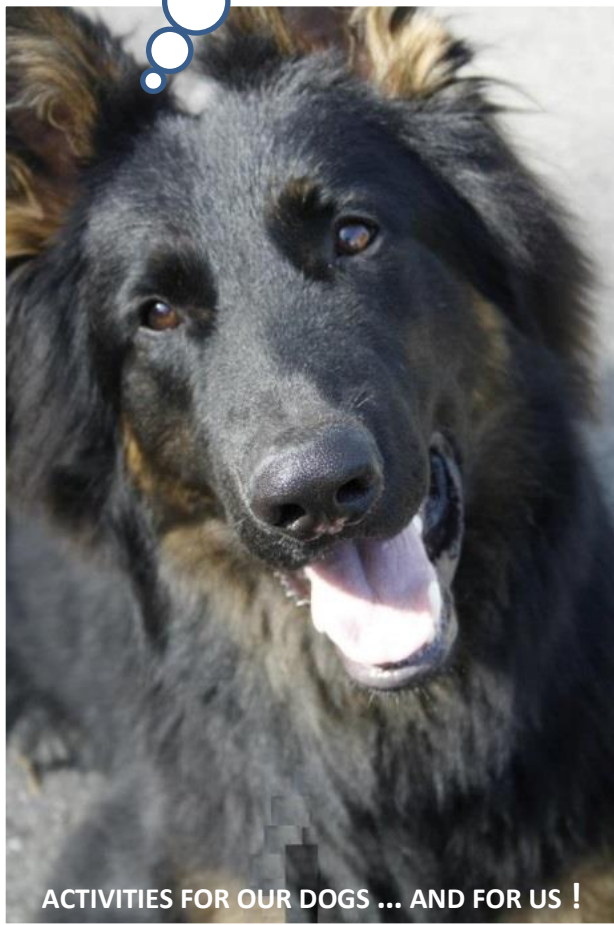


**LET'S DO SOMETHING  
FUN TOGETHER !**



**ACTIVITIES FOR OUR DOGS ... AND FOR US !**



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

FOREWORD.....	1
HOW TO COMMUNICATE .....	2
REWARDS .....	17
PHYSICAL AND MENTAL ACTIVITIES .....	22
WHEN DO THE ACTIVITIES OF OUR DOGS START? .....	42
HOW TO ORGANIZE ACTIVITIES .....	46
SLEEP AND RECOVERY .....	52
PLAYING FETCH .....	54
WALKS .....	62
ENRICHED ENVIRONMENTS.....	70
TREAT SEARCH .....	78
THE HIDDEN TREAT .....	86
THE LOST OBJECT.....	94
THE HIDDEN OBJECT.....	100
DISCRIMINATION GAMES .....	108
RESOURCEFULNESS.....	116
MASSAGE .....	126
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	136
BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	139





## FOREWORD

This book was created as my project at the end of my International Dog Training Education with [Turid RUGAAS](#), President of the PDTE – Pet Dog Trainers of Europe, which took place from November 2015 to November 2016 at [Chien presque parfait](#), the school of Paulina DRURI, in France.

The website is full of ideas of activities to organise for our 4-legged friends. It also includes some basic principles to ensure that these activities take place in the best possible way, **with respect, fun and togetherness**.

**The “recipes” are only general guidelines:** let’s not follow them blindly, without asking ourselves if one or more adaptations are necessary for our dog, according to his physical abilities, mental capacities and experience (or lack of experience).

The basic principle is that these are fun activities, games, fun pursuits. Let’s not put pressure on ourselves, and above all, **let’s not put pressure on our dogs!**

**I wish you and your dog many wonderful and enjoyable moments of play!**



[www.activiteschiens.be](http://www.activiteschiens.be)

*Activities for happy dogs*

## HOW TO COMMUNICATE

### Body language

Our dogs spend a lot of time observing their surroundings and especially observing US: nothing escapes them! The position/direction of the shoulders, hips, head or a wrinkled forehead, frowning eyebrows, a smile, squinted eyes, a tight or relaxed jaw, ... We go to the wardrobe, put on our shoes or walking coat, take the harness and leash. At what point did our dog realise that he was going for a walk with us? Very quickly, and in any case long before the harness and leash are in our hands! They spend a lot of time observing us and memorising our daily routine. Our body language is made up of so many clues for them.

While humans mainly use their voice as a means of communication, **our dogs prefer body language**. If a person gives two contradictory messages with each means of communication simultaneously, our dogs will opt for what they understand best: body language.

My dog is in the garden, I am standing on the doorstep, facing the garden, and I invite him in. I call him (verbal communication meaning “come and go inside”) but I face my dog and partially obstruct the doorway (physical communication meaning “don’t enter”). I am broadcasting two contradictory pieces of information. It is very likely that my dog will respond to the information of my body language: “You don’t want me to come in? OK, I’ll stay in the garden”. So much frustration for the human, given that the dog has not responded to the verbal invitation, the preferred means of communication for humans. **Let’s pay attention to the messages we convey to them through our body language.**



**An encounter with strangers: looking at each other without staring at each other, turned towards each other, without facing each other.**



Since our dogs communicate mainly with their body language, let's learn to read it in order to avoid unfortunate misunderstandings. Once we have learned to observe and recognise our dog's facial expressions and postures, we can see if something is bothering him, if something is "blocking" him. **Our dog is not "disobedient", he is simply confused by the lack of precision in the requests we make of him.**

#### Recommended books and DVD:

 *On talking terms with dogs: calming signals* by Turid RUGAAS (book and DVD)

 *Understanding the silent communication of dogs* by Rosie LOWRY.

#### Calming signals

Ethologists call "calming signals" the postures, looks, facial expressions and movements that dogs produce to calm themselves, to diffuse a tense situation, to express their peaceful intentions or to communicate to the other individual that they are in an uncomfortable emotional state.<sup>1</sup> When our dogs lick their lips, freeze, scratch and yawn, it's never without reason! If a dog yawns when he has just woken up, it is of course a basic biological function. And when he scratches, it may be to get rid of an itch in his fur. **We should always ask ourselves whether our pet is giving off a calming signal and take it into account.**

---

<sup>1</sup> Source: Véronique VALY, canine consultant, Au'Tour du chien, France




**Calming signals: sitting down, turning the head, blinking, licking lips**

Our dogs can send out these calming signals in many situations that escape us: a plane or a hot-air balloon, people we pass on a walk, a car, a bark in the neighbourhood (or any other animal noise), fireworks or even the noises produced by the television set, an object that we have dropped on the ground, ... If we can help our dog to be more comfortable in the situation, why not do it? There is a very simple means at our disposal: the hand signal.

### **The hand signal**

**This involves positioning our hand (palm facing our dog) between our dog and the object or source of the unpleasant noise.** As our dogs communicate mainly with body language, they learn very easily everything that is visual. This signal is easy and possible to do under any circumstances.

 **Recommended book: *Barking, The sound of a language* by Turid RUGAAS**

Whenever something unsettling happens, this signal means “**don’t worry, there is nothing to fear**”. This gesture is simple to do and is very easy for

our dog to understand (body language). He understands that we are there for him and to help him overcome the difficulties he faces. He can trust us.

This signal can be useful in many other circumstances: exciting situations (dog becomes overjoyed when you go for a walk or a beloved visitor arrives...). Although the title of the book does not imply it, Turid Rugaas describes several problematic situations and adapted solutions using this hand signal in her book “Barking – The sound of a language”.

**For dogs jumping on people**, for example, a hand signal from the person being jumped up on, palm towards the dog, combined with clear body language: turn away from the dog (head, shoulders and hips) in another direction than the dog’s (turn your back on him for example), without looking at him, of course. As he learns, he will understand that this behaviour does not bring him any attention from us or from other people. In the end, the hand signal alone will be enough to dissuade our dog from jumping, meaning **“I don’t want this kind of interaction with you”**. **Without getting angry, without pushing him, without shouting, a simple gesture of the hand is enough to communicate...**





Hand signal meaning: "I will take care of that, don't worry"



### Displacement behaviours

In addition to the calming signals, our dog will also be able to produce displacement behaviours. This is a voluntary behaviour of the dog, appearing in a conflicting context (of hesitation). Our dog thinks to himself: "I am asked to do something but I don't really want to (or I didn't understand the request), I prefer to go and do something else elsewhere". Our dog will then play, dig, smell a few blades of grass,... The displacement behaviour can also be a reaction to an uncomfortable environment: "All those cars passing by me so fast are scary, I prefer to pick up that empty can there and carry it around, it will make me think of something else". In this case, taking distance from the cars and giving a hand signal will help our dog to overcome the difficulty.

As a second example: my dog is in the garden, and I am standing on the doorstep (blocking the doorway and facing him), inviting him to come in



**Drinking is easier than facing another dog or the photographer**



**Digging is easier than coping with an enriched environment**

with my voice. He receives the two contradictory pieces of information (verbal and physical). Our dog can react to this contradictory information with a displacement behaviour: I tell him “come and enter” but my body tells him “don’t go through”, it is possible that he chooses a third solution. He will find something lying around in the garden (toy, stick...) or will stop to pee or scratch the ground...

**If our dog is doing a calming signal or a displacement behaviour, take that into consideration. Do not ever force your dog to do an activity or a game.** Either he has a good reason (physical, emotional or other) to not participate, or he does not know how to response because our request is not clear. **It is better to ask ourselves if it is worth to insist. And if we think so, then ask ourselves how to send our message the most effective way (let us think about the dog!).**

### Politeness

This is what humans do, in their everyday life, without finding it rude or threatening:

- 🐾 **staring,**
- 🐾 **walking straight towards another person.**

Let us remember that, for our dogs, **these two behaviours are threatening and confrontational**. Turning our eyes away from our dog and approaching him in a curve or by going around him, is a matter of politeness and respect that we have for him.

**Another extremely threatening gesture for our dogs is a hand on the neck or head.** When we are standing next to our dog, the part of his body that is closest to our hand is his head. It is almost a reflex to put our hand on it: let’s be aware of the impact of our gesture. It is not a small thing for a dog to have a hand placed on his head or neck.

Koumack is curving to bypass Garou



The hand on the head: wrong reflex from humans

## Verbal requests

Some use the word COMMAND. I prefer the word REQUEST.

Humans are talkative, let's face it! Verbal communication is definitely our natural mode of communication, unlike our dogs. So, let's make an effort to make it easier for them to understand our requests.

**Negative requests:** “do not jump”, “do not eat”, “do not let go”, “do not roll in it”,... These requests are not clear. We count on the fact that our dog will make the difference between “to jump” and “not to jump”. This is unrealistic! We have enough vocabulary (and our dogs are capable of learning dozens of different requests) to say words to them that express what we want (instead of telling them what we don't want).

We have all had this experience: “I'll finish the dishes (or anything else) and we'll go for a walk”. Our dog has understood “walk”, and is already having a party about his walk. He didn't understand that we had a task to finish before devoting ourselves to him.

So, let's be clear:

- 🐾 “Do not jump” can become “floor” or “ground”, which means: I ask you to put your 4 legs on the ground;
- 🐾 “Do not eat” can become “leave” or “ignore”, which means: I ask you to leave that nasty thing where it is;
- 🐾 “Do not let go” can become “guard” or “hold”, for example to teach our dog to carry objects.

**NO:** This too must be a human reflex, but it is not at all clear. Not clear for our dogs? Of course, but not clear for humans either!

Let's imagine that we approach an acquaintance, we talk to him during the approach and we put our hand on his shoulder. He or she says NO! Our movement is actually made up of a chain of movements/behaviours: the

approach / the discussion / the hand put down / the look. What exactly does this person say NO to?

If he or she says “stop”, “be quiet” or “take your hand away” or “turn your eyes away”, we would have known exactly what we had to do. **Just a NO is not clear. A bunch of NO’s is also unclear.**

Out of curiosity, let’s do the test for a day: **how many times today have I said no to my dog?** On the first day of the test, the result will most certainly be more than ten. But we will be able to improve over time.

However, we will have to pay particular attention to our **intonations** (a commanding voice or a joyful voice do not have the same effect on our dog) and tonalities (a high voice is exciting, while a low voice is soothing). If we ask our dog to stay put, for example, we will make sure that our request is calm, composed, with a low voice.

### Body requests

Remember that all verbal requests can be replaced/completed by gestural or physical requests:

- 🐾 **To learn “follow me”:** Let’s turn our body (from head to toes including shoulders and hips) in the direction we want to go, as soon as our dog moves towards us, we can reward/praise him;
- 🐾 **For a dog that jumps on people:** Let’s look away and turn our whole body away (even turning our back completely if necessary). As soon as the paws are on the ground, we can reward/praise;





**During mantrailing, helping Koumack to get through the bushes: the gaze and the body turned in the right direction**



**Follow me!**

**The body is turned in the direction which we want to go in**

- 🐾 **For a dog that eats what he finds on a walk, including nasty things:** Let's turn our body towards the desired destination (certainly not towards the nasty thing), a hand signal towards the unwanted thing, and a call if necessary (a small sound signal that will help our dog to come back to us, like a whistle, a click of the tongue, or the word we taught him to follow us, like "follow me"). As soon as our dog comes towards us, let's move away and reward/praise him.

To look at an object will help also our dog to understand which is the target.

#### TAKEAWAY

- 🐾 Let's learn to observe our dog (postures, calming signals, displacement behaviours...);
- 🐾 Let's make a hand signal every time it is necessary to help, reassure, support our dog;
- 🐾 Never force our dog;
- 🐾 Let's be police to our dog;
- 🐾 Let's learn to clearly communicate our requests (thinking like a dog!)

Let's check what our dog  
likes: cheese, dried  
sausage or treats!



Liver pâté, cream cheese and tuna yogurt





## REWARDS

### Purpose

The purpose of the reward is **for our dog to repeat a desired behaviour**. We reward to enhance an action that our dog has taken. On the other hand, it is therefore important to **ignore any undesired behaviour**.

### Quality

A reward is what our dog considers a reward. **We can offer them verbal praise, treats, caresses, a toy, ... Our dog will show us what he appreciates.**

**The reward statistically most appreciated by dogs is food.** Beware that not all food is worth a reward. A dry biscuit may look very bland next to a small piece of very smelly cheese. **There are however two exceptions:** those who are not interested in the food (multiple causes: stress, distractions, toothache...), and those who are so interested in the food that they are not able to concentrate on our requests.

**Toys are exciting for most dogs.** This reward is not suitable for games that require concentration. The toys can be used for search games (lost object, hidden object...). When our dog has found his toy, he can keep it as a reward to play alone or with us. Under no circumstances will the toy be thrown for the dog to fetch.

**Stroking requires skill on the part of the person giving it:** not on the head, no “shampoo”, not approaching too quickly, ... Some dogs do not appreciate being stroked, so let's be mindful of what they like.

**Verbal praise can be used alone or as a reinforcement of other rewards.** However, we must pay particular attention to our intonations (a commanding voice or a cheerful voice do not have the same effect on our dog) and to the tones (a high voice is exciting, while a low voice is soothing).

In an emergency, if we don't have treats available, we can always praise, even from a distance.

**Giving attention (laughing, looking, touching...) is a reward.** When our dog does something stupid and we smile and look at him, we show him attention. Let's not be surprised if he repeats this mistake every time he wants us to take care of him.

### Timing

With our body language and our verbal language, we will teach our dog to react in a particular way to certain requests (bodily or verbal): "bring back", "give", "leash", "follow me", "go towards", ...

