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A Dog’s World

An excerpt from Alfred Gingold’s new book “Dog World and the Humans Who Live There”.

George picks up the pace as we traverse the little high-walled path that cuts through the park’s surrounding berm and provides the first layer of insulation from city hubub. We pass the littlebabies’ playground where a group of young men are practicing tai chi while the babies are still asleep, and move smartly across the roadway and down an incline to the edge of the Long Meadow, 90 acres of grassy swale stretching for over a mile between the park’s inner roadway and the densely wooded Ravine. It is believed to be the largest open space in any city park in the country, six times the size of the Sheep Meadow in Central Park, and not once the site of a Simon and Garfunkel reunion. Virtually every undulation in the earth and every copse of trees has been placed there by design. “People think there was this beautiful spot, so they put a wall around it,” says Tupper Thomas, head of the Prospect Park Conservancy.

“But this place was built to look this way. It’s Disneyland.” To me, it looks like nature, but better. Ursula the French Bulldog runs up and leans into my shins. Her sinus procedure seems to have healed nicely. Olive the Sheepdog comes by for a pat. Joey the whatever is waiting for his well-chewed ball to be kicked, so he can bring it back, so it can be kicked again. Augie the Pug is holding his yellow ball in his mouth. If he knows you, he might come over to play catch. He pops the ball out his mouth, making exactly the same sound Leslie Caron makes in “The Night They Invented Champagne” in Gigi. You catch the ball and flip it back to Augie. Then he bounces it off his face back to you, or sometimes just off in the rolling veldt of the Long Meadow. The man with the pair of Pulis toots short blasts on a whistle.

It’s hard to say if the dogs are responding...

.... A few clusters of people hold coffee cups and talk. One guy, to my never-ending amazement, seems to read the Times while bicycling after his Irish Setter. Most are strolling singly or in pairs, individual particles with smaller particles, their dogs, circling them in loose orbits. The people are issuing commands with their Darth Vader alpha voices, or they’re offering praise and treats with their Kindly Mom voices. I’m alternating between the two, so I sound like a novelty act, Señor Wences and Little Willy. I wonder if the real reason George finds it so easy to ignore either voice is that he’s pretending not to know me, the way my wife does when I wear my beret into Manhattan. There’s always a dog or two in the deep mud flat that turns into a pond after it rains. Today, a beautiful Samoyed with fur as white as the inside of an Eskimo Pie, saunters nonchalantly into the middle of the enormous puddle and sits deliberately, as the stunned owner musters a choked, inquisitive “No?” A persistent voice calling “Zoe! Zoe!” sounds in the distance. Many, perhaps most, of the strollers are wearing big, dopey smiles, nodding and exchanging pleasantries about the weather as if we’re all a-headin’ off to the clambake in Carousel.

It is just so not me, historically.

From “Dog World and the Humans Who Live There” by Alfred Gingold
Published by Broadway Books
Pip Of a Tale

Did Pip really do the unthinkable while out in the park - take off for home on her own? The good news was that she knew her way home. The bad news was that her owner usually rode the F Train one stop to 9th street in order to get to Prospect Park. So Pip headed into the subway entrance by Dizzy’s and boarded an F train. Luckily someone on the train figured she was on her own, took her off at the next stop and called the phone number on the ID tag. Now we ask - what was the rush? Wouldn’t Pip have gotten off at the proper stop anyway?

Odin Waxes Electric

Windsor Terrace’s favorite checkerboard behemoth can’t wait for this winter to be over! Only recently recovered from major stomach surgery, Odin, the Great Dane, went into convulsions while being walked near some men working on a local cable installation.

It was the Veterinarian’s conclusion that indeed, Odin had been electrocuted. The utility denies everything. As for Odin - he certainly has a bone to pick with them.

While Odin pulled through, the initial emergency treatment & the ongoing treatment for complications with his heart & lungs have run up huge vet bills for his people, Tricia and Lars. They are planning a benefit party in the near future, but in the meantime, they could still use any help they can get. A website has been set up [http://www.monkeytrousers.com/odin/] where folks can chip in a buck or two or just leave words of encouragement. There is a PayPal link and a snail-mail address along with a great picture of Odin.

