him to get out of the water. This is especially important in swimming pools.

At the end of a day of swimming, remember to rinse off your dog. Salt and other minerals can damage your dog's coat. Also, dry your dog's ears after they get wet to prevent ear infections.

### COOKOUTS AND PICNICS

To keep your dog safe at a barbecue, always supervise them. Keep them away from the grill and hot surfaces, and make sure they don't have access to dangerous items like charcoal, lighter fluid, or bones.

Make sure all the garbage cans are closed and secure to prevent dogs from getting into bones, corncobs, and other trash that might cause them problems.

Never give dogs cooked bones, as they can splinter and cause serious internal injuries or choking hazards.

### BEWARE DEHYDRATION

Excessive heat, pavement temperature, and exercise can all contribute to dehydration of your dog. Look for the following signs of dehydration:

- Excessive panting
- Dry gums and nose
- Excessive drooling
- Lethargy or stumbling
- Sunken eyes
- Loss of elasticity in the skin

Offer your dog fresh, cool water as often as possible; even throw in some ice cubes or chips. Throw a cloth or towel soaked in cool water over your dog and mist his pads with cool water.

Dogs that have been exercising heavily may need electrolytes as well. You may use a product like Pedialyte diluted with water, but check with your veterinarian for dosage recommendations.

If your dog is not showing signs of recovery, you may also need to take him to an emergency vet who can administer fluids.



### WATCHING FOR HEATSTROKE

Heatstroke is serious and can be fatal. It is a result of a dog's prolonged exposure to excessive heat.

Heatstroke usually occurs when the temperature is high enough that it overcomes a dog's ability to dissipate heat. The degree of damage is determined by how high a temperature has reached and how long the animal is exposed. Dogs having heatstroke can easily have a body temperature over 105 degrees.

Heatstroke can happen fast in a dog, especially those with short muzzles such as Pugs, Bulldogs and French Bulldogs, because they have a harder time exchanging and getting rid of hot air. But heatstroke can happen to any dog of any breed or type.

One of the most common but preventable causes of heatstroke in dogs is leaving them unattended in cars—even with windows partially open. Never leave any dog unattended in a closed car in temperature higher than 60 degrees.

Here are the signs of heatstroke in dogs:

- Heavy panting
- Inability to get comfortable
- Rapid breathing
- Excessive drooling
- Bright red gums and tongue
- Labored or noisy breathing

- Look of panic in their eyes
- Difficulty maintaining balance
- White or blue gums
- Labored, noisy breathing
- Shock or collapse

If your dog begins to exhibit signs of heatstroke, you should immediately cool them down. Get them to a cool or air-conditioned space if possible.

Spray them all over with cool water and start fanning them. Since dogs don't really sweat very much, evaporation is the only way for them to get cool. Make sure their head, neck, and groin are as cool as possible. Cool their paw pads with cool water.

It is not recommended to put rubbing alcohol on a dog's pads. While alcohol can evaporate quickly, it can also be toxic or cause skin damage.

Severely affected dogs require fluids, medication, support, and oxygen. Take your dog to a veterinary emergency clinic, even if they seem to be looking better. Heatstroke can be very sneaky. Even after a dog seems better, there could be life-threatening issues internally. These cases must be addressed by a veterinarian at once.

The best treatment for heatstroke is prevention. Limit the time your dog works or exercises in hot weather. Choose cooler periods of the day for training and exercise sessions. Provide plenty of cool, fresh water, shade, and frequent rest periods when it's hot.

And never leave a dog unattended in a hot car.

Nothing beats canine companionship on vacations, in the great outdoors, and on the beach. If you're a responsible dog owner, you can ensure that your vacation with your best friend will be enjoyable for both of you. **FD**

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*Dr. Jerry Klein is the Chief Veterinary Officer at the AKC. Dr. Klein practiced veterinary emergency medicine for more than 30 years. He's also a licensed dog show judge and breeder of champion Afghan Hounds.*



Bea Page and Hogan demonstrate the "Four Feet On" parkour move at the Cornwall Furnace Memorial Park, in Cedar Bluff, Alabama.

# Hogan's **Ruin**

For this Frenchie parkour standout, all the world is an agility course.

By Lindsey Dobruck



Hogan is the only French Bulldog to earn an IDPKA specialty title (in the "Two Feet On" category). Here, he balances his front paws on a chain.

*It happens fast, and he makes it look easy.*

"Hit it!" says Bea Page, and with a running start, Hogan the French Bulldog springs toward a board angled nearly vertical against a fence. He swiftly hits the board with his front feet, then rear feet, bouncing off like a rubber ball. He trots back to Page with a satisfied grin.

"Yes, sir! Good boy!" Page says as Hogan looks to her, eager for the next challenge.

This fancy footwork is called a "tic tac," and it's one of several moves required to earn a title with the [International Dog Parkour Association \(IDPKA\)](#).