In order to establish these situations, words or requests in the minds and memories of our dogs, we will have to confirm to them, to the nearest half-second, that their behaviour is exactly what we expected of them.

**Reward timing is incredibly important.** The time elapsed between our dog's behaviour and the reward offered is as short as possible:

- 🐾 the ideal timing is 0,84 seconds;
- 🐾 up to 3 seconds, few dogs will still be able to link;
- 🐾 more than 5 seconds makes the link impossible.



**Reward to lick during mantrailing**



## Systematically or randomly

For something new to learn, each correct behaviour (the one that corresponds to what we expected) should be **systematically rewarded**.

Let's not forget to continue to ignore unwanted behaviour.

As soon as our dog has understood what we expected of him (he systematically responds correctly to the same request), we can **reward randomly**: we reward or not, without any precise pattern. The aim is that our dog can no longer predict when he will be rewarded. If we reward every other time, our dog will quickly understand the reward pattern. Not rewarding any more would lead to the extinction of the expected behaviour.

## Jackpots

**Let's also use jackpots:** a reward offered for special efforts and on special occasions. This jackpot can take many forms:

- 🐾 **quantity:** if I choose to reward learning a game with treats, my jackpot could be to offer several treats at once;
- 🐾 **quality:** if I choose to reward with treats, my jackpot could be a bigger chew or to lick paté;
- 🐾 **variety:** If I choose to reward with treats, my jackpot could be a toy;
- 🐾 **surprise:** if we are caught off guard on a walk, we don't have a toy or treat with us, we still have everything nature has given us: our voice, our body and our imagination. Small jumps, laughter, caresses can be a jackpot.



**Exciting rewards – to be used sparingly,  
e.g. for a jackpot**

After a jackpot, the learning session ends. If we took the trouble to give a jackpot, it is because our dog's behaviour was well worth it. Let's stop at excellence, our dog will only remember it better!

#### TAKEAWAY

- 🐾 The timing of the reward is critical;
- 🐾 Let's respect what our dog considers as a reward;
- 🐾 To reward systematically or randomly: each has its role;
- 🐾 Let's offer jackpots at strategic moments.

## PHYSICAL AND MENTAL ACTIVITIES

### Activities that complement each other

Whether we are talking about physical or mental activities, they have the advantage of **keeping our companions busy and entertained**, to avoid long, boring days. The general activity of a dog in a day is composed of<sup>2</sup> :

- 🐾 locomotor activities,
- 🐾 vocal activities,
- 🐾 masticatory activities,
- 🐾 intellectual activities,
- 🐾 sexual activities.

Each of these categories contains countless examples. Our dog spends time drinking and eating, doing his business, going out in the garden and exploring, chewing his toys (or the couch), playing with the other animals in the family, cleaning himself, being petted, ... **Their average daily activity is  $\pm 8$  hours a day (need to sleep on average  $\pm 16$  hours, up to 20 hours for a puppy).**

The motto "a healthy mind in a healthy body" invites us to practice both types of activities. This is also true for our dogs. According to Professor BERNARD SABLONNIÈRE<sup>3</sup> « *Regular exercise stimulates neurogenesis<sup>4</sup> by activating the release of neurotrophins<sup>5</sup>, and cognitive stimulation activates the survival of young neurons formed in the hippocampus by promoting their connectivity in existing neural networks* » ». **Physical exercise helps to create new neurons, and mental stimulation helps in the development of**

---

<sup>2</sup> Source: Joël DEHASSE, veterinary and behaviorist

<sup>3</sup> Source: Pr Bernard Sablonnière, French doctor and biologist : « Le cerveau, les clés de son développement et de sa longévité »

<sup>4</sup> Neurogenesis: creation of a neuron

<sup>5</sup> Neurotrophins: molecules essential for the survival of neurons

**these new neurons and their connection to the existing network. It is team work.**

Let's admit that when we think about our dogs' activities, most of us automatically think of physical activities, such as running, swimming, jumping, ... All these activities seem natural to us. Depending on the breed, certain predispositions can be noticed: a shepherd will actively gather the individuals around him (people, dogs...), a greyhound will sprint, a ratter will hunt small animals that happen to be in his field of vision, ...

During physical activities, one or the other of our dog's 5 senses are activated (smell, sight, hearing, touch, taste), which naturally makes his brain and neurons work (= mental stimulation). **However, dynamic physical activities leave little time for the brain to analyse and process the sensory information provided.**

### **Musculature and warm up**

To sum up very briefly, the musculature (ours as well as that of our dogs) is made up of **two categories: deep muscles and superficial muscles.**

Not very bulky and close to the joints, **deep muscles (or short muscles)** have a role in maintaining the anatomy in position and a role in balancing the anatomy in movement. They build and strengthen themselves when we make slow and controlled movements. In human gymnastics, yoga and the Pilates method are perfect examples of exercises adapted to the development of deep muscles, just like walking at a moderate pace.



**Building deep muscles: up and down an inclined plane**



**The deep muscles provide stability to the body while stationary**



**Superficial muscles (or long muscles)** mainly have a mobility role (dynamic and amplitude). They are more voluminous and are visible under the skin (therefore further away from the joints).

**The building of the muscles**, for an optimal result, must be done from the inside (deep muscles close to the joints) to the outside (superficial muscles visible under the skin). Until our dog has reached physical maturity (12 to 24 months depending on the breed), it is important to favour calm, slow activities with controlled movements. Activities involving fast movements, running or jumping should not be considered before adulthood.

Object throwing games (throwing a toy over and over again to get our dog to bring it back to us) are extremely physically (and emotionally) demanding, and are therefore to be avoided throughout our dog's life. **Our role is to provide our dog with games that protect him from injury or wear and tear and that build him up safely for a healthy and peaceful life.**

Remember that our dog's skeleton is **not equipped with a collarbone**. Its spinal column is therefore connected to the scapula (upper bone of the front legs) by muscles and tendons only. It is therefore essential, **before any physical activity, to allow our dog to warm up his muscles**. There are two options: a ten-minute massage or a calm, slow walk on a short leash.

### Option 1: warm-up by massage

 **Recommended book: The complete dog massage manual - Gentle dog care par Julia ROBERTSON**

A warm-up massage is given a maximum of 20 minutes before the physical activity. A second massage can also be performed after the physical activity, in order to eliminate the various toxins from the muscle mass and to avoid aches and pains after physical exercise (within 2 hours after the end of the physical activity).

## Option 2: warm-up by slow walk

We are obviously not talking about agility which is an activity of jumps, propulsions and landings, at high speed. **Rather, we are talking about a slow-moving course, climbing a very gentle inclined plane, crossing bars on the ground or going around tyres that are 4 to 5 metres away from each other.**

**We will choose the obstacles carefully,** depending on the physical condition of our dog. Are we talking about a young or old dog, a sick or injured dog, a healthy dog in the prime of his life?

**Let's keep an eye on the development of our dogs' physical condition.** A dog does not become "old dog" overnight. Like the body of an aging human, a dog's body will feel its muscles become less powerful and its joints become less flexible. Certain pathologies set in in the same way, as they develop. Let's keep this in mind.

**We can offer our dog guidance on how to find his way around:** take a walk by passing between the objects on the course. He will be able to analyse them with all his senses and get used to them. If our dog walks calmly, the leash may be long. If our dog walks fast or is excited, a short leash is required. If our dog has not learned to walk on a leash without pulling, we will teach him outside of the course. **We cannot simultaneously learn to walk over a course and learn to walk without pulling on the leash. Each type of learning requires a specific session.**

For a healthy dog, the course can be completed twice in its entirety. For any other dog, one time is sufficient.



**Walking slowly between parallel poles on the floor**



**Inclined plane to strengthen the deep muscles**

## Biological reactions

**Our brain is programmed to manage on its own the procedures relating to the functioning of our anatomy.** Our digestive system, for example, does not need us to think about how our stomach, liver or intestines work to do its job.

**Our brain also manages emergency situations:** when we are in danger, a complex process immediately takes place to give the body enough resources to **fight or flee for survival**.

Let's consider an example: during a walk, suddenly a loud bang is heard. Instantly, our brain prepares our body for danger by sending oxygen, fat, sugar and stress hormones into the body. The blood leads all these elements to the muscles so that we can run away or fight.

Let's say that it was not a dangerous situation, but perhaps just some joker who popped a balloon. The danger is averted: the new stimuli reach our brain, which sends the necessary messages to the different organs to return to a calm situation. Does our body instantly return to the same state it was in before the bang? Certainly not. A state of tiredness and hunger is often felt as a result of the fats and sugar used. It will also take time for the effects of the stress hormones to be eliminated (adrenalin: 1 to 6 days / cortisol: much longer).

Let's now assume that we regularly take part in hunting parties. We are familiar with the sound of gunshots and have incorporated them as part of an activity that we enjoy. This means that the brain does not trigger the alarm procedures, and we can enjoy our activity in a relaxed manner.

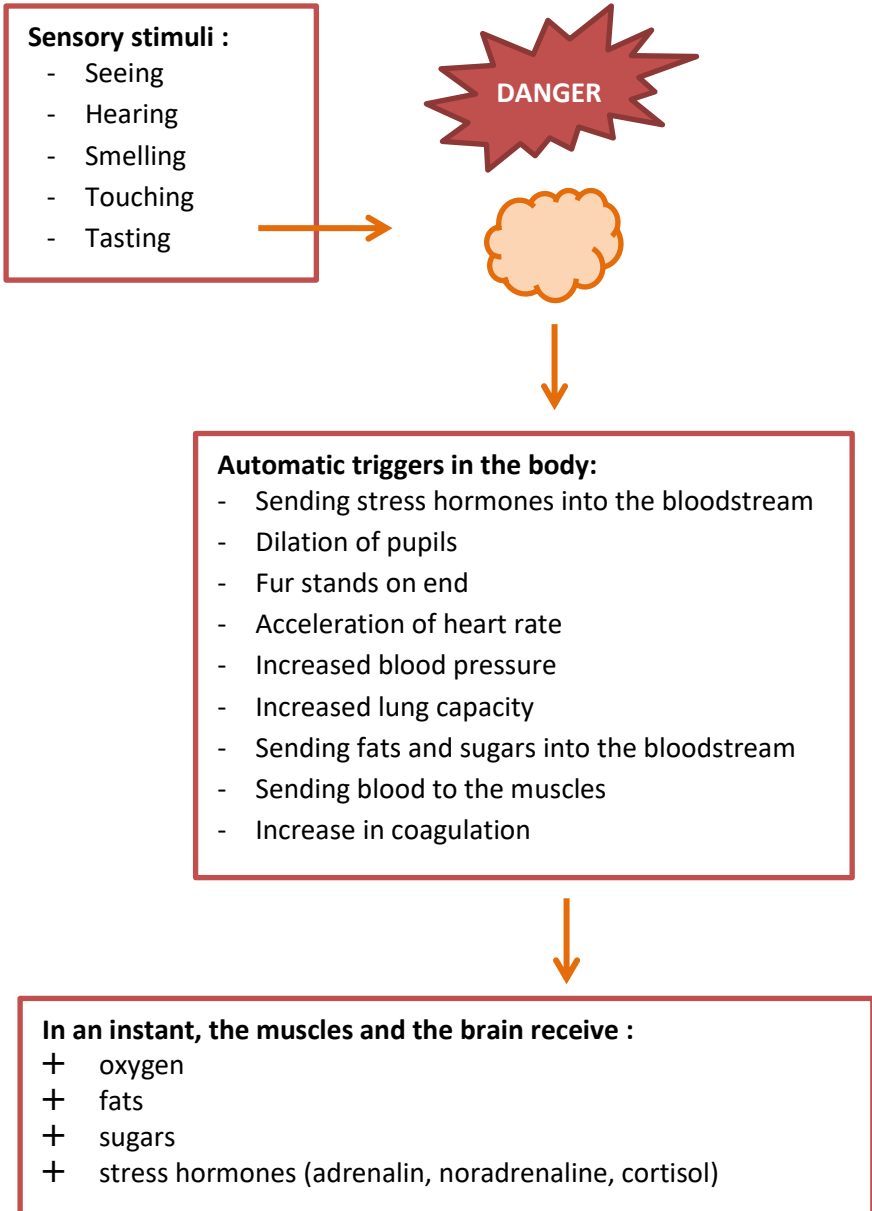




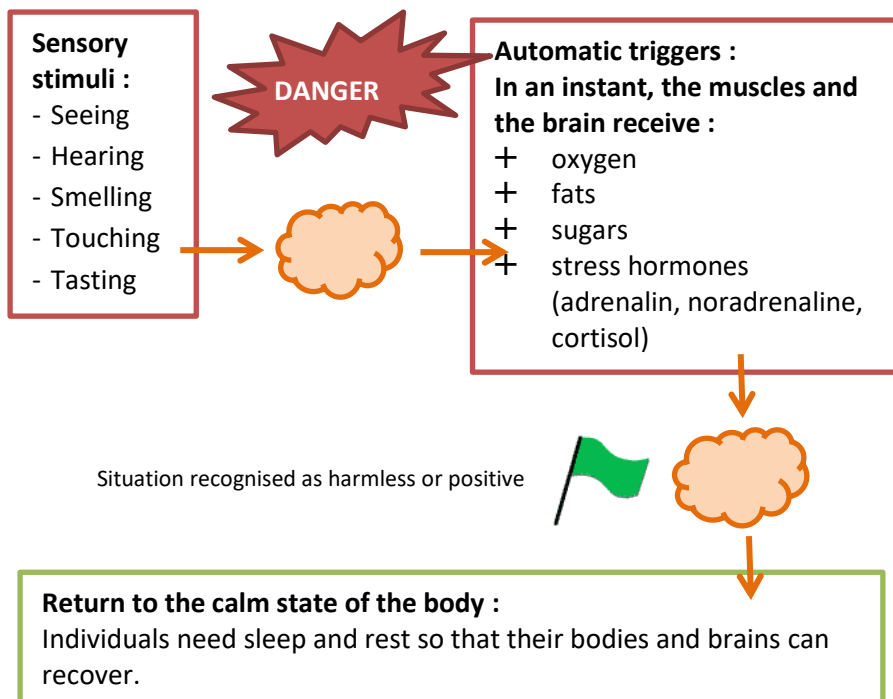
**When the situation is worrying ...**



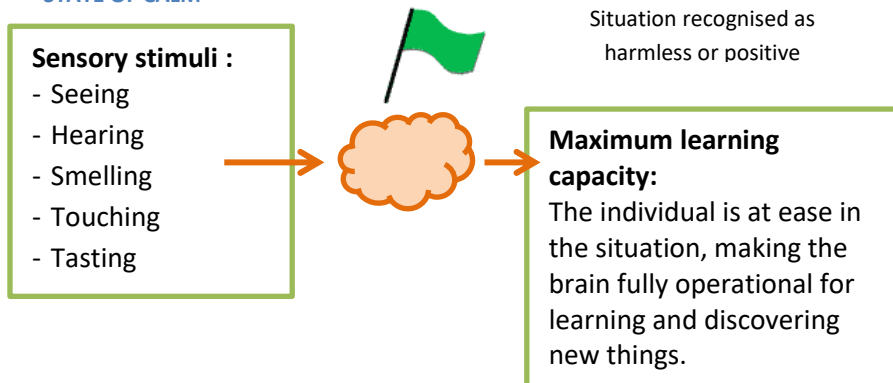
## A. AUTOMATIC PROCESS WHEN SOMEBODY FEELS UNSAFE: THE BODY IS PREPARED FOR FIGHT OR FLIGHT



**B. AUTOMATIC PROCESS WHEN SOMEBODY LEARNS TO COPE THE SITUATION: THE BODY GOES THROUGH A STATE OF ALERT, TO RETURN TO CALM**



**C. WHEN THE INDIVIDUAL COPES THE SITUATION: THE BODY REMAINS IN A NORMAL STATE OF CALM**



**These processes are identical in our dogs: their brains are programmed to react in case of danger.**

**A stressful situation generates stress hormones every time it occurs.** If an individual is sensitive to a certain stimulus or situation that occurs frequently, the hormones are released every time. Anatomy has not yet been able to completely eliminate the old effects of hormones, so new effects accumulate.