Successful Puppy Rearing

by Barbara Giella, PhD

Without our guidance, puppies will be puppies. They will soil your carpet, eat your shoes, bark and whine, pull on leash, and drive you crazy. Most undesirable puppy behaviors are normal. Hence, your job is to redirect and channel your pup’s natural behaviors in order to make him or her a polite family member.

When Should You Begin?

Right away! Puppies are learning all the time, so make sure they’re learning what we want to teach them. Take advantage of their critical socialization period (from 6 to 16 weeks). That is when canines learn most quickly and easily.

What Should You Know?

How dogs behave, develop, and learn! To be a good puppy parent, you must learn about housetraining, nutrition, health, exercise, socialization, the appropriate puppy environment, space management, and how to prevent unwanted puppy behaviors. Find out which games to play and how to train your dog. This is a tall order. Sounds like raising a child, doesn’t it?

What Should Be Guiding Principles Be?

"An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure!"

Begin as you mean to go on! Prevent what you don’t want; reward what you do. Guide your puppy’s behavior every step of the way each day. Remember that what your puppy is doing is what your puppy is learning to do. So if your puppy is chewing your shoes, the puppy is learning to chew shoes. Repeated chewing of shoes makes for perfect practice. Wow! A PhD in shoe-chewing!

Remember!

- As the Boy Scouts say: “Be Prepared!” Be proactive!
- Anticipate, anticipate, anticipate!
- Keep Them Comatose! (Exercise! Exercise! Exercise!)
- As some Englishman said, “Let sleeping dog’s lie” puppies need plenty of rest.
- On housetraining: “If in doubt, take’em out!” More is better!
- Also: “It’s only housetraining!” Not worth over crating your puppy or exhausting yourself.

Instead of polling the neighbors and friends, consider consulting an expert on confusing issues, such as crate and training. Conscious and conscientious puppy rearing can be very rewarding. Have fun!

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The Educated Puppy & Dogs, Too!
Barbara Giella, PhD, CPDT, CBC
The Educated Puppy & Dogs, Too!
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Vaccination: Which ones do they really need & how often?

by Ann Brightman (taken from Animal Wellness Magazine)
(http://www.animalwellnessmagazine.com/mag/v72/72/p42.htm)

When Helena took her new Sheltie puppy, Mick, to the vet for his first check-up, she felt more than a little anxious when it came time for him to receive his shots. While she wanted to protect her new friend from deadly diseases like distemper and parvo, she was also concerned about the health risks associated with over-vaccination. Although Helena went ahead with the vaccines and follow-up boosters, she was worried about subjecting Mick to subsequent annual shots, even though her vet told her it was risking his dog’s health even more by not doing so.

It’s a common quandary these days, especially as we hear more and more about the often devastating side effects of over-vaccination. How do we prevent our dogs or cats from contracting infectious diseases that can often be fatal, while also protecting them from the equally serious health consequences of too many shots? The best strategy is to learn which vaccines are absolutely necessary (referred to as core vaccines), why they’re needed, and what the minimum requirements are for each to ensure protection from disease without over-vaccinating.

WHAT ARE CORE VACCINES?

“Core vaccines are those that every dog or cat should receive, regardless of geographic location or lifestyle,” says Dr. Ron Schultz, Professor and Chair of the Department of Pathological Studies at the University of Wisconsin-Madison’s School of Veterinary Medicine. For dogs, the four core vaccines are canine distemper (CDV), canine parvovirus-2 (CPV-2), canine adenovirus-2 (CAV-2) and rabies. Those for cats are feline panleukopenia or parvovirus (FPV), feline herpesvirus-1 (FHV-1), also referred to as feline viral rhinotracheitis, feline calicivirus (FCV) and rabies. In this article we’ll be taking a close-up look at canine distemper and rabies.

The eight vaccinations listed above are considered core because the diseases they protect against are distributed over a wide area and have a high mortality rate. “These vaccinations are absolutely necessary,” says Dr. Schultz. “You want the vaccine to be the first antigen to prime the immune system. You don’t want to leave it up to natural immunization or exposure.” This is because, when compared to the actual disease-causing virus, the vaccine is a safer way to protect the animal. “If the vaccine is live, it’s attenuated. If it’s killed, it can’t cause disease,” explains Dr. Schultz. “It’s true that many puppies that never see a vet get naturally immunized by exposure to distemper, as an example, but for every one that gets vaccinated, probably another would have died if the first encounter with distemper occurred prior to vaccination.”