In this discipline, Hogan is a record-setter: He's the first of his breed to earn an IDPKA title, and the only Frenchie to hold an intermediate and a specialty title.

But in its essence, parkour—for humans and for dogs—isn't about titles or rankings. Combining athleticism and creativity, parkour encourages dogs and owners to engage with their environment in new and exciting ways.

"It just really builds a bond like nothing else that I've done," Page says. "Parkour is actually my favorite of all the sports—love, love, love, love, love it!"

Courtesy Bea Page



*Defying Gravity: IDPKA cofounder Abigail Curtis and Flux show confidence and agility with a gap jump.*

### **The French Connection**

Parkour (for humans) was developed in France in the 1990s by actor and stunt coordinator David Belle. The name derives from the French word *parcours*, or route, and the objective is to traverse the environment as swiftly and creatively as possible.

*Traceurs*, or practitioners of parkour, maneuver urban landscapes with cat leaps, gap jumps, dive rolls, vaults, balancing, “underbars,” and tic tacs—stuntman-style moves that require skill, imagination, and an understanding of one’s own abilities.

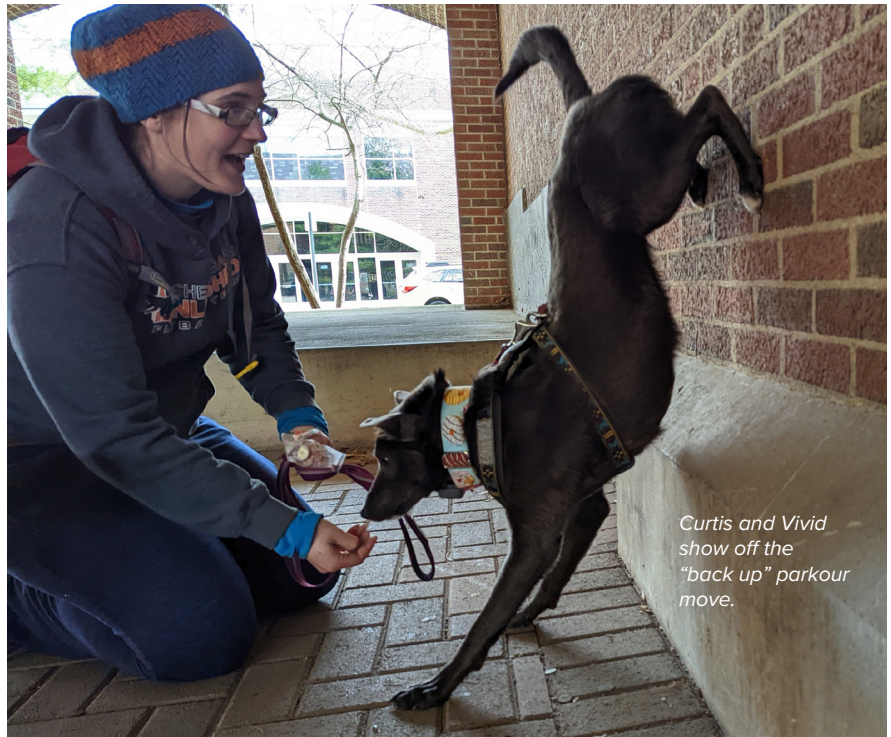
IDPKA founders Karin Coyne and Abigail Curtis, of Ohio, are active in the sport themselves and would often bring their dogs along when training. They adapted the parkour movements for canine bodies and began teaching dog parkour classes at a local training facility.

“We love parkour, and we really, *really* love the dog parkour, and we wanted to find a way for it to grow and still have the structure and meet the spirit of what we want,” Curtis says.

She and Coyne initially balked at

suggestions to create a dog parkour titling program—the original sport’s founders eschewed competition, comparison, and commercialization.

Could they promote parkour in a way that appealed to dog-sport athletes—who typically chase titles and ribbons—while honoring and preserving its ethos?



*Curtis and Vivid show off the “back up” parkour move.*



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digestive health.  
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What they came up with was a non-competitive, video-submission titling track, emphasizing accessibility, safety, exploration, and personal growth.

### Playing It Safe

For each IDPKA titling level, dogs interact with an obstacle using balance, confidence, and agility—like weaving through a bicycle rack, trotting along a retaining wall, jumping over a log, or crawling under a bench. **The rules are thoughtfully constructed** using measurements based on the dog's structure so that obstacles can be scaled—this makes the sport accessible to all dogs, with no particular breed having an advantage.

For example, at the training level, dogs cannot jump off an obstacle that is taller than their stopper pad. (The height limit is raised to shoulder-level as the dog advances in age and skill.) Dogs are required to wear a back-clip harness with thick straps. Handlers are instructed to spot their dogs and be ready to lower them off an obstacle safely, if needed. Submissions with safety violations or dogs who appear stressed or reluctant result in a non-passing score.

