



The Woof-Meow Show

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The “Woof-Meow” show is on every Sunday at 8:30PM on WVOM, 103.9FM, the Voice of Maine. Hosted by Don Hanson of Green Acres Kennel Shop, the show focuses on educating dog and cat guardians about their dogs and cats.

AIR DATE: 3JUN07

GUEST: Don Hanson and Kate Dutra

Selecting A Dog Training Instructor and Class

Selecting a dog training instructor and class is an important decision. The wrong decision could traumatize you or your dog and set learning back extensively. We recommend you use the following criteria for selecting a dog training instructor.

1. Select a trainer and class that is Dog-Friendly. A Dog-Friendly instructor will **NOT** use or recommend any methods or tools that work on the principal of intimidation or coercion or that have been designed to cause the dog physical, mental or emotional pain. That means they will **NEVER** use or recommend shock collars, choke collars, prong collars, squirt bottles, scruff shakes, alpha rollovers or other inhumane tools and techniques.
2. Select a trainer who complies with the *American Humane Association's Guide to Humane Dog Training*. Such trainers will rely on teaching methods that use positive reinforcement for good behavior rather than punishment for unacceptable behavior.
3. Verify the trainer’s credentials. Ideally they will be a Certified Pet Dog Trainer (CPDT) accredited by the Certification Council for Pet Dog Trainers (CCPDT) or will work under the supervision of one so qualified.

In order to become a CPDT, a trainer must first have 300 hours of experience teaching dog training classes. They must also take and pass a written examination that covers instructional skills, animal husbandry, ethology, learning theory, and training equipment.

The CCPDT is the first and only organization in the world to offer a standardized certification program for dog trainers. While some trainers may say they are “certified,” if it is not by the CCPDT it may not mean much. You can find a list of trainers certified by the CCPDT at <http://ccpdt.org/rstr/index.html>

Be advised that just because a trainer has the CPDT accreditation it does not mean they are Dog Friendly. A CPDT has demonstrated that they have the requisite knowledge to train dogs, but you will need to ask and verify their training philosophy.

4. Ask if the trainer is a member of any of the following organizations; TrulyDogFriendly.com, the Association of Pet Dog Trainers (APDT), or the International Association of Animal Behavior

Consultants (IAABC). Dog training is an evolving profession and those who are committed to it are members of one or all of these organizations in an effort to stay current in the field.

Members of TrulyDogFriendly.com are devoted to the type of dog-friendly training we practice at Green Acres. While the APDT and IAABC have statements on dog friendly training, they are statements of goals for their members and not requirements, so you will still need to screen carefully.

5. Observe a training class without your dog. Are the dogs and people having a good time? Talk with a few participants and see if they are comfortable with the trainer's methods. If someone won't let you observe a class, don't enroll.
6. Look for trainers who treat people and dogs with respect, rather than an "I'm the boss" attitude. Remember, you will be the one actually being taught by this person, not your dog.
7. Ask the instructor about their methods for teaching people. Do they provide comprehensive written materials? Do they demonstrate how to teach a behavior? Do they assist you as you practice with your dog? Are they available for questions outside of class?
8. Look for classes with at least one instructor for every 8 to 10 students. At Green Acres a typical class of 5 to 6 students will have two instructors.
9. Avoid trainers who offer guarantees about results. These trainers are either ignoring or do not understand the complexity of animal behavior.
10. Avoid trainers who object to using food as a training reward. Food is an acceptable positive reinforcement training tool. Just like us, our dogs do things because there is something in it for them, usually food. (If the trainer insists that dogs should work for praise only, ask him/her if you can take their classes for free if you tell him/her how good it is.)
11. Run away from trainers who insist you use a choke chain or pinch collar. The new style harnesses and head collars are humane alternatives to choke chains and pinch collars.
12. A good instructor will take care to protect your dog's health in a group setting. Ask if dogs and puppies are required to be vaccinated prior to class and, if so, which vaccines are required. Make sure you and your veterinarian are comfortable with the vaccination requirements.

Once you start a dog training class remember the following:

1. Do not allow a trainer to demonstrate with your dog unless they tell you first exactly what they plan to do.
2. Do not be afraid to tell a trainer to stop if s/he is doing something to your dog you don't like.
3. If a trainer tells you to do something that you don't feel good about, do not do it! Do not be intimidated, bullied or shamed into doing something that you believe is not in your dog's best interest.
4. And last, but certainly not least, have fun while training your pet!