MINIMIZING VACCINATION

Although core vaccines are necessary to protect your companion from infectious disease, even these do not need to be given on an annual basis. “That’s what we’re trying to change,” says Dr. Schultz. “What we recommend is that both puppies and kittens get the core vaccines at least once at or over the age of 12 weeks.” The 12 weeks is significant, because prior to that, many animals still have passive maternal antibodies that block immunization, which means they may not respond to the vaccine and are therefore unprotected against the disease.

Summer Calendar

FIDO Remembers
FIDO Memorial ceremony paying tribute to our departed friends will be held on May 21 in the Long Meadow. For more info please go to www.fidonbrooklyn.org/events

Coffee Bark!
The first Saturday of each month. Free coffee, dog biscuits and more: 7am-9am in the Long Meadow in front of the Picnic House. Go to www.fidonbrooklyn.org/events for more info!

FIDO Steering Committee Meeting
2nd Monday of the month. Floating location so call first. All welcome. Call the FIDO voicemail 1-888-604-3422 or email fidonbrooklyn@att.net.

The Bowser Browser:

With Bob Ipcar

Dog World and the Humans Who Live There
Alfred Gingold
Broadway Books, 2005

“You know your inner dog person is stirring when you put your dog’s happiness before your own!” Sound familiar? Best of all, Alfred Gingold writes of the Dog World we know as Prospect Park. Does he name names? You bet! While some human identities are protected for the good of humanity, you don’t have to be a Sherlock Holmes to figure out who they are. He certainly names dogs, first and foremost is his own little Norfolk Terrier named George. With no thanks to George, Gingold embarks (pun intended) on a rare journey shared only by those of us who suffer the sub-zero winters and excruciating summer heat of Prospect Park—yeah, all for the sake of our dog’s happiness!

For what is a dog but a willful beast, bent on asserting its own individuality while pretending to conform to human ideals. Group training sessions; encounters with little old ladies with umbrellas, frothing Chihuahua ready to kill, are all rites of passage which Gingold attempts to survive (not without some measure of sardonic angst and outright humor). George, on the other hand, takes them as they come. The origins of professional dog walkers [once proclaimed by New York Magazine to be freaks & weirdos]; the joys of being able to dress up, carry on [Brooklyn, the Black Hole of Fashion], are just for starters. You learn about subjects you never thought you would ever want to know. Gingold devotes a whole chapter to seeking out and becoming fast friends with Constance Depler, the artist who gave us the oft reproduced Bar Hounds.

Dog World is a great read—if your dog will let you share the reading light.

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continued on page 6
You Never Know...

with Eliza Beckwith

You never know where walking your dog in Prospect Park might lead. Last November I was walking Duncan (the "mostly" Border Collie) when I ran into Drew Pisaro and his "mostly" Golden Retriever, Silas. I was directing a play that I'd been working on with the writer Richard Willett for over three years, and in that chit-chat-dog-walker way we all have, told Drew, "What's it about?" he asked, after telling me that he was a playwright and critic. "Well," I said, "it's about Thalidomide — the drug prescribed in the early sixties that caused birth defects."

I described the play, and told him that the lead character was a sexy, troubled, armless English nightclub singer, which was then being played by an American able-bodied actor. His eyes lit up, and he said, "Wait a minute, do you know about an actor in England who does a show called "Seal Boy Freak"? He's a short-armed Thalidomider and it sounds like he'd be perfect for the part!" A casting session in the Nethermead, with who'd have thunk it?

I went home, did a Google search and found Mat Fraser. We sent him the script and made plans to produce the play again. So Mat came over in December, and the play and he were an enormous success. He was profiled in The New York Times, and in Time-Out (which actually mentioned the dog connection) and was interviewed on Air America and WNYC. Much of the show was sold out, and I thank so many of my fellow dog-owner friends for coming to the play and for supporting us. (We certainly thanked Duncan and Silas in the program).

FIDO Membership Drive

With this FIDO newsletter, we are kicking off our annual membership drive. Although we FIDO members number in the hundreds, it’s time for nearly all of us to renew that membership. Unless you have renewed or joined in the past few months, most memberships have expired. We need to give our support to the organization that represents our group’s interests and acts as liaison between Prospect Park and those of us who use the Park for the pleasure and exercise of our dog companions. The Park has extended special consideration allowing us to let our dogs run free, off-leash during designated hours in designated places. We need to nurture that special connection. FIDO dedicates itself to doing so.