Just like stress, **an exciting activity produces the same effects on the body.** If a dog is hunting, his body will use all available resources (oxygen, sugars, fats and stress hormones). To catch its prey, it will need both speed and endurance. If these hunting parties occur frequently, our dog's body will be overloaded with adrenaline, noradrenaline and cortisol.

When we throw a ball, stick or frisbee for our dog, we repeatedly reproduce this hunting scenario, and thus initiate this biological mechanism of stress hormone production.

**If these exciting and/or stressful situations occur frequently, our dog's body will find itself in a situation of chronic stress, with all the possible pathologies that may result (hypersensitivity to visual and sound stimuli, difficulty concentrating, loss of appetite and digestive disorders, sleep disorders, irritability...).**

### Biochemical reactions

When the body produces adrenaline, there is a parallel production of other substances which are not without consequences.

- 🐾 **Gastric fluids:** these can lead to diarrhoea or loose stools, vomiting, digestive problems;
- 🐾 **Anti-diuretic hormones:** they cause an increase in urine production (our dog will pee much more often);



- 🐾 **Neuro-hormones neuropeptides Y:** they damage the immune system;
- 🐾 **Sex hormones:** they cause changes in behaviour, such as humping or increased irritability.

**Any stressful situation causes changes in the body, small or big, depending on the intensity of the stress and its duration. In the case of recurring stress, we speak of chronic stress.**

Chronic stress is harmful to health (digestive problems, allergies and skin problems, body and mouth odour, high heartbeat, high blood pressure, drinking a lot, ...) and leads to behavioural problems (excessive barking and howling, nervousness and irritability, depression and lack of social skills, pulling on the leash...).

### **The uniqueness of each individual**

The ideal for optimal learning is to avoid exciting and/or stressful situations. In the case of too much excitement or stress, the brain is monopolised by physical survival reactions and therefore cannot handle anything else in the same period of time. New information is not acted upon because the brain is unable to deal with it.

It is important that **activities respect the physical, emotional and learning capacities of each individual**. Like any other species, dogs are not all made in the same mould. The origin of the breed can be important, but within a breed, a lineage, a kennel, even a litter, **each individual is born with particular abilities (physical and mental)**. And as with humans, every day is not the same, and every individual has variables: **every individual has weak points and off days**. It is the same for our dogs.

Let's take a visual stimulus: the passing by of a bicycle. Some breeds are indeed predisposed to chase anything that moves quickly. This does not mean that all individuals of that breed will react in the same way to the same stimulus. Logically, the reverse is also true: not all individuals of a placid breed will necessarily remain unresponsive to the same stimulus. **Individuals of the same breed have things in common, but each individual remains unique.**

**Depending on one's experience**, these differences are even more obvious. A dog of a breed known to be placid, who has had a negative experience with a bicycle (fear or physical injury) will become reactive (or not...) to the passing by of any other bicycle.

**Every day is also different:** if our dog is feverish (not enough rest? accumulated fatigue? sick or injured?), he will be less tolerant on that particular day than on any other day of the year.

### Mental activities and health

Numerous studies have been carried out on different mammals (rats, dogs, humans...) and have proven that **mental stimulation helps to fight against brain ageing**. In human medicine and para-medicine, mental stimulation exercises are practised as part of specific care given to the elderly (for example to combat Alzheimer's disease), **but also to young children, or even infants, to alleviate certain growth or development problems.**

It is recognised, scientifically and internationally, that the brain becomes and remains effective by being regularly used and trained: *"Use it or lose it"*, to quote a famous saying. What is true for humans is also true for any species with a similar nervous system, including our dogs.

A recent scientific study (Cornell University study) analysed the impact that a stimulating environment can have on cancerous mice: **mice that**

**benefited from this enriched environment seem to have been protected from developing cancer.**



## Watch the world go by

As good observers, if they have the opportunity, our dogs will spend time looking out of a window: birds or the neighbour's cat crossing the garden, passers-by on the pavement, cars, ... **While observing, if our dogs seem to “do nothing”, their brain is nevertheless at work:** the sensory pathways (sight, smell, hearing, taste, touch) feed the brain with all kinds of information. Although there is no physical activity, the neurons are indeed working at full capacity.

“Doing nothing” is an activity that we can offer them on a walk: stopping at a terrace, in a garden, on a bench... **Watching the world go by, picking up sensory information from the environment, ...**



**Séverine and Heidi are watching the world go by**





## Balanced activities

A dog who is bored will show behavioural problems<sup>6</sup> (non-exhaustive list: intensive licking or biting of a part of his body, chasing after his tail, destruction of objects at home, aimlessly going back and forth along a fence or a door...). It is up to us to provide him with enough interesting activities, while respecting his needs for recovery and sleep. **If a bored dog shows behavioural problems, an “overbooked” dog will show them just as much.**



**Exciting physical activities generate  
the spread of stress hormones in the body.**

---

<sup>6</sup> To be differentiated: undesirable behaviour (natural behaviour for the dog but considered undesirable in the human world) and behavioural disorders (unnatural behaviour of the dog).

## Strengthening the mutual bond

The activities also have a direct consequence on the relationship we have with our dog: the time spent together reinforces our sense of closeness, as long as these shared moments are filled with **respect, fun and enjoyment**.



**Sharing a break after a tracking session**



## Building trust

Finally, any successful challenge **reinforces**:

- 🐾 **the confidence the dog has in himself,**
- 🐾 **the confidence he has in us,**
- 🐾 **the trust we have in him.**

Building up this confidence from small victories to small victories will allow our companion to overcome his fears, to take initiatives and to challenge himself. Succeeding in these challenges will again contribute to building the confidence he has in himself.



**A matter of trust...**

## TAKEAWAY

- 🐾 Physical and mental activities complement each other to achieve balance;
- 🐾 Mental activities help fight against brain aging and disease;
- 🐾 Excitement and stress block quality mental stimulation;
- 🐾 Stress and chronic stress impact our dog's anatomy and reactions;
- 🐾 Each individual is different and one day is not the other;
- 🐾 Quality learning is learning without overexcitement or stress;
- 🐾 "Doing nothing" (watching the world go by) is an activity;
- 🐾 Bored dogs can develop behavioural problems;
- 🐾 Dogs who are "overbooked" can develop behavioural problems;
- 🐾 To reinforce our complicity, let's share moments of respect, fun and conviviality;
- 🐾 Our dogs build their self-confidence by winning adapted challenges.

## WHEN DO THE ACTIVITIES OF OUR DOGS START?

The puppies begin to be active in the litter, with their mother and siblings. Born blind and deaf, **the puppies are already able from birth to taste, smell and feel.** The breeder (be it a professional breeder or the person in whose home the litter was born) may have a few cuddly toys of different materials at their disposal. The puppies' 3 senses are then solicited.

**Sight and hearing are acquired between the 11th and 13th day.** Two days after the development of sight and hearing, the breeder may place an object near the puppies. They begin to discover the world little by little (only one novelty at a time: a human, a tube, a cardboard box, a bag, a toy, a cushion, a sound...). Too much could stress the litter: too many noises, people, objects, handlings, ...

**Between 2 and 2 1/2 weeks of age, puppies may crawl** and look outside their burrow for a few moments before their mother brings them in.

**From 3 or 4 weeks onwards, they can be left to explore gradually and gently.** They discover a new world full of stimuli. Just let the puppies make choices, without forcing or coercing them. They gradually gain independence and learn to be curious.

**Learning is more effective if our dogs (like humans for that matter) learn on their own.** Of course, we must take care of the litter, to ensure the safety of each member, but it is **important to let the puppies discover and test their environment.**

The ideal age to leave the litter is **between 9 and 12 weeks of age**. It is up to the new adopter to take over. In order for our new arrival to feel safe and secure, he will need:

- 🐾 Water, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week (no restriction),
- 🐾 food (at least 3 meals, but if possible, 4 or 5 meals a day),
- 🐾 to go outside to relieve himself regularly,
- 🐾 to sleep ( $\pm 20$  h / 24)<sup>7</sup>,
- 🐾 to not be alone<sup>8</sup>.



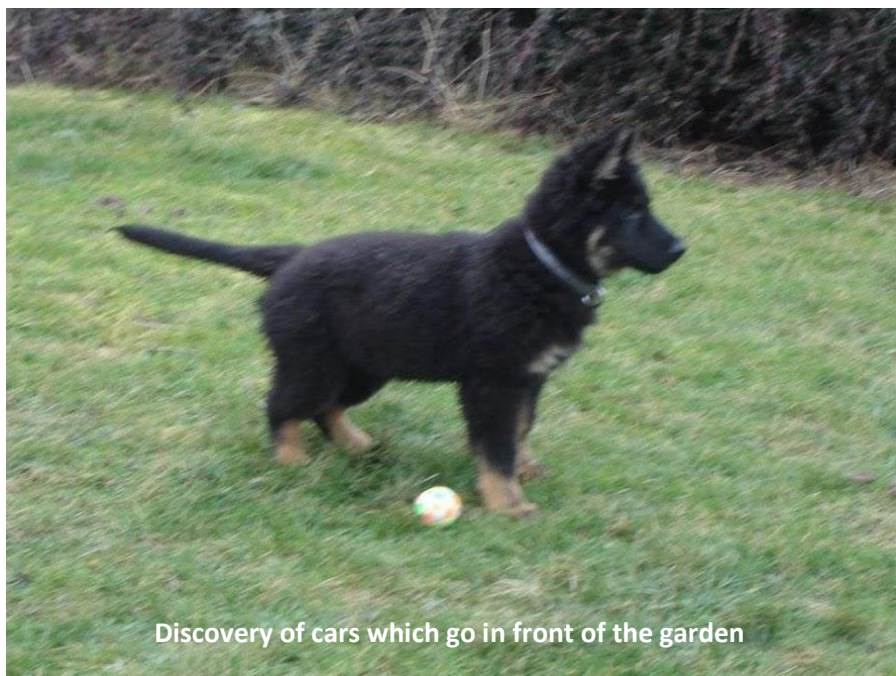
---

<sup>7</sup> For quality sleep, the puppy needs to feel secure. This means that he should not be left alone: if a human or another dog is present, the puppy knows that this companion will stand guard and that he is safe.

<sup>8</sup> The dog is a social animal, which naturally needs contact and companionship. If our way of life requires us to leave our dog at home, it is essential to teach him to stay alone or to find him a companion or dog-sitter.

Let's think about preparing the house for his arrival: the different places to eat, drink, relieve himself and sleep. When the puppy has arrived at our home, let him have time to acclimatise: **everything he knew before has disappeared and he finds himself in a new world.** Let him have two or three days to get to know his new home and his new playmates (humans, dogs or others).

**After acclimatisation to his new environment,** we can offer him to start activities, always respecting his development and his experience of the world. A dog born in the country is not used to the sounds and smells of the city. A dog born in the city does not know the sounds of farm animals and has probably never seen or heard tractors.



Discovery of cars which go in front of the garden

The chronology above is that of a puppy but **our new companion could be an adult**. If adopting a teenage or adult dog, it is also important to prepare the house for his arrival and let him acclimatize before starting activities. Depending on our dog's natural predispositions ("I'm not afraid of anything – I'll go for anything", "I'm not comfortable with my new life", "I like my new friends", "I'm terrified of this new environment",), we will take care to put him at ease with his new life, if necessary, and in any case to adapt the activities to his knowledge of the world and his physical and mental abilities.

#### TAKEAWAY

- 🐾 Discovering the world begins with mom and siblings;
- 🐾 Just let the dogs make choices, without forcing or constraining;
- 🐾 Let us ensure the feeling of security of our new arrival (eating, drinking, sleeping, peeing and pooing, social contacts);
- 🐾 Respecting the development and his experience of the world (dogs in cities >< dogs in countryside).



## HOW TO ORGANIZE ACTIVITIES

**Keeping a diary** of activities is interesting, at least initially. It allows us to note the activities we offer (walks, search games, places to explore, resourcefulness games...), but also the reactions of our dogs (excited, relaxed, hesitant, fearful, reactive...).

We can check on the one hand that the **activities are varied** (different places to walk, meeting strangers, variations of games and hiding places...) and on the other hand that **the development of our dog is taken into account** (he has not become bored/he can manage the progression of the difficulties).

	Mon. 11/1	TUE mar. 12/1	Wednes. 13/1	THUR. 14/1	FRI. ven. 15/1	SAT. sam. 16/1	SUND. 17/1
06:00							
07:00							
08:00	Chicken	Pasta	Chicken	Sardines	minced Meat	Beef	Fish
09:00							
10:00	walk in the fields 15'	walk in wood 15'	walk RAVEL (Parkway) 20'	walk in wood 20'	walk with Judy RAVEL (pathway) 15'	walk Bolette Street	walk in the fields 15'
11:00			dr with house				
12:00							
13:00	Visit Carl (excitement)	CAREFUL Heart on the right thigh	"lost object"	CARE tick on left ear	"hidden object"	CAREFUL Towelmen	Discrimination game with 4 decks
14:00							
15:00	52	HEART 54	RATE (number of beats per minute) 54	52	58	54	53
16:00							
17:00							

**Diary including duration and type of activities, possible health problems, daily heartbeat and meals**

**Maya is observing a water fall**



**Construction site: barrier, rubble and smells to analyse for Sugus**

Whatever activities are offered, it is important to let our dog:

- 🐾 observe and analyse with all his senses,
- 🐾 take initiatives and decisions,
- 🐾 take a break if necessary,
- 🐾 face difficulties.

### Observe and analyse with all his senses

All activities involve the activation of the senses (one or all 5 at a time). **A walk means: smelling** every pole or blade of grass; **watching** a butterfly fly or a car drive by; **listening** to birds sing or the wind in the leaves of a tree; **feeling** the different surfaces of the ground with his paw pads; **tasting** the water in a puddle or chewing on a piece of wood. To be able to analyse and memorise every element of one's environment takes time.

A fabric tunnel, crossed while walking: the rustle, smell, luminosity, contact of the legs and back





## Take initiatives and decisions

During the walk, for example, let our dog walk wherever he likes around us. Perhaps a garden fence or an electric pole will be very interesting. What if that tree had a scent that was still unknown...? Let our dogs explore at their own pace, stop, explore again and start again.

If a dog finds it interesting to explore our laundry or under a piece of furniture? As long as the dog's safety is not at risk, let him. A curious dog is a healthy dog!



A curious dog is a healthy dog!

## Take a break if needed

During the walk our dog may need a break. Stopping, nose in the wind, and watching the world go by is a rare pleasure.

While exploring an enriched environment<sup>9</sup> or during a chewing activity, some rest may be welcome.

The same is true during a resourcefulness activity: there is no need to insist that the dog should continue. Can we force someone to concentrate? No! However, taking a break and then resuming the activity is the ideal solution. Let's do the same for our dog.



---

<sup>9</sup> The idea is to create places to explore, by arranging various objects over a few square metres (recycling of bottles, door curtains, bag, boxes, wood, boots,...).