“If you do parkour incorrectly, it can absolutely, 100 percent be very dangerous,” says Curtis, who has a degree in veterinary medicine. “But parkour, both human and dog parkour, is really built on that foundation of (needing) to be



As teams practice parkour, they begin to see their city with a new perspective. Page says, “This fish statue ... at the Weiss Lake Lodge drew my parkour eye to it as a really cool obstacle to interact with.”

safe and strong and smart, and (training) ourselves so that the things we are doing are actually very, very safe and controlled.”

As dogs develop physical fitness and body awareness, they're also problem solving and building confidence. Through parkour, Curtis says, dogs are given an opportunity to successfully conquer challenging situations—shifting from a cautious or fearful mindset to one of

confidence and accomplishment.

“At those upper levels, I see the dogs go through the same kind of process that I know I go through when I'm looking at a difficult or complicated movement in human parkour,” Curtis says—a process of analyzing, strategizing, choosing the challenge, or opting out.

“It's just so beneficial for a lot of these dogs to learn how to be confident and make those decisions and become the best versions of themselves.”

### A Whole New World

Before setting records in parkour, French Bulldog Hogan earned his AKC championship in conformation, as well as his Canine Good Citizen Advanced, AKC Temperament Test, and Trick Dog Performer titles. But Hogan's confidence and sparkling personality caused hiccups in trialing sports like rally and agility.

“He is such a social butterfly,” Page laughs. “I have run him a couple of times in agility trials, and as soon as he spots a ring crew, he's off and running to



French Twist: Hogan is working toward his AKC Trick Dog Elite Performer title, with a skit called “King of K-9 Kandyland.”

Courtesy/Bea Page

# Fun with Frenchie

Despite holding the top spot as [AKC's most popular dog breed](#), the French Bulldog can be a rare sight in companion and performance sports. Page says Hogan is proof that Frenchie are more than capable of enjoying these activities, especially when their handlers keep it fun and rewarding.

"I think the more we do with our guys, the more they just say, 'Oh, that's fun! Let's do more of that.' Because you make it fun, they want to do it," Hogan says.

Patty Sosa, president of the [French Bull Dog Club of America \(FBDCA\)](#), says French Bulldogs have a confident, comical personality that outsizes their small stature.

"When I got my first Frenchie, she was a little dynamite. She was unbelievable, and she thought she was a Bullmastiff," Sosa says. "And I always said I had to put a mirror in the back of her crate so she would realize that she was just a 22-pound French Bulldog."



*Peanut and her Doberman Pinscher buddy, Remi*

As a breeder, Sosa has paired Frenchie with a variety of owners, from first-timers looking for a family companion, to a serious obedience competitor who was on track to earn a Utility Dog Excellent title.

She posits that social media and celebrities have contributed to the breed's surge in popularity, but their intelligence and easygoing nature make them appealing, adaptable companions.

"They're thinkers, and we have one in particular—her name is Peanut—and she is such a thinker. You can see the way she cocks her head, the way she looks

at things," Sosa says.

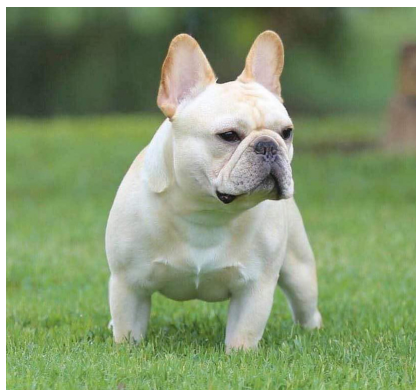
Sosa recommends searching for breeders on the [FBDCA](#) website, and be ready to wait—a conscientious breeder will ask you questions about your lifestyle, invite you to their home, and pair you with the puppy or adult dog *they* think has most suitable temperament for *your* family and lifestyle.

go greet them and say, 'Oh, hello! How are you? I forgot about my mom over there, because I want to be sociable!'"

Enter dog parkour. With no ring times, judges, or special equipment required, Page found an activity that stretches Hogan mentally and physically—at their own pace, and in their own time. And being a true *traceur*, Hogan now finds obstacles that lend themselves fit for parkour behaviors when they're out and about.

"If he'll see something, he'll go offer to put paws up on it or jump over it," Page laughs. "... He just offers the behaviors, because he has such a foundation of knowing that we're out to have fun, and it's going to be rewarding."

Page uses positive-reinforcement, rewards-based training methods, so Hogan is always motivated to play. The most challenging aspect of parkour for Page is finding obstacles that meet the precise title requirements. An expert gap jump, for example, requires leaping between two obstacles that are as far apart as one and a



*Beauty and Brains: Before Hogan's days as a traceur, he stunned in the conformation ring.*

half times the dog's body length.