Memberships renewed now will remain current until April 1, 2006.

Please cut out and fill in the form (on back page) and mail the form with your check to:

Fido in Prospect Park
230 7th Avenue, #157, Brooklyn, NY 11215.

After we have heard from you, we will send you a membership form for 2005-2006.

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Getting In the Holiday Spirit

Bark the Herald Angels Sing! is declared an official holiday!

This year’s Bark the Herald Angels Sing! was a great success and we thank all of you who came out and enjoyed the festivities! Brooklyn’s own Burrough President joined us proclaiming it an official holiday!

"Whereas, Prospect Park is a beautiful resource for all Brooklynites to enjoy, be they human or canine, and it is only fitting that this office should join with those organizations dedicated to preserving the companionship between dogs and humans in celebration of the holiday spirit; and Whereas, the Fellowship for the Interests of Dogs and their Owners (FIDO) host "Bark, the Herald Angels Sing!" carrying on a great Brooklyn tradition of people and their dogs coming together over coffee and treats to sing songs, both on and off key, and just have a great time together in the gorgeous surroundings of Prospect Park; and Whereas, on behalf of all Brooklynites, I salute and commend all the dedicated Members of FIDO for working to see that Prospect Park stays a safe and healthy place for dogs and their people, for protecting and enhancing off-leash opportunities for dogs to exercise and play, and educating dog owners on appropriate conduct, ensuring a respectful coexistence with other patrons of Prospect Park; now, therefore, I Marty Markowitz, President of the Borough of Brooklyn, do hereby proclaim Saturday, December 18, 2004 Bark, the Herald Angels Sing! 2004 Holiday Celebration Day in Brooklyn, USA.

In witness whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the Seal of the Borough of Brooklyn to be affixed this 18th Day of December, 2004.

Marty Markowitz
President of the Borough of Brooklyn

For The Health Of It!

Dr. Andrea Auerbach, Chiropractor, has some Good News For Dog Lovers!

If you are fortunate enough to possess one of these furry creatures you are well aware of the "pull" they have on their "people". Trips to the park can be "ruff" on our bodies as our K-9’s try desperately to control their excitement.

If you set aside 10-15 minutes each day for stretching, you will offset this accumulated tension so you can use your body with greater ease.

Try these stretching exercises for a bit of relief.

For more info please contact
Dr. Auerbach at: 718 399 1111
Vaccination:
[continued from p.3]
and are therefore unprotected against the disease. American Association of Hospital Association (AAHA) guidelines recommend vaccinating again at one year, and once every three years after that, although even that may not be necessary. "I have studies that show duration of immunity at seven to nine years for all the core vaccines except rabies, and even on an antibody basis I can show that rabies gives much longer protection than three years," says Dr. Schultz.

CANINE DISTEMPER (CDV)
CDV is a highly infectious and often fatal disease that attacks the respiratory, gastrointestinal and central nervous systems. Although dogs of any age can contract distemper, puppies up to six months of age are most susceptible to the disease, which can cause a range of symptoms from fever, loss of appetite and eye inflammation in its early stages, to diarrhea, vomiting, pneumonia, and neurological complications such as ataxia, seizures and paralysis.

Canine distemper occurs around the world not only among domesticated dogs, but also in many wild carnivores such as raccoons, skunks and foxes. "Wildlife is actually now more of a reservoir for distemper than dogs are," says Dr. Schultz. "The virus is spread mainly by air, or by direct contact with secretions from the infected animal. The mortality rate among puppies with distemper is 50% or higher." On the plus side, the distemper virus is very fragile and easily destroyed by outside influences. "It doesn't live very long in the environment," says Dr. Schultz. "It dies very quickly because it is what we call an enveloped virus. These kinds of viruses are highly susceptible to water, disinfectant and sunlight."