## Facing difficulties

We tend to protect small dogs, which we take in our arms and carry from one place to another. These dogs know our arms, neck and chin very well. But what do they know about the rest of the world?

A fearful dog evokes pity and, to protect him, we keep him away from anything that gives him difficulties. If we organise activities, taking care to give our fearful dog enough time and space, he learns by himself that he is capable of doing things. Each small victory is then a reward for our dog, who gains a little more self-confidence, as the difficulties he has managed to overcome are overcome.

**For the activities and games that we organise, it is important to evaluate the level of difficulty by adapting to our companion's abilities:** exercises that are too difficult lead to failure after failure and risk making our dog lose his self-confidence, whereas exercises that are too easy and lack challenge can frustrate our dog. It is up to us to choose what suits him best, physically and mentally.

### TAKEAWAY

- 🐾 Keeping a diary can help us organize adapted and varied activities;
- 🐾 Vary the fun activities, while taking into account the development and the rhythm of our dog;
- 🐾 A curious dog is a healthy dog;
- 🐾 Breaks are allowed and beneficial;
- 🐾 Balanced activities for a balanced dog.



## SLEEP AND RECOVERY

**Our adult dogs need to sleep an average of 16 hours a day, depending on the breed and individual. A puppy may need up to 20 hours of sleep.**

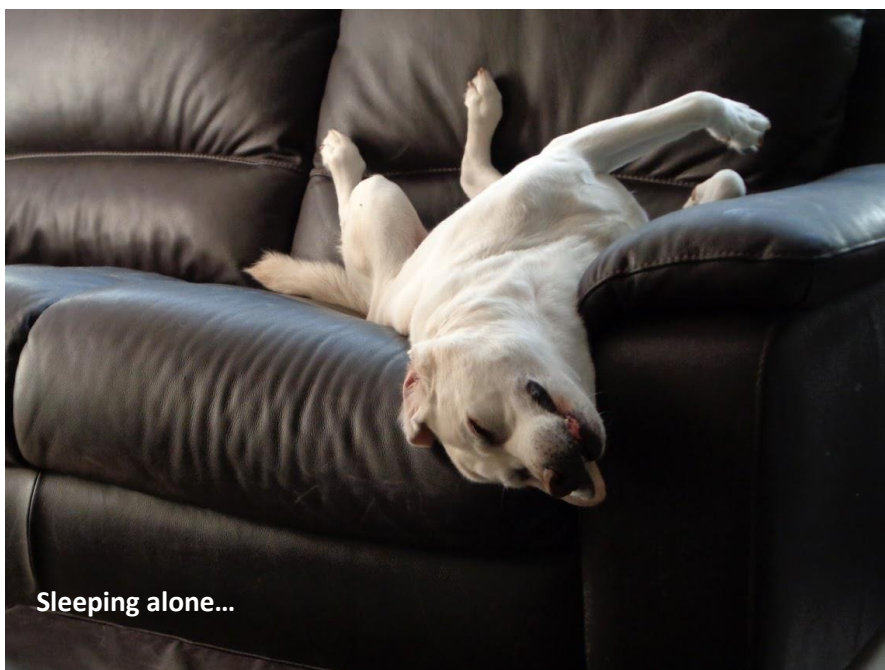
Lying on the deck or in an armchair, seemingly doing nothing, just watching us or watching and listening to the world go by is not part of the resting time. Exercising your senses stimulates the brain, so it is an activity in itself.

While as a general rule, a dog needs an average of 16 hours of sleep, **he will need more rest if he has participated in an exceptional activity.** Our dog's brain and body require a longer recovery time, as do ours when we go on a full day excursion if this is not our habit. Depending on the individual (age, state of health...), his habits and his training for certain activities, our companion needs a longer recovery time.

**Let's not forget that exciting or stressful activities also generate additional fatigue, which calls for an additional recovery time.**

### TAKEAWAY

- 🐾 “Doing nothing” is an activity;
- 🐾 An exceptional activity leads to an exceptional sleep period;
- 🐾 Every individual has his own optimal recovery time.



Sleeping alone...



...or together

## PLAYING FETCH

### What is it?

It involves throwing an object (ball, stick, rope, frisbee...) a few metres away, with the aim that the dog goes to fetch it and bring it back to us. We must admit that everyone has already tried this kind of game. Let's observe our dogs, what can we notice?

### The process

During a game of fetch, the set of actions or physical reactions of our companion is made up of, among other things:

- 🐾 Seeing the object being thrown,
- 🐾 Start in the direction of the launched object,
- 🐾 Look / hear / feel where the object has landed,
- 🐾 Arriving at the destination,
- 🐾 Stop to grab the object or catch it in mid-air,
- 🐾 Return the object to the launcher,
- 🐾 Stop and start again.

This visual, auditory and olfactory information is sent to the brain. Depending on the dog's experience, he either remains in a rational or moderate interaction (those who cope) or it becomes an automatic reaction, it has become a reflex (those who do not cope).

Think for a moment of swimmers or runners who have learned to react as quickly as possible to the auditory stimulus of the gunshot announcing the start of the competition. They trained their bodies to fight innate reflexes (startle, shake...) to transform them into learned reflexes (propel themselves forward).

This process is identical in dogs trained to run after objects. Through training sessions, our dogs' reflexes are sharpened to start and run after an object. And finally, it doesn't matter what the object is: everything that passes in front of the dog's eyes, at a certain speed, provokes the same reflex. Our dog will run after that thing or that person: a bicycle, a cat or a child running, ... **We have increased our dog's speed of reactivity as well as its predation instinct.**

### Those who cope

Some of our companions are quite capable of handling chasing games. After some throws, they stop fetching the object and chew it in the corner of the garden or the living room or simply give it up to move on to other activities. These dogs are able to measure their physical and emotional tolerance threshold.

### Those who do not cope

What about dogs who get excited to the point of not being aware of the world around them? At the sight of the adored object, these dogs will salivate, whine, bark, jump up, sometimes all at once: a **firework of excitement**. They become addicted to these objects and what they represent. In some cases, these objects become such an important resource that these dogs do everything in their power not to lose this object. **A person or an animal who would come too close to this treasure, could bitterly regret it.**



**When sharing the ball is possible...**



**When sharing the ball is not possible...**



## Physical injuries

Depending on the “technique” chosen by our dog for starting, running or jumping (and returning to the ground), catching, pivoting back to the thrower... serious physical injuries can be sustained. If our dog chooses to launch himself into the air to catch the object passing over him, let’s imagine the muscular, articular and skeletal constraints to which his body is subjected from the moment he propels himself from the ground: he jumps, is in suspension, grabs (or tries to grab) the object and lands or falls back to the ground.

Let us remember that our dog’s skeleton is not equipped with a collarbone. Its spinal column is therefore connected to the scapula (upper bone of the front legs) by muscles and tendons only.





## An expert opinion

Nathalie Barrière, a veterinarian specialising in osteopathy, answers the question ***“What injuries or other consequences have you seen specifically as a result of throwing games (balls, frisbees, sticks...)?”***

*“The most common injury is a **torn anterior cruciate ligament in the stifle (knee)**. This tear can be partial or complete. The lower leg remains on the ground while the upper one swivels, creating a twisting of the knee. When the tear is complete, the dog often needs surgery. When it is partial, it depends on many factors but the dog should be rested for at least 2 months.*

***This injury leads to a cascade of compensations at the osteopathic level:** the pelvis tilts to put more weight on one hind leg than the other. This tilting of the pelvis causes a blockage in the 4th or 5th lumbar vertebrae and in the thoracolumbar junction.*

*The hips will be stimulated during propulsion. If this is done at an angle and/or cold, the dog may feel severe pain. **The pelvis will then very quickly become injured as well.***

***Injuries to the forelimbs are also frequently encountered, especially in the shoulders** (most often following a slip) or in the carpus (wrists) (following sudden braking and changes of direction).*

***Injuries to the back** will mainly be located in the high dorsal region (between the shoulder blades), at the thoracolumbar junction and in the lower lumbar region.*

***The nape of the neck may also be blocked** during an abrupt movement. This is one of the most painful areas. Dogs often cry out “as if they were stepped on their tail, even though they are not being touched” throughout the period of inflammation.*

*The temporo-mandibular joints (jaws), when catching straight “in the mouth” can also become blocked.*

*Injuries and pain can be marked instantly, sometimes even with a scream, or after cooling down (sometimes even only the next day).*

*In the most serious but fortunately rarer cases, **fractures or tearing of the growth plates can occur**. These fractures are difficult to treat because they are often spiral fractures, i.e., linked to a twisting of the long bone at the time of landing. The bone most often affected by this type of fracture is the tibia.*

*All these problems were “acute” after-effects, but we **must not forget the injuries which will be chronic, as a result of repeating the same movements over and over again**, we will find arthritis in the joints which are most stressed, i.e.: the knees, hips, vertebrae (dorsal and lumbar), wrists and shoulders.”*

### Excitement and stress hormones

Let's remember that excitement causes the dog's body to **trigger the survival process**: fat, sugar, increased heart rate, increased blood pressure, stress hormones, ... His body prepares itself for action.

**The ideal is to avoid exciting and/or stressful situations. Remember: in case of too much excitement or stress, the brain is monopolised by the physical survival reactions and therefore cannot handle anything else in the same amount of time. New information is not acted upon because the brain is unable to deal with it.**

### Alternative activities

If our dog likes balls, sticks, frisbees or any other toy, there are a multitude of games to offer them using these toys: chewing, carrying, looking for a lost object, retrieving a hidden object,...

Overcoming a challenge such as carrying an object reinforces the confidence our dog has in himself.



**Alternative to fetching games: carrying a branch**

Alternative to fetching games: the hidden object for Koumack



#### TAKEAWAY

**For the majority of dogs: do not throw objects!**



## WALKS

**There are a thousand ways to go for a walk. We will obviously take into account the physical capabilities of our dogs.** A puppy can walk for 10 minutes at the age of 3 months, adding 5 minutes per month of age. An older dog is no longer able to walk as long as before or on uneven surfaces. **To each dog his own walk!**

We will also take into account the emotional abilities of our dogs. If our dog is reactive to horses or cars, we will choose suitable walking places (without horses / without cars) if our aim is to offer a relaxing and exploratory stroll. **Habituation exercises are to be organised outside the relaxing walk.**

It is important that the equipment be adapted to our dog:

- ✿ the **leash** must be long enough to allow the dog to discover his surroundings: 3 meters minimum. A training session can be helpful before using a long leash with our dog;
- ✿ the **harness** must respect his morphology (throat, scapula and underarms);
- ✿ **the carabiner clip** is attached to the harness so that the snap hook is positioned upwards (not towards the back of the dog).

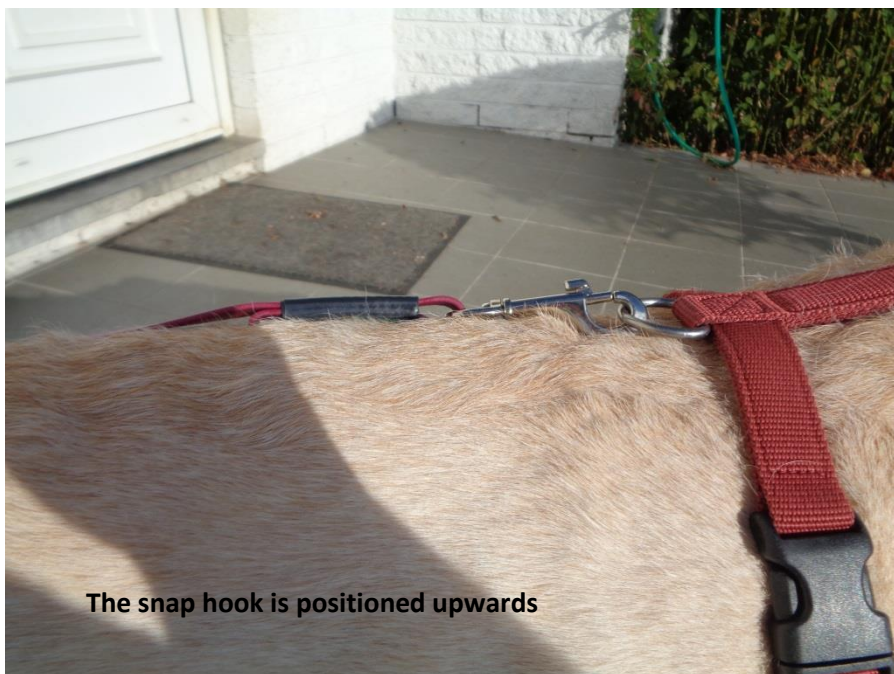
If we prefer to walk our dog without a leash, let's keep the leash on until the muscles have time to warm up (at least 10 minutes).

**Recommended website for the material:** [www.freedogz.be](http://www.freedogz.be) - Els VIDTS

**We regularly offer our dogs new places to walk (city, forest, car park, building sites...), and keep in mind that, depending on the weather or the seasons, these places change in configuration and smell.**



**Adapted harness for Lissa: shoulder blades, armpits, throat are free**



**The snap hook is positioned upwards**



A freshly cut field in spring or the same field in the rain in autumn are places to be rediscovered olfactorily, but also with the touch of the paws on the ground. The rhythm of the children's school day is also an example of the changing atmosphere of a neighbourhood or village, depending on the time of day or the time of year we walk there.

**Beware that in very cold or hot weather, the pavements can be irritating for the pads (frozen pavements or burning tarmac for example).**

Walking together, our dog and us, or sharing it with other people and/or other dogs, is also a variation of the fun activities.

How about taking a little break on a bench to watch the world go by! All our senses in action, seemingly doing nothing.

### Those who cope

**During these walks, our dog has learned to deal with new sensations, new situations, new objects, ... All these victories build the confidence he has in himself... and in us.**

If the aim of the walk is to explore, the pace of the walk is necessarily slow. Let's observe our dogs as they explore: they look, smell, listen, move forward a little to see and feel better, and continue the walk at this pace. **The slower we walk, the more we invite our dog to take his time to explore and discover the world.**

**When our dog stops, it is important that we stop too.** The message we give him when we stop is "I'm waiting for you, take your time". If our dog has stopped for something, he has no difficulty with (to do his business or to analyse a very interesting blade of grass) and we continue our walk,

## Social walks with “les youkis heureux”



...on a country lane...



...in mud...

while our dog is busy, he will feel obliged to catch up with us, without having finished analysing that wonderful smell that had attracted his attention so much.

Our dog will also stop to better observe (with all his senses) something that intrigues or frightens him. By stopping, we give him the time he needs to check that this thing is not dangerous: we ourselves have remained in this situation, we have not run away.

It is always useful to give a hand signal if our dog seems hesitant.

### Those who do not cope

It is important to be aware that some dogs will not be able to handle the situation when faced with something that frightens them too much: they will then become reactive (growling, barking, throwing themselves forward or trying to run away...). **It is urgent to get our dog out of this situation which overwhelms him: put the necessary distance between our dog and something he can't cope with.**

If our dog has become reactive to certain things (non-exhaustive list: rubbish bag, tree branch, butterfly, noise, walker, jogger, dog, horse, plane, car...), habituation walks can be organised but it is better to ask for the help of an instructor, consultant or behaviourist who uses non-coercive and non-violent methods.