"The dog can do the skills, but finding those obstacles that fit all the criteria at the top levels of the sport is the challenge," she says. "And it's a fun challenge! It's a fun challenge to go out and say, 'Gosh, I need this,' and start looking around for it."

Curtis says this "scavenger hunt" is the element that best captures the spirit of parkour—getting out into the world with confidence, and interacting with the

landscape in creative, innovative ways.

"I absolutely love hearing dogs be able to go out and have a bigger bubble and enjoy more of their life through the skills that they learned in parkour," Curtis says. "And that's what we wanted for parkour. ... It's not about, can you do this *thing*? It's about the philosophy behind it, and learning to conquer those mental blocks and all of those kinds of things that make it so much more fun for me." **FD**

*Lindsey Dobruck is the senior consulting editor of AKC Family Dog and the Lancashire Heeler breed columnist for the AKC Gazette.*

Did you know IDPKA titles count toward the AKC FIT DOG program? [Click here to learn more](#) about FIT DOG titles, and see Page 15 for more on other unique FIT DOG activities.



# DEDICATED DENVER

**Meet the service dog who's changed the lives of a teen and her family**

By Jen Reeder

**O**n weekends, Southern California teen Elle Davis heads to her basketball class. Every 15 minutes or so, the 14-year-old leaves the court to head into the stands to drink water and pet her service dog, Denver, who shows his support by kissing her face to lick off the sweat. The noise and commotion in the gym could potentially be overwhelming for someone with autism, anxiety, ADHD, and epilepsy—but with Denver watching her play, the class

is a ton of fun for Elle.

When asked what her basketball class would be like without Denver, Elle says, “Not good—because I would not be doing it.”

It's just one example of the positive impact Denver has made on Elle's life, according to her mom, Julia Davis. In fact, the entire Davis family—which includes her husband, Rob, who serves in Space Force; sons Will, 19, and Zach, 17; and a Poodle mix named Penny—adores Denver.



*Denver is more than just a comfort to Elle. "He's a great addition to the family," says Elle's mom, Julia Davis.*

"Denver is nothing short of amazing," Julia Davis says. "He is the best dog ever."

### Being of Service

Elle partnered with Denver—a Labrador Retriever–Golden Retriever mix trained by the nonprofit Canine Companions—in August 2023 after

meeting a friend's service dog. Prior to the partnership, Elle had difficulty sleeping through the night because of anxiety about having a seizure while in a separate room from her family. But with Denver sleeping in her bed, whenever she woke up and felt anxious, she could pet his soft ears until she fell back asleep.

Denver's main job is to help keep Elle's anxiety low and regulate behaviors. For instance, he's trained to distract and redirect her from picking at her skin or nails by nudging her with his nose.

"Every kid gets exhausted and tired of hearing their mom's voice over and over and over again," Julia Davis says. "But a cute dog bumping (you), you've got to listen to that."

The dedicated dog makes Elle's chores and daily routine more enjoyable. He can pull open a clothes drawer when it's time to get dressed for bed. He essentially only barks on command—and Elle loves to hear him bark—so Elle's mom can promise to ask Denver to *spea*k as a reward for, say, brushing her teeth.

The confidence Denver brings also means Elle is more willing to leave the house. Earlier this year, Elle and her canine companion enjoyed a Disney cruise, where she was able to meet a dozen beloved characters like Minnie Mouse, Goofy, and Pluto.



*Courtesy, Julia Davis*



*Denver is "Mr. Personality," according to Julia Davis.*

"I could wait in line for characters because I can pet him and get that anxiety off me," Elle explains.

It was a completely different experience from when the family took a Disney cruise three years earlier, before Elle had partnered with Denver.

"I remember she got so overwhelmed the whole time and wouldn't wait in line to see the characters. Just very antsy, tons of meltdowns because of everything going on," Julia Davis recalls.

"Then we went with my dad three months ago, and Denver came with

us. Elle went everywhere. We had zero behavioral issues the whole entire time. It was a night and day difference having Denver there and just having that support. It is amazing what she can do with him there now."

### Offering Independence

Denver is one of over 400 service dogs provided to children with autism by Canine Companions, according to Kyle Kensing, manager of public relations and marketing for the Southwest region of Canine Companions.

"The number one goal of Canine Companions is helping people achieve a more independent life," he says. "Providing that sense of calm is one of the major benefits that a Canine Companions service dog provides."

The nonprofit, which is celebrating its 50th anniversary this year, provides service dogs to children with physical or cognitive disabilities, adults with physical or auditory disabilities, and veterans with PTSD, in addition to facility dogs for handlers working in hospitals, schools, and in law enforcement.



Denver and the Davis family live on a military base in San Pedro, California.