Although there is only one distemper serotype, there are several genotypes. "What this means is that, from an immunologic standpoint, it doesn't matter which distemper infects the animal, they're all similar; the vaccine for canine distemper can protect against the different genotypes." Dr. Schultz adds that modified live vaccines (MLV) are most effective for distemper. "In fact there's no question in my mind that you should be using live vaccines for most of the core. Although attenuated, live vaccines infect and replicate, and that's how you get immunity." Although AAHA recommends vaccinating against distemper every three years after the initial puppy shots, challenge studies have shown that the minimum duration of immunity can last five to seven years, and perhaps even longer. In fact, titers have indicated that dogs can be protected for nine to 15 years. "To be honest, although canine distemper is a core vaccine, I think a dog only needs to receive it once in his life," says Dr. Schultz. "The same goes for canine parvo and adenovirus-2. That's the vaccination program I've been practicing on my own dogs without any difficulty whatsoever.

We've never had a vaccine-preventable disease occur." Titer testing is highly effective for canine distemper, but according to Dr. Schultz, the best time to do it is at two weeks or more after the last puppy vaccination, to ensure that the animal responded to its initial vaccines.

"To my mind, that's the only time it's of medical benefit to use a titer test for canine distemper. After that, you don't really need to titer the animal since you can easily go five or seven years before the next vaccine."

RABIES (RV)
Unlike distemper and parvo, rabies is a disease that can be transmitted from animals to humans, which is why rabies vaccinations are required by law throughout North America. The virus infects the central nervous system, causing encephalitis and death. Symptoms can include confusion, partial paralysis, aggressive behavior, excessive salivation and other neurological signs. Although rabies occurs worldwide, including in Asia, Africa and Latin America, some countries such as the U.K. are rabies-free. In North America, rabies is most prevalent in the eastern portions of the continent, although cases can occur anywhere. Wild animals such as raccoons, skunks, bats and foxes are the major carriers. Because rabies isn't age-related, mammals at all stages of life can be affected with the same degree of severity. The chief means of transmission is by a bite from an infected animal. "There are multiple strains of rabies, but the important thing is that the vaccine prevents infection with all those different strains," says Dr. Schultz. "Although the risk of infection in domesticated animals is generally low, the public health concern is the issue. That's what drives the regulations for rabies vaccines."

As with the other core vaccines, puppies and kittens should be vaccinated at 12 weeks. Although some states and provinces have approved a three-year rabies vaccine, some still require annual re-vaccination for dogs and cats, even though the duration of immunity based on challenge studies has been shown to be three to seven years. The regulations vary from state to state and province to province, and even from municipality to municipality. "It's also important to realize that a municipality might have a more restrictive requirement than the state or province it's a part of, although not the other way around." "Rabies titers are effective, but there's no point running them because you're going to have to vaccinate your animal by law anyhow," says Dr. Schultz. However, titer testing for rabies is useful in cases where the animal has had an adverse reaction to the vaccine, or has a medical condition that could be aggravated by the vaccination. "In these situations, local municipalities will sometimes accept a letter from the vet as a reason not to vaccinate every three years, but the guardian has to understand that the animal is still considered to be non-vaccinated, and if it bit someone, it would be treated as such if it's gone beyond the three years, irrespective of the vet's letter. Even so, if you have a dog that for health reasons shouldn't be given a rabies vaccine, it's better to take the chance of it being quarantined for biting someone than to give the vaccine and kill the dog."

BACK TO BASICS
Vaccinations definitely have their place in disease prevention, but knowing where to draw the line is key. "I've seen it go from no vaccines back in the mid-1960s, to where we just kept adding one after the other," says Dr. Schultz. The pendulum has since started swinging back again as organizations such as AAHA and American Association of Feline Practitioners (AAFP) began looking more closely at which vaccines out of the 12 for cats and 16 for dogs were really needed and why. "We used to have one manufacturer that made a canine vaccine combo with 13 different components in it. That's not good, and that's why it's not available anymore." Now, by contrast, companies are coming out with information demonstrating that their products give duration of immunity lasting several years. "All the major manufacturers are coming out with a minimum of three years immunity. To me, that's the greatest gratification in the more than 25 years I've been doing this."
Many a dog has left its mark
On off-leash regions of Prospect Park.
Owners galore are in the loop,
And gladly stoop to scoop the poop.
To see the canines run and play
Is enough to make an owner’s day.
The dogs and owners make a team
That helps the park stay safe and clean.

—Maureen Sanders

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*Renews due yearly on April 1st. If you first became a member of Fido after 4/2004, you’re good until 4/2006