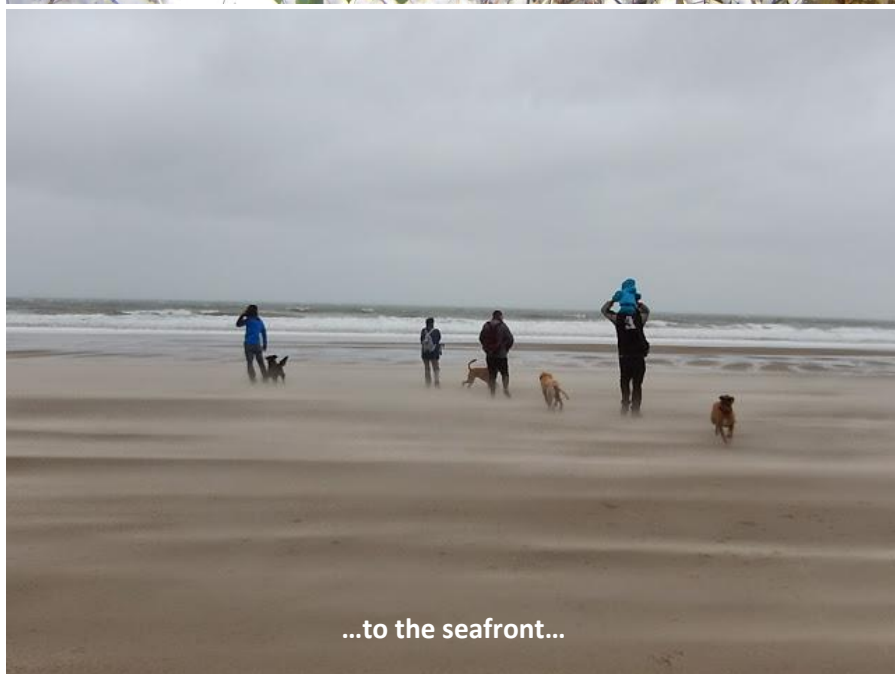
The criteria for a habituation walk are:

- 🐾 duration of only a few minutes,
- 🐾 at a sufficient distance from the difficulty (each dog has his own safety distance)
- 🐾 in a secure environment,
- 🐾 ends on a positive note,
- 🐾 respects the development of our dog.

**Recommended book and DVD: “My dog pulls, what do I do?”, by Turid RUGAAS.**

#### TAKEAWAY

- 🐾 Relaxing walks and habituation walks: opposite purpose / different organisation;
- 🐾 We need non-coercive material (long leash and ergonomic harness – armpits, throat and shoulder blades are free);
- 🐾 To walk slowly = To allow our dogs to use all their senses;
- 🐾 Let’s vary the fun activities;
- 🐾 Learning to cope safely with difficulties;
- 🐾 Walking or watching the world go by.







Els (Freedogz) is walking with Imaree and Lissa, with long leashes





## ENRICHED ENVIRONMENTS...

**The idea is to create places to explore, by arranging various objects over a few square metres. Exploring in complete safety allows our dog to gain self-confidence. He learns to manage difficulties by using all his senses.** He can observe, hear and smell the objects or places visited. He learns with each exploration that the world is not dangerous and that he can face obstacles.

Instead of throwing away cardboard boxes and objects that we no longer need, we can reuse them for our dogs' greatest pleasure. However, let's be careful to create safe environments. Depending on our dog's temperament and physical abilities, let's think about offering him environments that suit him.

During this activity, as with any other, **our dog may need a break.** He might move away from all these objects for a few minutes or longer, depending on his needs at the moment. Let him do it! **If we organize an enriched environment indoors (in a garage or a play room for example), make sure he still has an exit so that he can move away from the environment if necessary.**

**All we have to do is to place the objects, provide a bowl of water and a way out. Our dog will do the rest, we just have to observe him.**

### Those who do not cope

For example, some dogs are more **sensitive to noise**. For these dogs, it is important not to have noisy objects such as chimes or ganneries with elements that the wind could make them collide. Some objects that are too light, such as plastic bags and empty cardboard boxes, can move or fly away.







Recycling of floppy disks, bottles, door curtains, cardboard boxes, planters, bags, pieces of wood,...



Wheelbarrow, pipe, tyre, cones, barrel,...

Other dogs are **“obsessed” with certain objects**, such as a ball, a stuffed toy, a branch, a plastic jug or a cone. For these dogs, it is important not to have objects that are “too interesting”. They may give them their full attention, chew them and carry them around without showing interest in other objects. While they play, they do not explore. Moreover, if the ground is cluttered with several other objects – the very principle of the enriched environment – our dog risks being injured while running and playing. Let’s also not lose sight of the stress hormone levels that exciting situations provoke.

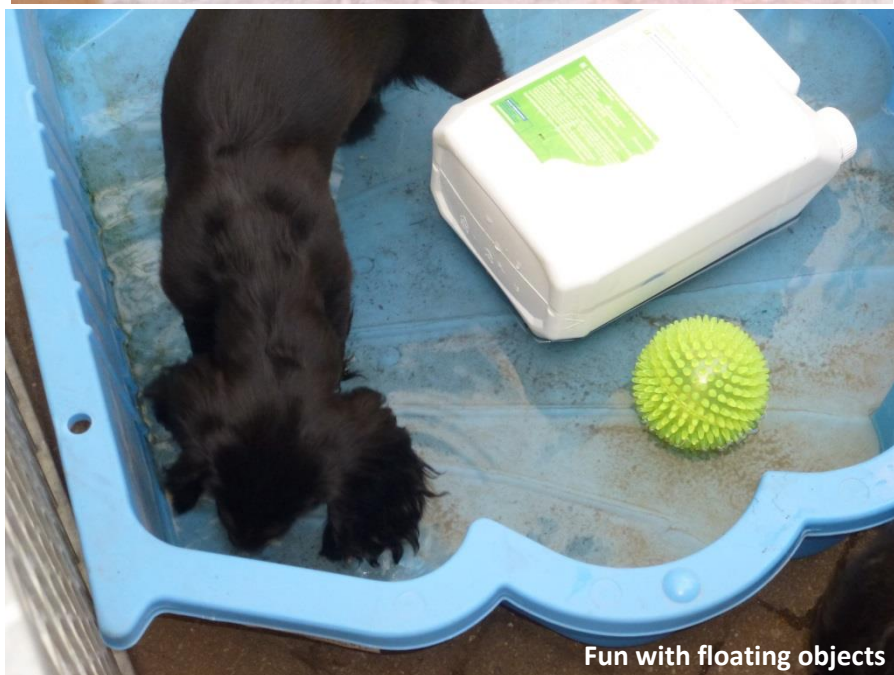
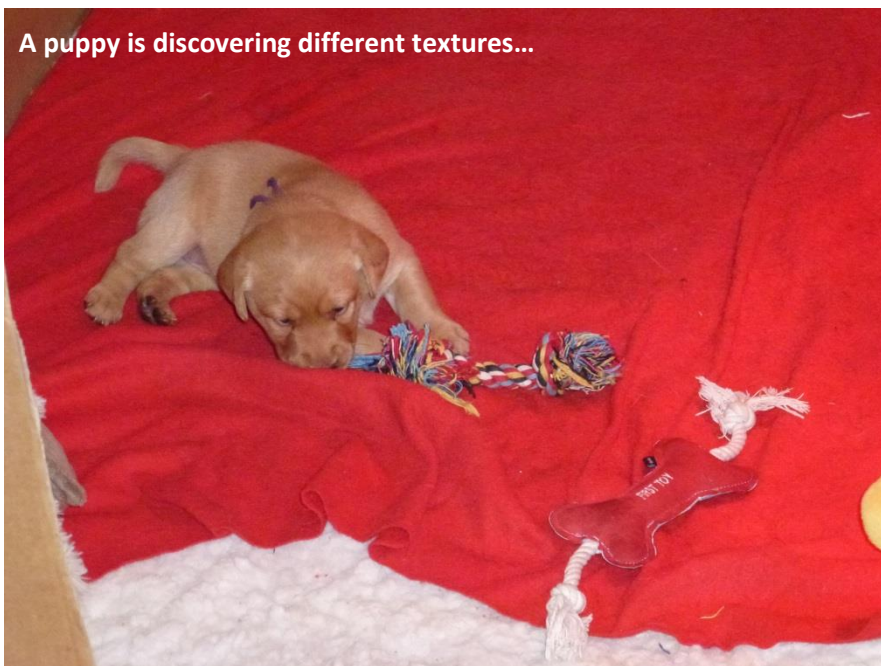
**Some dogs like to dig.** We can organize a search area on tarmac for example or at home. They will then be able to focus on the different objects selected for them.

**If we are taking care of a litter of puppies**, certain precautions must also be taken: it is essential to offer them new items, but integrating only one new parameter at a time, whether visual or auditory. Cuddly toys or blankets of different sizes and textures are excellent novelties for the little ones of a few days old. From three weeks onwards, other objects can be progressively integrated.

If we have adopted a new dog, whatever his age, it is **essential to adapt to the abilities of our dog**. We can offer him more and more difficulties, by renewing objects and places at will, while taking into account the progress of our companion.

We can offer our dog the opportunity to explore in the company of one of his friends. Two socialised dogs who have not yet met each other can get to know each other in an enriched environment, so that they can be brought into contact with each other in a gentle way.

A puppy is discovering different textures...



Fun with floating objects





Exploring alone... or with a friend...







The construction site of a house



A deserted football field

We can also take advantage of our walks to explore a variety of places, such as a building site, a house under construction, a warehouse, a dump or a car park. These are places where the smells are infinitely renewed, given the movement of people, materials or vehicles: almost daily olfactory and visual changes.

#### TAKEAWAY

- 🐾 Spread various everyday objects to create a secure area that can be explored;
- 🐾 Choose naturally enriched places for walks;
- 🐾 Exploring improves self-confidence, learning to manage difficulties and using all senses;
- 🐾 Collect or make objects to create secure enriched environment;
- 🐾 Take into account of the temperament of our dog (fear from sounds, hyper-sensibility, reactivity from sudden movements...);
- 🐾 Taking a break is sometimes necessary.

## TREAT SEARCH

### What is it?

How do we suggest that our dogs use their nose to find tasty things to eat? The search for food being part of the basic survival reflexes, **all dogs have this innate talent**. This activity can be proposed from once to 4 times a day.

### What do we need?

Treats that our dog likes, in small pieces or as a paste.

### Description and progression

**Step 1:** 5 treats scattered, where the dog can see them, over a small area. To make the exercise easier for dogs in difficulty, we can start in a quiet room of the house (where he feels comfortable).

**Step 2:** More treats, always within sight of the dog, over a larger area.

**Step 3:** Many treats, while the dog is not watching, over the same area. It is important to add only one difficulty at a time: either the number of treats, or the surface area, or the environment (calm, noisy, distracting...), or in or out of the dog's sight. **Only one parameter changes between two stages of the exercise.**

**Step 4:** Many treats, again within sight of the dog, on the same surface, in the garden for those who offered the exercise at home or during a walk (in an open area) for those who already used the garden. When a new parameter causes great difficulty (change of environment for example), the level of difficulty of one of the other parameters can be reduced (again while watching, for example).





... on the terrace or in the grass...



...in tall grass or dead leaves...

**Step 5:** We continue to offer increasingly difficult searches, changing only one parameter at a time. The weather can also help us to diversify environments.

**Step 6:** After working on the ground, we can tackle working at heights. We place cream cheese or pâté (a slightly sticky food that is easy to spread) on a border, a pole, a clothes line, window boxes, ...

### Learning without pressure

It is possible that **our dog may take a break**: he simply leaves the search area and goes off to other activities or simply goes to rest. There is no need to insist and make him continue the exercise. If we force our dog, it is no longer a game but it becomes an obligation which will not necessarily leave him with a good memory.

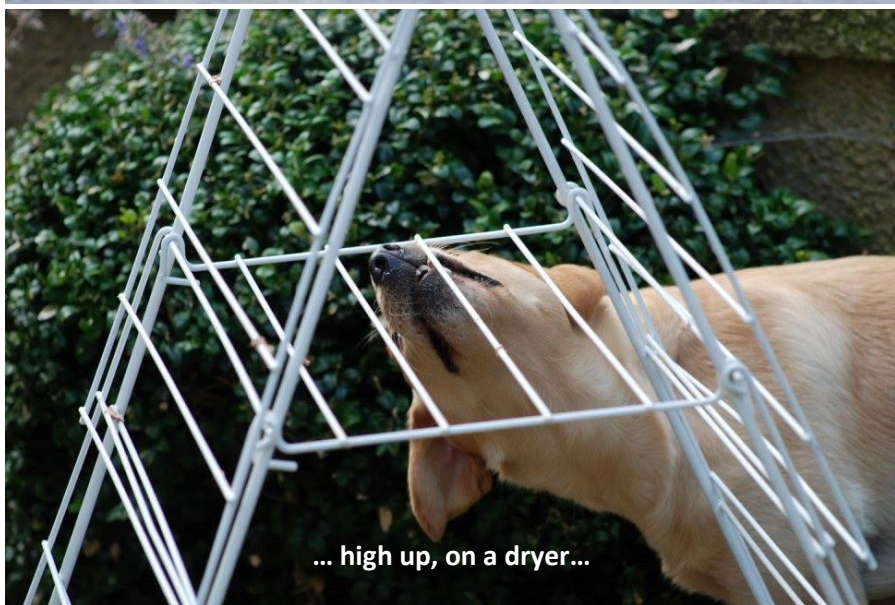
Scent work requires a lot of concentration. Beginners need time to develop their abilities as they go along. And let's not forget that **learning takes place optimally when the dog is not stressed and therefore not put under pressure.**

In the same vein, there is no need to "motivate" our dog by repeating the request ("search" for example). While our dog is focused on each of the treats to be found, he mainly uses his sight and sense of smell. Repetitions of "search", "search", "search" distract him and overwhelm his ears and brain with unnecessary information. **This is only distraction, not motivation.**

... in the snow ...



... high up, on a dryer...





**It is unnecessary to help them**, for example, by pointing to the treats you see. The game is for our dogs to develop their olfactory skills, it is not a game of speed or performance. When our dog stops searching, the game is over, either temporarily because a few moments of rest will be enough for him, or permanently depending on our dog. Let's respect his learning pace.

**Let's also respect his recovery pace**: a busy weekend induces a greater need for rest. The ideal is then to offer our dog an easier search game: a few treats scattered around the house or on the lawn will do the trick.

### Those who do not cope

If our dog is not interested in this game, a question arises: does he like the treats we offer him? **It is up to us to offer him treats that live up to his expectations.**

If our dog likes these treats but he is not interested in searching, it is probably because it is too difficult for him (physically if our dog is old, sick or injured / emotionally if our dog is not at ease in the environment for example / if we have skipped steps in the learning progression). **It is up to us to offer him a game that matches his physical and/or emotional abilities.**

Some dogs do not like to share their food. It is imperative to offer these dogs the opportunity to do so alone. **It is up to us to offer a game adapted to the social abilities of our dog.**



... to do alone or together ...





On a snuffle-mat

### TAKEAWAY

- 🐾 All dogs have this talent;
- 🐾 Choose treats which are appreciated by your dog;
- 🐾 It can be organized from once a day to four times a day;
- 🐾 Increase the difficulty level, step by step;
- 🐾 No pressure;
- 🐾 Choose games which are adapted to the needs, expectations and abilities of our dog.

## THE HIDDEN TREAT

### What is it?

Here's how to suggest to our dogs to use their nose to find good things to eat, hidden (in a box, under a yoghurt container). The search for food being part of the basic survival reflexes, **all dogs have this innate talent.**

### What do we need?

- 🐾 Treats that our dog enjoys,
- 🐾 Yoghurt pots or any other container.