Canine Companions works with Labradors, Golden Retrievers, and crosses of the breeds because they have the “greatest success rate” in performing a variety of tasks—from opening doors and picking up items around the home, to waking veterans from night terrors, to alerting someone who is deaf when an alarm goes off, Kensing notes.

Naturally, living a more independent life can lead to more opportunities for fun. Since partnering with Denver, Elle has forged a friendship with Nigel Gulliver, 15, who also has autism and epilepsy. They play in the same basketball class and head out on adventures with their moms, from nature hikes and beach trips to movies and dinners at restaurants like Chuck E. Cheese, according to Nigel’s mom, Angela Gulliver.

“They just really look out for each other, and they hold hands and they make each other laugh,” she says.

She’s been impressed by the close bond Elle shares with Denver and the way he brings comfort, safety, and joy to the teen and her family.

“When we hang out or we go to their

house, Denver’s always there and I see the comfort that he gives Elle. But he’s also goofy and fun,” Gulliver says. “He’s fully functional (as a service dog), but an awesome dog on top of that.”

Seeing Elle and Denver interact has opened her eyes to how impactful a service dog can be for a person with special needs and deepened her admiration of the Davis family.

“I just think that they’re an incredible family that will leave no stone unturned and make sure that they’ve researched every single thing—and do that—in the best interest of Elle,” she says. “Integrating Denver into their lives is just another example of that.”

### Responding to Seizures

Although Denver wasn’t trained as a medical alert dog, he intuitively started responding to Elle’s seizures because they share such a strong connection, according to Julia Davis.

“When she does have a seizure, he is right there in her face. She stops breathing. And so he’s sitting there licking her face like, ‘Come on, breathe, breathe, breathe,’” she says.

“He’s just licking her and nudging her and trying to get her to wake up. Then when she does come to, he gives her that deep pressure therapy and he’s right there, right on her. And he doesn’t leave her side until she’s fully better. For an hour or so afterwards he’s clung to her.”

The loyal dog also stays by Elle’s side whenever she is hospitalized due to her epilepsy, which has happened frequently over the last year and a half.

“The last one, we were in the hospital for almost a month between three different brain surgeries,” Julia Davis says. “Denver was there the whole time with us, and it wasn’t a traumatizing experience for Elle. We were there forever, and she didn’t think twice about it. That distraction, that sleeping with her, being there, giving her ‘loves’ when she was not feeling well, being there to play with ... he’s been there every step of the way.”

### Happy at Home

Back at home, Denver loves cuddling with Elle for naps or hogging the beanbag chair dubbed “Big Joe” with his belly up in the air. He and the family’s other dog, Penny, tug a stuffed bear and enjoy chomping on ice cubes together.

While Elle believes her dog is usually “the best of the bestest boys,” he can sometimes be naughty, which she finds amusing. For example, he recently managed to steal two loaves of pumpkin bread that were cooling on the kitchen counter, quickly eating them with Penny.

It wasn’t his only infraction.

“Once, when I was getting a book, he ate my toast, but I caught him mid-act,” Elle says.

The family often jokes that Denver likes breakfast food the best. But Elle knows what her dog truly likes best: “Me.”

For more information about Canine Companions, visit [canine.org](http://canine.org). **FD**

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*Journalist Jen Reeder is the 2025 Hall of Fame inductee of the Dog Writers Association of America.*



1st Place  
Color  
Dex Deskins  
Border Collie  
Auburn, WA

# Lasting Impressions

The winners of our 2024 AKC Photo Contest represent dogs in all their wondrous glory. Selected from hundreds of entries, we believe these photos speak for themselves.

Want to get involved? Check out more information about the [2025 AKC Photo Contest here](#).



## 2<sup>nd</sup> Place Color

Cheri Kropac

German Shorthaired Pointer

Thompson, OH



## 3rd Place Color

Lois Hall

CCSO Reserve Deputy/K-9 Handler

German Shepherd Dog

Ellijay, GA



1st Place  
B&W  
Meg Vincent  
Golden Retriever  
Chicago, IL



**2<sup>nd</sup> Place**  
**B&W**

Molly Heitzig  
Australian Shepherds  
Jerseyville, IL



## 3<sup>rd</sup> Place B&W

Tiffany Goncalves

Basenji

Downey, CA

# Honorable Mentions



**Top:**  
Dianne Bolt  
Mixed breed  
Eau Claire, MI

**Bottom left:**  
Lauren Coffey  
Mixed breed  
Plainfield, IN

**Bottom right:**  
Virginia Mitchell  
Labrador Retriever  
Springville, AL



**Top left:**

Jenna Martin  
Mixed breed  
Ramsey, MN

**Bottom left:**

Gwyneth Heidelbaugh  
Cavalier King Charles  
Spaniel  
Superior Township, MI

**Top right:**

McKayla Dodson  
German Shorthaired  
Pointer  
Inwood, WV

**Bottom right:**

Theresa Whitley  
French Bulldog  
St. Louis, MO

# Think your dog has that certain “star quality”?



## Are you an accomplished shutterbug (or aspiring to be one)?

Then we invite you to enter. Our theme this year is “Go Dog Go!”  
As always, the entries are based solely on creativity, quality, and originality.

### *Well, there are a few rules, too.*

For rules and additional details, go to  
[akc.org/products-services/magazines/family-dog/photo-contest/rules/](http://akc.org/products-services/magazines/family-dog/photo-contest/rules/)

## So start snapping!

The 2025 AKC Photo Contest began on April 15, 2025.  
Entries must be postmarked by January 31, 2026, and received no later than February 6, 2026.

**Email your high-resolution photos to:**  
[photocontest@akc.org](mailto:photocontest@akc.org) please include your name and the breed of the dog (if applicable).

Jessica Hatamaria from Mountain View Elementary School receives books from Kathleen Soares of the Sun Maid Kennel Club.



# Bailey's Book Club

## Delivering dog books to young readers

By Meghan Cutler and Jessica Vasallo

**B**ailey's Book Club, an AKC Public Education initiative, brings the joy of reading—and the magic of dogs—to classrooms nationwide. This program is a community outreach effort to deliver dog-themed books (in English and Spanish) and supplemental materials to K-12 schools in underserved communities throughout the U.S.

To be eligible, schools must hold Title I status or contain a student body where at least 40 percent of the student population qualifies to receive free or reduced-price lunch. **Title I** helps ensure that all children have access to an equitable, well-rounded, high-quality education.

By placing engaging, dog-centered literature into the hands of students, Bailey's Book Club promotes literacy while

introducing young readers to the values of the human-canine bond—fostering compassion, responsibility, and a love for our four-legged companions.

### Making an Impact

Since its inception, the Bailey's Book Club program has collected over \$1,000 in monetary donations and over 500 gently used books from the public. In addition, the AKC Education Department has funded the program more than \$3,000 to maintain a stock of K-12 dog-themed books.

Over the years, the program has grown in popularity, with 500 books donated in year one, 1,000 in year two, and more than 2,000 books in year three. In 2024, a Facebook post regarding the Bailey's Book Club program went viral over



Kathleen Soares of the Sun Maid Kennel Club, and Angela Coleman and Tiffany Duran of Pinedale Elementary showcasing donated books

several days. This post prompted nearly 500 schools to submit applications to receive books. The book inventory was quickly depleted, and educator requests are still being fulfilled.

### How to Donate as an Individual

If you want to support Bailey's Book Club, you can participate in three ways.

■ If you have gently used dog-themed books at home appropriate for youth ages 5-18, you may send them to AKC Public Education, 8051 Arco Corporate Drive, Raleigh, NC, 27617.

■ You may also choose to purchase new dog-themed books to donate. If you aren't sure which titles are appropriate, you can buy books from our [Amazon Wishlist](#). The list includes reasonably priced dog-themed titles appropriate for ages 5-18. The books will ship directly through Amazon to the AKC Raleigh office.

■ You can also make a monetary donation to the program. You can write a check in the desired amount payable to American Kennel Club, include the AKC Education Department on the memo, and mail it to the address above.

These are all excellent ways to contribute to the program and help AKC Public Education get dog-themed books into children's hands. The books received on your behalf will contain a label acknowledging the donor. Each donor's name will also be added to the Bailey's Book Club website donor recognition list.

*"We are a Title I school that has grown in the past few years, so we truly appreciate the donated books about dogs. I added them to our library and students are very excited to check them out."* — Jennifer Carden, K-8 Library Teacher, Montessori Regional Charter School, Erie, PA

*"We have a very small library at a Title I school. It is so nice when we get books gifted to the library. The box we received contained adorable picture books for our littles and some great chapter books for our older readers. Programs like Bailey's Book Club really make a difference by adding new, quality books to libraries in schools. We really appreciate Bailey's Book Club and the AKC for providing these books."* — Margaret Hernandez, TK-8 Library Media Tech, Flying Hills School of the Arts, El Cajon, CA

*"The kids love the books and the bookmarks! I appreciate that the books are for a variety of age ranges, as my school is pre-K (age 3) to grade 8. Thank you as well for including books in Spanish."* — Kristen Finnegan, PreK-8 Library Media Specialist, Ross/Woodward Classical Studies Magnet School, New Haven, CT

## How to Donate as a Club

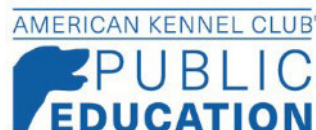
A meaningful way for clubs to give back to their local communities is by hosting a Bailey's Book Club book collection at an event. AKC Public Education supports participating clubs by providing contact lists of local Title

I schools, promotional flyers to advertise the collection, email templates for outreach to schools, and custom stickers featuring the club's name to place in each donated book.