### Description and progression

**Step 1:** Place a single treat, not too small, under a yoghurt container while the dog is watching. We start in a quiet room in the house (where he feels comfortable). You can also make small holes in the bottom of the jar so that the smell is more easily perceptible.

**Step 2:** A single treat of the same size as in step 1, in full view of the dog, placed under a yoghurt pot,  $\pm 20$  cm from a second yoghurt pot (under which no treat is placed).

**Step 3:** A single treat of the same size as in stages 1 and 2, placed under a yoghurt pot while the dog is not watching,  $\pm 20$  cm from a second yoghurt pot (under which no treat is placed). It is important to add only one difficulty at a time: either the size of the candy, or the number of pots, or the nature of the container, or the environment (calm, noisy, distracting.), either in or out of the dog's sight. **Only one parameter changes between two stages of the exercise.**





1 to 4 perforated yoghurt pots and cheese on the terrace



**Step 4:** A small treat, while the dog is not watching, with 2 yoghurt containers.

**Step 5:** A small treat, while the dog is not watching, with 3 jars of yoghurt.

**Step 6:** A small treat, again in full view of the dog, placed under a Tupperware box,  $\pm$  20 cm from another Tupperware box (under which no treat is placed).

**When a new parameter causes great difficulty (change of container for example), one can decrease the level of difficulty of one of the other parameters (again at sight or reduce the number of containers for example).**

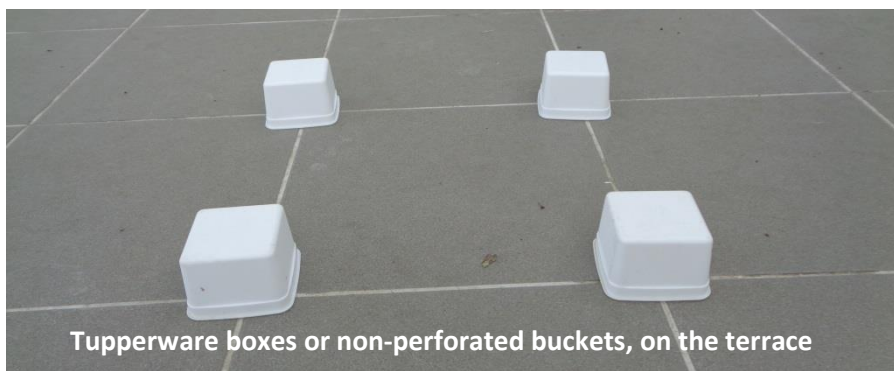
**Next steps:** we continue to offer increasingly difficult searches, modifying only one parameter at a time:

- 🐾 after working at home, one can tackle working outdoors, where there will be more distractions,
- 🐾 you can play with the distance between containers.

### Learning without pressure

It is possible that **our dog may take a break**: he simply leaves the play area and goes off to other activities or simply goes to rest. There is no need to insist and make him continue the exercise. If we force our dog, it is no longer a game but it becomes an obligation which will not necessarily leave him with a good memory.

Scent work requires a lot of concentration. Beginners need time to develop their abilities as they go along. And let's not forget that **learning takes place optimally when the dog is not stressed and therefore not put under pressure.**



**Tupperware boxes or non-perforated buckets, on the terrace**



**Non-perforated buckets, in the garden**



**Non-perforated metal bucket**

In the same vein, there is no need to “motivate” our dog by repeating the request (“search” for example). While our dog is focused on each of the candies to be found, he is mainly using his sight and sense of smell. Repetitions of “search”, “search”, “search” distract him and overwhelm his ears and brain with useless information. **This is only distraction, not motivation.**

**There is no need to help him**, for example, by pointing to the right container or lifting it up to deliver the treat. The game is for our dogs to develop their olfactory skills and resourcefulness, it is not a game of speed or performance. When our dog stops searching, the game is over either temporarily because a few moments of rest will be enough for him or permanently depending on our dog. **Let’s respect his learning pace.**

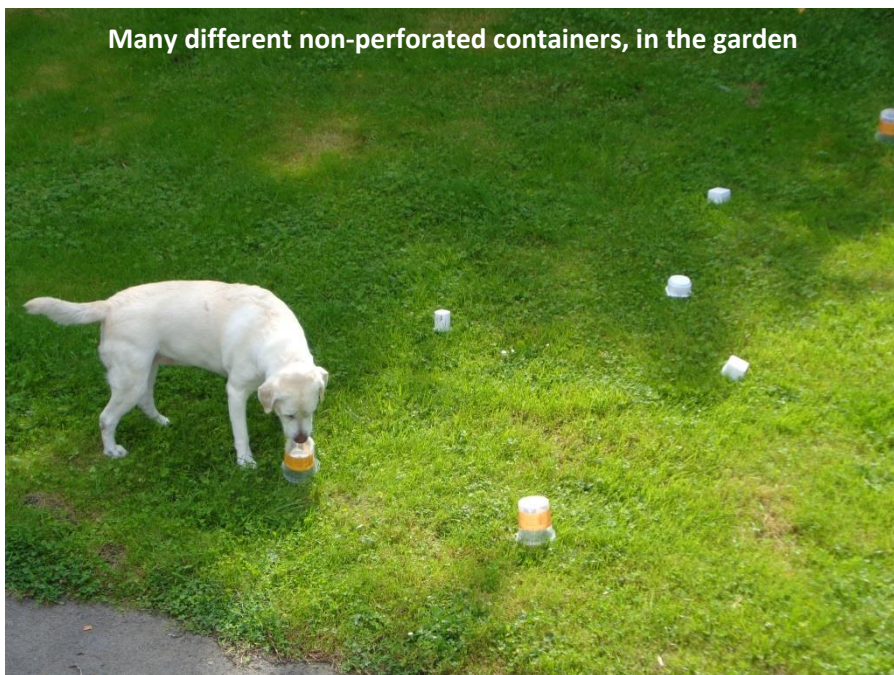
**Let’s also respect his recovery pace:** a busy weekend means a greater need for rest. The ideal is then to offer our dog an easier search game: a few treats scattered, without hiding them, at home or in the lawn will do the trick (see “the treat search game”).

### Those who do not cope

If our dog is not interested in this game, a question arises: does he like the treats we offer him? **It is up to us to offer him treats that live up to his expectations.**

If our dog likes these treats but he is not interested in research, it is probably because it is too difficult for him (physically if our dog is old, sick or injured / emotionally if our dog is not at ease in the environment for example / if we have skipped steps in the learning progression).

**Many different non-perforated containers, in the garden**



**Fripouille checks each container before finding the hidden treat**







When the container is...



... more interesting than a treat

Let's teach our dog to "retrieve" and "give" during specific play sessions.

Some dogs may also be able to accept the game with some containers but not with others: a metal container can be noisy, and therefore frightening; a container that is too heavy to knock over can be discouraging. **It is up to us to offer them a game that matches their physical and/or emotional abilities.**

Some dogs do not like to share their food. It is essential to offer these dogs the opportunity to play the game on their own. **It is up to us to offer a game adapted to the social abilities of our dog.**

Others are “obsessed” with certain objects, such as a plastic can, a cone or any other container that we could use. For these dogs, it is important not to have objects that are “too interesting”. They will give their full attention to the containers, not the hidden treat.

#### TAKEAWAY

- 🐾 All dogs have this talent,
- 🐾 Offer treats that our dog likes;
- 🐾 Increase the difficulty, step by step;
- 🐾 Offer learning without pressure;
- 🐾 Offer a game adapted to our dog’s needs, expectations and abilities.



## THE LOST OBJECT

### What is it?

The idea is to invite our dogs to use their nose to find an object that we have unfortunately lost, while walking for example (our mobile phone, the car keys...).

### What do we need?

- 🐾 An object our dog likes,
- 🐾 Treats our dog likes.

### Description and progression

**Step 1:** Let's settle down in a quiet room in the house (in which he feels comfortable). Let's start by getting our dog interested in the chosen object, let's say a sock. The sock is placed on the floor, in front of our dog. As soon as he is interested in it (looks at it, approaches it, sniffs it, touches it with his nose or paw, takes it in his mouth...), he receives a reward. We start again until our dog is systematically interested in the sock, and in the most committed way (each dog will naturally offer a mark: touching with their paw, staring at it while barking or taking it in the mouth for example).

**Step 2:** In the same room of the house, stand close to our dog and drop the sock on the floor, in full view of our dog, clearly visible on the ground. Our dog will receive a reward for each mark of interest in the sock.

**Step 3:** In the same room of the house, we stand a little further away from our dog and drop the sock on the floor, in full view of our dog, clearly visible on the floor. Our dog will receive a reward for each mark of interest in the sock.

**Only one parameter changes between two stages of the exercise: either the distance from our dog, or out of the dog's sight, or the environment, or the visibility of the object.**

**Step 4:** In the garden, let's stand close to our dog and drop the sock on the ground, in full view of our dog, clearly visible on the ground. Our dog will receive a reward for each mark of interest in the sock.

**When a new parameter causes a high degree of difficulty (e.g., change of environment), the level of difficulty of one of the other parameters can be reduced (e.g., reduce the distance).**

**Step 5:** Let's walk in the garden with our dog and drop the sock, out of the dog's sight, clearly visible on the ground. Let's stop and invite our dog to look for the sock.

**Our body language will help our dog if we are completely turned towards the lost object, as well as staring at the object.**

**Step 6:** Let's walk in the garden with our dog, along a border near a single grassy area and drop the sock, out of the dog's sight, into the grass. Stop and invite our dog to look for the sock.

**Step 7:** Let's start to "lose" our sock on the walk.

**As the change of environment induces an important difficulty, let's decrease the level of difficulty of one of the other parameters (reduce the distance for example or choose a place where the dog can see the object easily).**

**Next steps:** start all over again... with a new object (wallet, slipper, key ring...).

**“Lost” sock at less than one meter, maximum visibility:**



**Greater distance, maximum visibility:**



**Sock lost in the grass, walking along the border:**



## Learning without pressure

These game sessions are necessarily very short (less than 5 minutes and a maximum of 3 sessions during the day). Each session involves reflection and scent work which require a lot of concentration from our dog. If the session is too long or if we repeat too many sessions on the same day, we risk failure. It is better to stop on a positive note, even if it seems to us that the last game proposed was very easy to perform. Beginners need time to develop their skills as they go along. And let's not forget that **learning takes place optimally when the dog is not stressed and therefore not put under pressure.**

In the same vein, there is no need to “motivate” our dog by repeating the request (“search” for example). While our dog is focused on the track of the lost object, he mainly uses his sight and sense of smell. Repetitions of “search”, “search”, “search” distract him and overwhelm his ears and brain with unnecessary information. **This is only distraction, not motivation.**

**There is no need to help them unduly**, for example, by pointing to the location of the lost object. Staring at the object and turning completely towards it are already important indications. The game is for our dogs to develop their olfactory skills, it is not a game of speed or performance. When our dog stops searching, the game is over, either temporarily because a few moments of rest will be enough for him, or permanently depending on our dog. **Let's respect his learning pace.**

**Let's also respect his recovery pace:** a busy weekend means a greater need for rest. The ideal is then to offer our dog an easier search game: a few treats scattered, without hiding them, at home or in the lawn will do the trick (see “treat search”).

## Those who do not cope

If our dog is not interested in this game, one question is obvious: does he like the treats we offer him as a reward? **It is up to us to offer him treats that live up to his expectations.**

If our dog is not interested in the object, let's ask ourselves how we can make it more interesting. With socks, for example, we can hide a few treats inside and tie the end. **It's up to us to offer him an interesting and attractive object.**

If our dog likes these treats and the object but he is not interested in looking for it, it is probably because it is too difficult for him (physically if our dog is old, sick or injured / emotionally if our dog is not comfortable in the environment for example / if we have skipped steps in the learning progression). **It is up to us to offer them a game that matches their physical and/or emotional abilities.**

Some dogs could also accept playing the game with certain objects but not with others: metal keys, for example, are not very pleasant to play with.

On the other hand, if our dog likes the object "too much", he will keep it for himself and will not give it back. For later play sessions, let's use material that our dog doesn't like too much. **We can also teach him to let go on request during specific play sessions.**

As soon as our dog has understood that we become extremely clumsy and that we really lose our object very often, it is possible that he becomes hyper-vigilant and observes us excessively. **It is up to us to respect our dog's tolerance threshold.**



### TAKEAWAY

- 🐾 Offer treats that our dog likes;
- 🐾 Offer an object that our dog likes;
- 🐾 Increase the difficulty, step by step;
- 🐾 Offer learning without pressure;
- 🐾 Short sessions are a must;
- 🐾 Offer a game adapted to our dog's needs, expectations and abilities.

## THE HIDDEN OBJECT

### What is it?

The idea is to suggest to our dogs to use their nose and resourcefulness to find a toy that we have hidden.

### What do we need?

- 🐾 Our dog's favourite toy,
- 🐾 A container (basket, cardboard box...) adapted to the size of our dog who must be able to easily pick up an object at the bottom,
- 🐾 Newspaper or empty rolls of toilet paper / kitchen paper.

### Description and progression

For the game described below, let's assume that we have chosen a basket, a toy and empty toilet paper rolls.

**Step 1:** Let's settle down in a quiet room in the house (where our dog feels comfortable), put the toy in the basket, in full view of our dog. There are no other objects in the basket. As soon as he becomes interested in the toy (looks at it, approaches it, sniffs it, touches it with his muzzle or paw, takes it in the mouth...), we reward him. We start again until our dog is interested in his toy in the most engaged way (each dog will naturally propose a mark: touching it with his paw, staring at it while barking or picking it up, for example). It is important for this game that our dog retrieves/relinquishes his toy. If he doesn't do it naturally, we will teach him during specific play sessions.

**Step 2:** In the same room in the house, in the same basket, let's place a few cardboard rolls and place the toy among the rolls, in full view of our

**Koumack's favourite toy, in a basket**



**The toy and some cardboard rolls**

dog. The toy remains visible despite the rolls. As soon as he retrieves/gives us his toy, we reward him.

**Only one parameter changes between two stages of the exercise: either the container, or out of the dog's sight, or the environment, or the visibility of the object.**

**Step 3:** In the same room of the house, in the same basket, let's place even more cardboard rolls and drop the toy into the rolls, in front of our dog. The toy is almost hidden among the roll. As soon as he retrieves his toy, we reward him.

**Step 4:** In the same room of the house, in the same basket, place the toy and cover it with rolls, in front of our dog. The toy is totally hidden among the rolls. As soon as he retrieves his toy, he gets rewarded.