For clubs who cannot organize a book collection but still want to make a difference, monetary donations can be sent directly to AKC Public Education. These funds are used to purchase books for eligible schools that have requested book boxes. All clubs that contribute—whether through book donations or financial support—are recognized on the AKC Education website for their commitment to the educational well-being of youth nationwide.

To get started, clubs interested in coordinating a book collection should complete [this form](#), and the AKC Public Education team will be in touch to assist. **FD**

*Meghan Cutler and Jessica Vasallo are the AKC Public Education team.*



*Leslie Galesh's Poodles with a book donation from the All Breed Training Club of Akron*

Courtesy Leslie Galesh

# In a Blur

*A tripod  
Whippet  
overcomes  
major setback  
to hit Fast CAT  
track.*



Courtesy, Dr. Deana McNamee, DVM

**A**n impressive pedigree and high expectations preceded Whippet Blur's arrival to the world.

After all, her grandmother won the AKC National Lure Coursing Championship, and her father was a top lure courser and breed champion. Mom was no slouch either, earning her field championship.

Her breeder kept Blur and planned what she wants for all her Whippets: "I hope for both successful lure coursing dogs that will also be successful in the show ring," says Dr. Deana McNamer, DVM, of North Carolina.

Lure coursing is a sport for sight-hounds—such as Whippets and Greyhounds—in which they follow a lure, usually a white plastic bag, moved with a pulley system around fields.

The sport is designed to test these breeds on what they were originally developed to do—hunt game using their amazing vision and speed. Blur showed great promise in her early training for coursing, but her future took a drastic change during her second year of life.

## THE ACCIDENT

It was a day like any other day. McNamer and her husband arose before sunrise to take care of their dogs and get ready for work.

"Blur just happened to be the first dog I let outside that morning. Unfortunately, because it was dark when I let her outside, I didn't realize that a small agility tunnel that was out in the front yard had blown in front of our front porch," she says. "The porch is made of stone slabs and is three steps high."

When Blur had been outside long enough to "do her business," McNamer opened the door and called her.

"At this point, it was just light enough for me to see what was happening. She came running to the door and decided to jump over the tunnel and onto our front porch, but didn't realize that there was about 6 feet between the



*Blur in full sprint on the Fast CAT course*

tunnel and the porch."

When Blur jumped the tunnel, her front feet made the top of the porch, but her back legs didn't. Her right knee crashed into a stone step, resulting in a catastrophic injury. The edge of the step cut the patella ligament from the patella bone and then entered the knee joint space, also cutting the cruciate ligament.

As a veterinarian, McNamer knew it was a devastating accident.

"We had consults with three different specialty surgeons; all gave a very poor prognosis with surgical repair," McNamer says. "They speculated that even with a successful surgery and all the risks that would follow it, failure of the surgery once she started running around was likely and the eventual outcome would be amputation. Rather than putting her through it all, we elected to amputate the leg."

Plans for Blur to enter her first com-

petition changed to plans for helping her adjust to her new life.

"Once the decision was made to amputate her leg, I realized that everything she was bred for was suddenly gone. She could not participate in either showing or lure coursing with only three legs. However, at first, I think the disappointment was overshadowed by the need to care for a tripod. Our focus was just getting her adjusted to living with three legs."

## THREE-LEGGED LIFE

Post-surgery, Blur's life consisted of rest and rehabilitation. And then one day, the McNamers realized that Blur was going to be fine. "About six months after her amputation, I was shocked to see how normal she was, running around our yard like a normal dog," she says.

For a time, they thought the best thing would be to find Blur a new home



*After a catastrophic injury, Blur the Whippet found her way into the world of Fast CAT.*

where she could get more attention. They reached out to their local dog community, but the right home never materialized.

“So, I refocused, and I tried hard to find activities that would stimulate Blur and replace the activities that she was no longer able to do,” McNamer says. “We dabbled in agility and while Blur loved it, my life was too busy for that sport.”

It was clear that Blur yearned to fulfill her legacy of being a lure courser. She effortlessly ran around the McNamers’ 3-acre property.

Three-legged dogs cannot compete in AKC lure coursing for sighthounds, but McNamer learned the AKC changed the eligibility for the all-breed Fast CAT events, allowing tripods to enter.

“I thought this was finally her chance to shine,” she says.

### FINDING HER PLACE

Fast CAT is a 100-yard straight line dash. Dogs chase the lure and are timed. Their time is converted into miles per hour, and they earn points toward titles based on their times.

McNamer entered Blur in a Fast



CAT event not far from her home near Raleigh, North Carolina. When she arrived, however, there was confusion when she reported for inspection. At all coursing events, dogs must be checked to make sure they are sound before they can compete.

“I was told that they couldn’t tell if she was lame or not. I was patient as I knew this was a new change. I showed them the rule change, explained that I was a veterinarian, and assured them that

she was moving normally for her with only three legs,” she says. “Finally, it was decided that the Field Trial Committee needed to evaluate her for lameness and once that was done, she was approved and ready to go.”

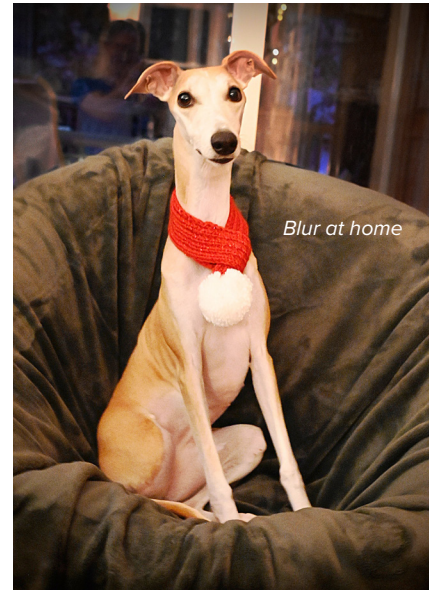
Blur headed for the start line and immediately drew attention.

“I will just say she was a superstar. She ran down the track like she had four legs. Everyone was amazed. I was proud, but to be honest, this was just

Courtesy owner



*Dr. Deana McNamer with her dog Blur*



*Blur at home*

Left: Courtesy Mary Pick; Right: Courtesy Dr. Deana McNamer, DVM

Blur to me,” McNamer says.

Blur clocked 27.45 mph on her inaugural run. After a rest, they prepared for their second run of the day, and McNamer realized that Blur had a fan club.

“Suddenly, I had a crowd. Everyone, especially the kids, all wanted to make sure they saw Blur, the three-legged dog, run. She had another stellar run, not much slower than a normal Whippet, and everyone cheered her on.”

Blur came home following the three-

day event with her BCAT title. Her fastest run was 7.43 seconds, or 27.53 mph.

Chris Frodsham, business operations manager of Time to Fly Performance Dog Sports, was running the Fast CAT event where Blur made her debut. It was his crew’s first experience with a tripod entering one of their events.

“The comment from our staff was, ‘If I didn’t see that Whippet finish the run, I never would have known she was a tripod.’ When running, Blur looks like

any other Whippet. When she slows down and stops, you can tell she only has three legs because of the way she needs to compensate for her balance,” Frodsham says. “We have run a few other tripods since. All pass inspection and run pretty normally.”

There are many opportunities for dogs that lose limbs. Today, tripods can compete in AKC agility; the non-jumping classes of AKC obedience and rally; and AKC scent work; in addition to Fast CAT and the all-breed Coursing Ability Tests (CAT).

If you have a dog that loses a leg, keep your mind open to all that they are still capable of, McNamer advises.

“Once the amputation has happened, the dog doesn’t see any limitations like we do. I believe they do understand that things have changed, but in my experience, they very quickly adapt to those changes and just go on living life the best they can,” she says. “And the best thing you can do for them is to not limit them but to let them be the best they can be.” **FD**

*Penny Leigh is the director of the AKC Agility League and AKC GoodDog Helpline and competes in dog sports with her canine team.*

Borzoi aren't known to love water, but mine seem to like it.

—Danielle Snyder, DVM, of Biloxi, Mississippi, on dock diving with her sighthounds. Her dog Talia was the only Borzoi to compete at the 2025 AKC Diving Dogs Premier Cup.

In the hot Southern summers, Snyder enjoyed watching her Borzoi cool off in a horse trough on her property. So she took a few to a local dock diving pool to see if they'd take to the sport. On one visit, she brought Talia, then a young puppy, along with two littermates.

"Two of them were like, 'I don't think so,' and Talia was just like, *plop!* off the end of the dock. And I said, 'OK, girl! Well let's do this!'"



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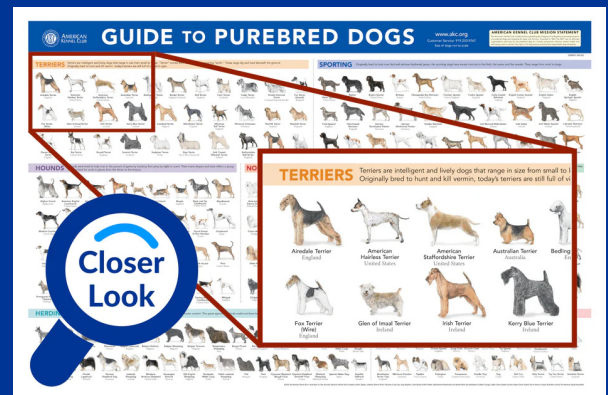
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