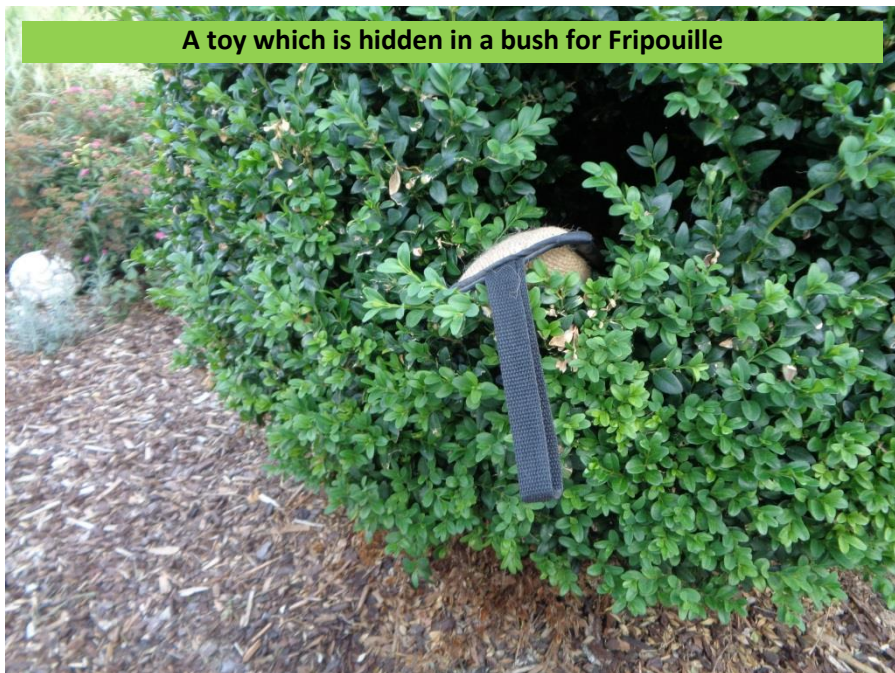
**Step 5:** In the same room of the house, in the same basket, place some cardboard rolls and place the toy among the rolls, while the dog is not watching. The toy is visible despite the rollers. As soon as he retrieves his toy, we reward him.

**When a new parameter creates too much difficulty (dog not watching, for example), we can decrease the level of difficulty of one of the other parameters (fewer rolls for example).**

**Step 6:** In the same room of the house, in the same basket, place the toy and cover it with rolls, **while the dog is not watching**. The toy is totally hidden among the rolls. As soon as he retrieves his toy, we reward him.

**Next steps:** Start all over again ... with new containers (cardboard box or a suitcase that can be closed, a bush or hedge in the garden, ...) or other objects (new toy, wallet, phone, ...).

**A toy which is hidden in a bush for Fripouille**





## Learning without pressure

These game sessions must be very short (less than 5 minutes and a maximum of 3 sessions during the day). Each session involves reflection and scent work which require a lot of concentration from our dog. If the session is too long or if we repeat too many sessions on the same day, we risk failure. It is better to stop on a positive note, even if it seems to us that the last game proposed was very easy to perform. Beginners need time to develop their skills as they go along. And let's not forget that **learning takes place optimally when the dog is not stressed and therefore not put under pressure.**

In the same vein, there is no need to “motivate” our dog by repeating the request (“search” for example). While our dog is focused on the track of the lost object, he mainly uses his sight and sense of smell. Repetitions of “search”, “search”, “search” distract him and overwhelm his ears and brain with unnecessary information. **This is only distraction, not motivation.**

**There is no need to help them unduly,** for example, by pointing to the location of the hidden object. Staring at the object and turning completely towards it are already important indications. The game is for our dogs to develop their olfactory skills, it is not a game of speed or performance. When our dog stops searching, the game is over, either temporarily because a few moments of rest will be enough for him, or permanently depending on our dog. **Let's respect his learning pace.**

**Let's also respect his recovery pace:** a busy weekend means a greater need for rest. The ideal is then to offer our dog an easier search game: a few treats scattered, without hiding them, at home or in the lawn will do the trick (see “treat search”).

**When the toy is well hidden ... in a hedge ...**



**...in a basket with rolls**



## Those who do not cope

If our dog is not interested in the toy, let's ask ourselves how to make it more interesting. We can use a new toy (novelty appeal), a pencil case in which to hide treats (a sock with a knot in it can also contain treats). We can also offer it a special treat (a tasty reward to chew, for example). **It's up to us to offer him an interesting and attractive object.**

If our dog likes the object but he is not interested in finding it, it is probably because it is too difficult for him (physically if our dog is old, sick or injured / emotionally if our dog is not at ease in the environment for example / if we have skipped steps in the learning process / if the container is challenging or scary). **It is up to us to offer him a game that matches his physical and/or emotional abilities.**

Some dogs could also accept playing with certain objects but not with others: metal keys for example are not very pleasant to play with.

On the other hand, if our dog "likes" the container or camouflage objects "too much", he might give them his full attention and forget about the toy. Our dog could also feel pressured and will prefer to destroy or shred the container (quick fix) rather than try to calmly solve the problem. **It is up to us to take into account our dog's tolerance level.**

### TAKEAWAY

- 🐾 Offer an exceptional object / treat appreciated by our dog;
- 🐾 Choose suitable containers;
- 🐾 Increase the difficulty, step by step;
- 🐾 Offer learning without pressure;
- 🐾 Short sessions are a must;
- 🐾 Offer a game adapted to our dog's needs, expectations and abilities

## DISCRIMINATION GAMES

### What is it?

The idea is to offer our dogs the opportunity to use their nose to find an object marked with a specific scent, among other objects (identical or visually different).

### What do we need?

- 🐾 An object marked by a scent that our dog likes,
- 🐾 Other objects with neutral scents,
- 🐾 A spaghetti tongs or any other tool to move objects without leaving our scent,
- 🐾 Treats that our dog enjoys.

### Description and progression

For the game described below, let's assume that we have 4 identical socks, which we have washed (use the most neutral products possible and avoid strong perfumes) in order to get rid of any unwanted odours. One of them will be marked with our scent, the 3 others will remain as neutral as possible.

**Step 1:** Let's settle down in a quiet room in the house (in which he feels comfortable). Let's start by getting our dog interested in the sock that bears our scent. After having kneaded the sock in our hands for 4 to 5 seconds (if it takes too long, our dog may become impatient and leave us with our sock), we put it on the floor, in front of our dog. As soon as he is interested in it (looks at it, approaches it, sniffs it, touches it with his muzzle or paw, takes it in the mouth...), he receives a reward. We start again until our dog is systematically interested in the sock, and in the most committed way (each dog will naturally offer a mark: touching it with his paw, staring at it while barking or picking it up, for example).



**Let's avoid olfactory contamination by using spaghetti tongs:**



**2 socks in the bathroom**



If we want our dog to mark his find in a specific way (for example by barking), we will teach him this behaviour during specific play sessions.

**Step 2:** In the same room in the house, insert a second sock. To prevent the “neutral” sock from catching our scent, we can handle it with a spaghetti tongs or after putting on a glove, for example. We place it clearly visible on the floor, about 20 centimetres from the first sock. We can also refresh the smell of the first sock by holding it in our hands for 1 to 2 seconds. Our dog receives a reward for each mark of interest in the “right” sock, the one that bears the scent of our hands. If our dog gets the wrong sock, we do not react (no sighing, laughing, gesture...). Let’s remain impassive to wrong choices.

**Step 3:** In the same room in the house, put a third sock (“neutral” odour) about 20 centimetres away from the other 2 socks. Our dog receives a reward for each mark of interest in the “right” sock. Let’s ignore wrong suggestions. We will take care to move the 3 socks using the spaghetti tongs, in a random sequence. If we systematically put the “right” sock down first or systematically last, our dog will quickly learn that it is a question of selecting the first or last object put down, without making the link with the smell (or lack of smell) of this object.

**Only one parameter changes between two stages of the exercise: either the number of objects or the environment.**

**Step 4:** Let’s try a change of location, the garden for example. Our dog receives a reward for each mark of interest in the “right” sock and let’s continue to ignore the wrong suggestions.



4 socks in the garden

**Fripouille is looking for a blue sock (fresher smell) among blue clothes, worn by the same person**



**When a new parameter causes great difficulty (change of environment for example), we can decrease the level of difficulty of one of the other parameters (go back to 2 socks: one scented and one neutral).**

**Step 5:** Keep increasing the number of socks.

**Next steps:** Start again from the step 1... with new objects and other odours.

**Are our dogs able to find a tissue scented with paprika, among other tissues scented with salt, cinnamon or thyme? Or find a garment freshly marked with our smell in the middle of other clothes also marked with our smell, but older? Of course they can!**

### Learning without pressure

These game sessions must be very short (less than 5 minutes and a maximum of 3 sessions during the day). Each session involves reflection and scent work which require a lot of concentration from our dog. If the session is too long or if we repeat too many sessions on the same day, we risk failure. It is better to stop on a positive note, even if it seems to us that the last game we played was very easy to do. Beginners need time to develop their skills as they go along. And let's not forget that **learning takes place optimally when the dog is not stressed and therefore not put under pressure.**

In the same vein, there is no need to "motivate" our dog by repeating the request ("search" for example). While our dog is focused on selecting the scent to be found, he mainly uses his sense of smell. Repetitions of "search", "search", "search" distract him and overwhelm his ears and brain with useless information. **It is only distraction, not motivation.**

**Beware of "false" scent clues!** For example, in a game where the goal is to find an object that we have marked with our own scent, it is important that the other objects DO NOT carry our scent. If we hold objects in our hands,

even with our fingertips, we leave olfactory marks that could lead to confusion.

**Beware of gestural clues!** For example, we should always avoid depositing the “right” object last. Our dog will quickly understand that the last object is the right object, and he will no longer see the need to use his sense of smell.

**We should not help them too much**, for example, by pointing to the location of the object to be selected. Staring at the object and turning completely towards it are already important indications. The game is for our dogs to develop their olfactory skills, it is not a game of speed or performance. When our dog stops searching, the game is over, either temporarily because a few moments of rest will be enough for him, or permanently depending on our dog. **Let’s respect his learning pace.**

**Let’s also respect his recovery pace:** a busy weekend means a greater need for rest. The ideal is then to offer our dog an easier search game: a few treats scattered, without hiding them, at home or on the lawn will do the trick (see “treat search”).

### Those who do not cope

If our dog is not interested in this game, we must ask the question: does he like the treats we offer him as a reward? **It is up to us to offer him treats that live up to his expectations.**

If our dog is not interested in the object, let’s ask ourselves how we can make it more interesting. With socks, for example, we can hide a few treats inside and tie the end. **It’s up to us to offer him an interesting and attractive object.**

If our dog likes these treats and the object but he is not interested in looking for it, it is probably because it is too difficult for him (physically if our dog is old, sick or injured / emotionally if our dog is not comfortable in the



environment for example / if we have skipped steps in the learning progression). **It is up to us to offer them a game that matches their physical and/or emotional abilities.**

Some dogs could also accept playing with certain objects but not with others: metal keys for example are not very pleasant to play with.

On the other hand, if our dog likes the object “too much”, he will keep it for himself and will not give it back. For later game sessions, let’s use material that our dog doesn’t like too much. **We can also teach him to give on request during specific play sessions.**

If our dog makes a lot of mistakes, **let’s check that we have not introduced an unwanted smell on the objects used.** If the game consists of selecting an object that bears our scent, haven’t we accidentally contaminated the other objects with our scent or the scent of the rewards? Let’s take a pile of clothes bearing the scent of the same person, and ask our dog to find a sock with a fresher smell. A seasoned dog will be able to solve this game, but not a beginner dog.

### TAKEAWAY

- 🐾 Offer treats that our dog likes;
- 🐾 Offer an object that our dog likes;
- 🐾 Increase the difficulty, step by step;
- 🐾 Offer learning without pressure;
- 🐾 Short sessions are a must;
- 🐾 Offer a game adapted to our dog's needs, expectations and abilities;
- 🐾 Watch out for unwanted scents.

## RESOURCEFULNESS

### What is it?

We will ask our dogs to use their thinking and their senses to solve a problem that we have made for them (finding treats in a device with movable parts, a container with sliding drawers...).

The hidden object game can already be part of this category: our dog first uses his sense of smell to find the object and then uses his mind to retrieve it (take it out of the container or the hedge).

**Let's constantly renew games for new mental stimulation.**

### What do we need?

There are a lot of different containers for purchase, but of course we can make them ourselves, which will be cheaper.

### Description and progression

Let's imagine that we have a large plastic toy, with sliding drawers and a swivel drawer.

**Step 1:** Let's settle down in a quiet room in the house (where our dog feels comfortable), put the plastic paw on the floor. While our dog is watching, let's put a treat in one of the sliding drawers. One treat, in one drawer that we leave open. Our dog becomes familiar with the plastic toy.

**Remember that our dog rewards himself, as he eats the treat as soon as he finds it. We couldn't possibly reward him any faster!**



**Step 2:** In the same room of the house, while our dog is watching, place a treat in the drawer of the plastic toy, and close the drawer. Let our dog figure out how to slide the drawer out. It's up to him to test and use his nose or paw to solve this problem.

**Only one parameter changes between two stages of the exercise: either the type of drawer closure, or placing the treats out of the dog's sight, or the environment.**

**Step 3:** In the same room of the house, place a treat in the swivel drawer and close the drawer. Let our dog solve this new problem caused by the change of the opening mechanism.

**Step 4:** In the same room of the house, while our dog is watching, place the treats in the different drawers of the toy, and close the drawers.

**Step 5:** In the same room of the house, while our dog is not watching, place the treats in the different drawers of the toy and close the drawers.

**When a new parameter causes great difficulty (with the dog not watching, for example), we can reduce the level of difficulty of one of the other parameters (reduce the number of filled drawers or leave some drawers open, for example).**

**Step 6:** In the same room of the house, while the dog is not watching, put the pieces of dry biscuits (less odorous) in the different drawers of the leg, and close the drawers.

**Next steps:** start all over again... with new containers (bought or home-made).

### Working the brain and memory

These games are still games of reflection and resourcefulness as long as they are new. If we propose to do this treat search game again and again with the same plastic toy, our dog will use his memory (“How did I solve that the last time?”) and not his thinking and resourcefulness. **Let’s keep renewing the games for new mental stimulation.**

### Learning without pressure

These game sessions must be very short (less than 5 minutes and a maximum of 3 sessions during the day). Each session involves reflection and scent work which require a lot of concentration from our dog. If the session is too long or if we repeat too many sessions on the same day, we risk failure. It is better to stop on a positive note, even if it seems to us that the last game offered was very easy to do. Beginners need time to develop their skills as they go along. And let’s not forget that **learning takes place optimally when the dog is not stressed and therefore not put under pressure.**





**Balls to be filled with treats or spread with pâté**



**Sliding circles**



A spinning top that loses treats as it moves



Poles to be  
lifted or  
knocked down



In the same vein, there is no need to “motivate” our dog by repeating the request (“search” for example). While our dog is focused on the problem he has to solve, he mainly uses his sight and sense of smell. Repetitions of “search”, “search”, “search” distract him and overwhelm his ears and brain with unnecessary information. **This is only distraction, not motivation.**

**It is unnecessary to help them too much**, for example, by showing where the hidden treat is. The game is for our dogs to develop their olfactory skills and self-confidence, it is not a game of speed or performance. When our dog stops searching, the game is over either temporarily because a few moments of rest will be enough for him or permanently depending on our dog. **Let’s respect his learning pace.**

**Let’s also respect his recovery pace:** a busy weekend means a greater need for rest. The ideal is then to offer our dog an easier search game: scatter a few treats, without hiding them, at home or in the lawn (see “treat search”).

### Those who do not cope

If our dog is not interested in this game, a question arises: does he like the treats we offer him? **It’s up to us to offer him treats that meet his expectations.**

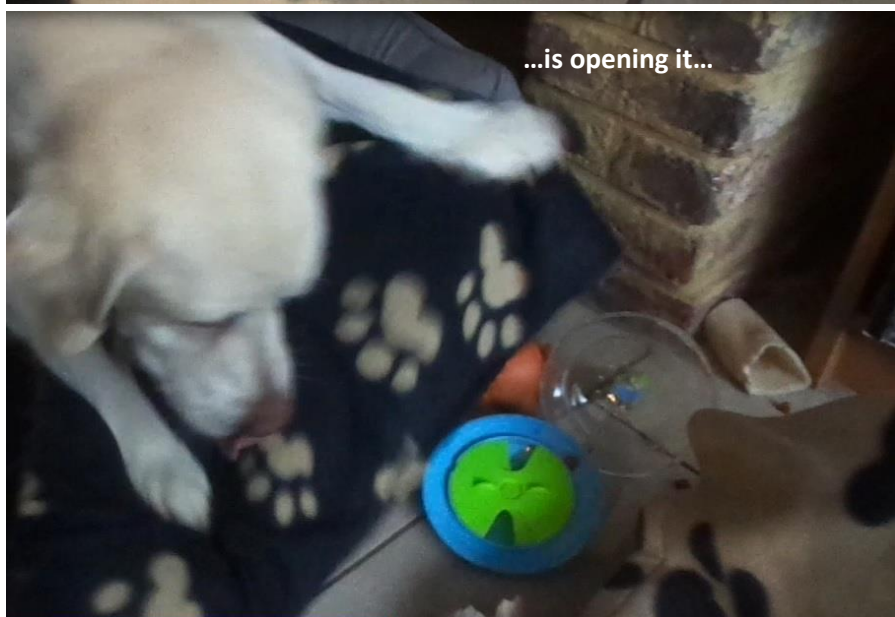
If our dog likes these treats but is not interested in the game, it is probably because it is too difficult for him (physically if our dog is old, sick or injured / emotionally if our dog is not at ease in the environment or with the game containing the treats for example / if we have skipped steps in the learning progression).

Some dogs may also be able to accept play with some containers but not others: a metal container can be noisy, and therefore frightening; a container that is too heavy to knock over can be discouraging; a container that moves around (like a spinning top) can be exciting. **It is up to us to offer them a game that matches their physical and/or emotional abilities.**

Some dogs do not like to share their food. It is essential to offer these dogs the opportunity to play the game on their own. **It is up to us to offer a game adapted to the social abilities of our dog.**

Some dogs will be frustrated if they are unable to solve the proposed problem. They may want to take their treats by force (by destroying the hiding place, for example). **It is up to us to offer them a game that matches their determination and patience.**







...and finishing looking for treats on her sofa.

#### TAKEAWAY

- 🐾 Offer an exceptional treat that our dog loves;
- 🐾 Choose appropriate containers;
- 🐾 Increase the difficulty, step by step;
- 🐾 Offer learning without pressure;
- 🐾 Short sessions are a must;
- 🐾 Offer a game adapted to our dog's needs, expectations and abilities;
- 🐾 Constantly renew the games by offering new problems to be solved.

## MESSAGE

### The foundations

 **Recommended book: The complete dog massage manual - Gentle dog care by Julia ROBERTSON**

**Before any handling, let's take the time to check that our dog really wants to be touched, stroked or massaged.** A dog that appreciates being stroked in a general way, may not feel like being stroked at a specific time of the day or week (excitement, fatigue, pain, thirst, needs...). **If our dog is forced** (by physically restraining him or by giving him the order to stay for example), **the caressing or massaging session will not bring him any benefit.**

Some dogs will appreciate a simple contact, such as **placing the back or palm of the hand, fingers relaxed, without moving.**

**Let's provide a comfortable place for our dog:** a quiet room and a mattress or blanket. The bedding (mattress or blanket) will be the place reserved for the sessions. **If our dog wishes to take a break,** he will only have to leave the bedding area. It is up to us to respect his limits and his wishes.



**The massages are always done in the direction of the fur and the muscles, leaving one hand in contact at all times** (static, placed outside the area of the body that is being massaged). **We can also use both hands in movement**, taking care that one hand remains in constant contact with the dog. Be aware that two hands in motion is not recommended for nervous dogs. For small dogs, we can use two fingers instead of the whole hand (index and middle fingers).

Once the session has started, **let's remember to give him the opportunity to take a break and leave**: we just have to take our hands off and observe our dog's reactions for 5 seconds. Using his body language, postures or attitudes, he will tell us if he wants the session to continue, end or if a short break is necessary.

**If they do not wish to be petted**, some dogs will simply back off as soon as they understand our intention. Others, will be more nuanced and show calming signals such as:

- 🐾 freezing,
- 🐾 turning the head,
- 🐾 licking,
- 🐾 yawning,
- 🐾 blinking, ...

### Respecting his personal space

While humans hug and kiss all the time, dogs don't do this. This closeness is far too intrusive for a dog; the lack of freedom of movement that a **“big hug”** represents **may make our dog feel uncomfortable**. Most dogs learn to tolerate these invasions and rudeness from the humans in their family, but that doesn't mean they find it pleasant or comfortable.



**Yawning**

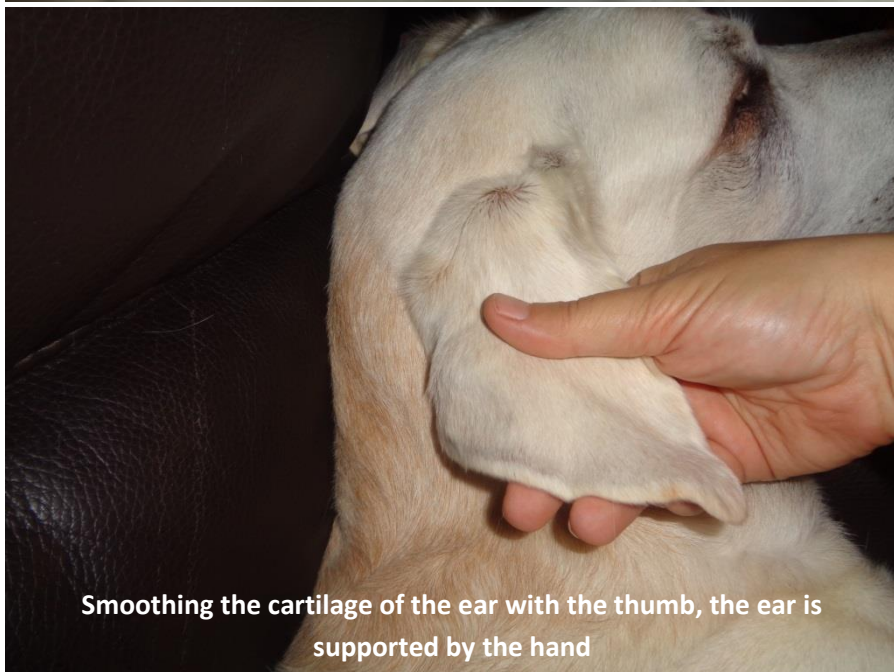


**Licking**





**Effleurage: the hand flat, fingers together – for small dogs, 2 fingers are enough (index and middle finger)**



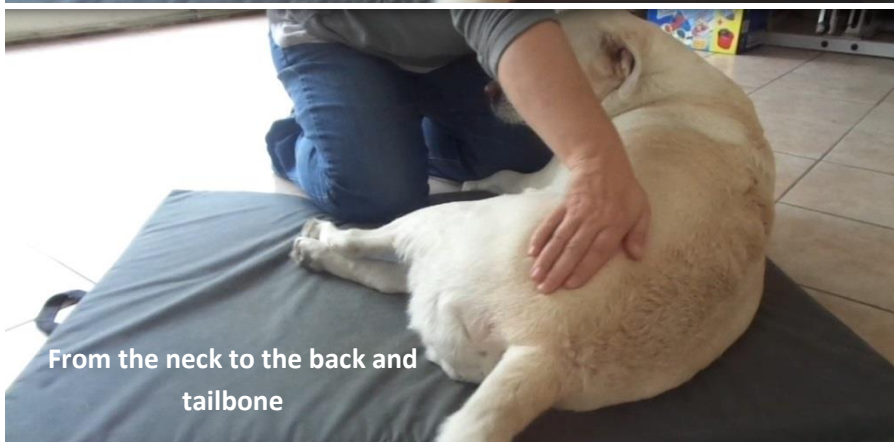
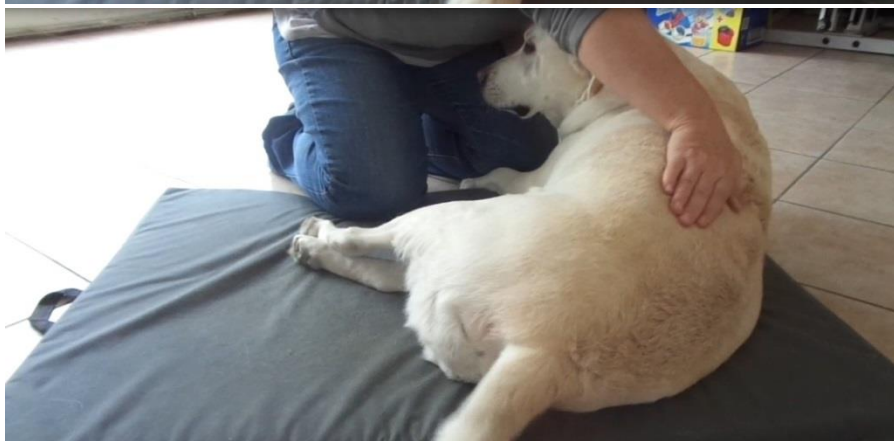
**Smoothing the cartilage of the ear with the thumb, the ear is supported by the hand**

## How to start

The easiest technique to learn is that of **effleurage**: the hand flat, fingers together, with light pressure. Our dog will tell us if the pressure should be lighter or more pronounced. It looks like a caress, but the intention is different: let's focus on what our hand feels. What information do we receive via the palm of our hand? Do we feel warmth, knotted or supple muscles, tension in our dog's body?

### Here's how to proceed:

- 🐾 We will sit near the massage area (bedding such as a mattress or blanket);
- 🐾 We sit or kneel next to our dog (do not lean over or face him);
- 🐾 Place the palm of one hand on our dog, and let it rest to make contact;
- 🐾 Let us place the second hand, palm on the shoulder, and in a gentle way, making slow and calm gestures, slide our hand from the shoulders to the side, following the direction of the fur and muscles (3x on each side);
- 🐾 We can also use both hands, one after the other (only one hand is preferable for a nervous dog);
- 🐾 During the session, we must remain mindful of our body position in relation to our dog and avoid leaning over him at all times (let's only caress the flank which is on our side);
- 🐾 Let's pause to check that our dog still wants to be stroked (5 seconds);
- 🐾 Let's give him the choice to leave at any time;
- 🐾 Then let's move from the top of the shoulder to the chest (3x on each side);



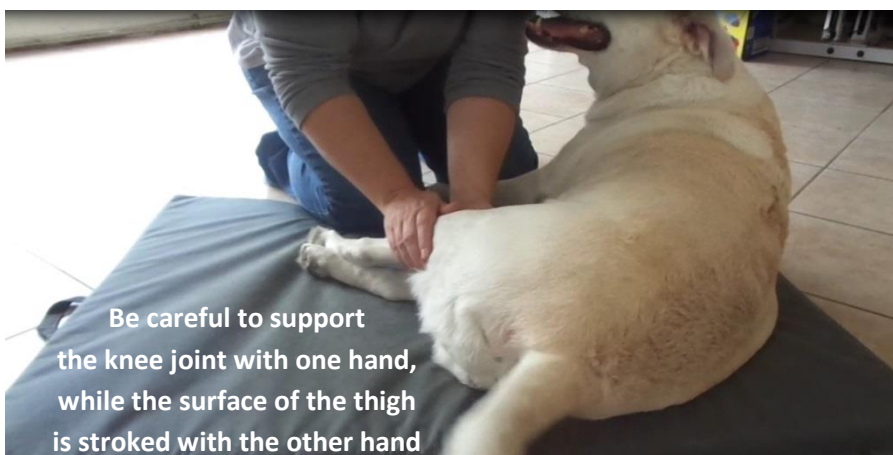
From the neck to the back and  
tailbone



The neck



The chest



Be careful to support the knee joint with one hand, while the surface of the thigh is stroked with the other hand

- 🐾 Go back to the top of the shoulder and follow the spine backwards (not on the spine, but just beside it) (3x on each side);
- 🐾 Let's check that our dog still wants to be stroked;
- 🐾 Let's go to the neck, positioning our hand behind his ear and sliding our hand down to the shoulder (3x on each side);
- 🐾 We can also massage the thighs: be careful to support the knee joint with one hand, while the surface of the thigh is stroked with the other hand.

If our dog is ready to continue, we can offer him an ear massage: the ear supported by the fingers of the hand and smoothed by the thumb, by slow movements, in the direction of the fur (from the top of the ear to the edge).

### The benefits

It has been proven that appropriate stroking can **lower the dog's heart rate**. The dog is relaxed and feels the experience in a positive way.

Massage **positively affects the lymphatic and circulatory systems** to promote healing. Remember that the veins carry blood with metabolic waste, while the arteries carry oxygenated blood. If the muscle is blocked by a knot or tension, it is loaded with venous blood (waste products) that has not been able to circulate properly. By stretching the muscle, arterial blood (oxygen) is supplied to nourish and repair the muscles.

Massages lead to the release of **oxytocin**. This is a neurotransmitter that acts on the limbic system, the emotional centre of the brain, **promoting a feeling of satisfaction and reducing anxiety and stress**. During a massage, both the person massaging and the one who is being massaged experience a release of this wellness hormone. The massage stimulates the brain to **produce dopamine and releases endorphins and serotonin** into the blood vessels which **improve mood and promote happiness**.



Massaging the muscles **reduces muscle spasms, cramps and adhesions**. It also **prevents dysfunctions of the muscles and fascia** (connective tissue that surrounds the muscles as well as nerves, bones, blood vessels...).

Massages are of course known for their **relaxing effects, both physiologically and psychologically**.

By respecting our dog's wishes (giving him the choice to end the massage, adapting the pressure to his needs, massaging the areas according to his indications...), the **relationship** between our dog and us can only grow.

### When NOT to massage

- 🐾 Within two hours before and after meals,
- 🐾 When the dog is sick (dehydrated, fever, swollen lymph glands, ...),
- 🐾 When the dog is injured (open wound, infected skin...),
- 🐾 When he is tired or breathes heavily,
- 🐾 Un case of clinical shock,
- 🐾 Immediately after an accident or impact,
- 🐾 In case of persistent pain (without diagnosis),
- 🐾 If the dog has a lump, growth or tumour,
- 🐾 **If the dog does not want a massage.**

### TAKEAWAY

- 🐾 It is up to us to observe and understand what our dog likes;
- 🐾 Massage on a specific area (mattress or blanket) that our dog can leave if necessary;
- 🐾 Adapt the massage (areas, pressure...) depending on our dog's reactions;
- 🐾 Mind the counter-indications.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

### To my 3 inspirations and “guinea pigs”:

- 🐾 Sugus, Labrador retriever, \*8<sup>th</sup> January 2002
- 🐾 Fripouille, Labrador retriever, \*19<sup>th</sup> December 2006
- 🐾 Koumack, German Shepherd, \*15<sup>th</sup> November 2011



### To the organisers of the IDTE 2015-2016 training course

- 🐾 Turid RUGAAS, PDTE President
- 🐾 Paulina DRURI, *Chien presque parfait*
- 🐾 Julia ROBERTSON, *Galen Therapy Center*
- 🐾 Amelia TARZI, translator-interpreter, *Refuge de Thiernay*

## **To the PROCANINA Canine Education Centre**

Who gave me the financial support to participate in the course

## **To the participants of the training**

Especially Eva, Pilar, Laure, Térésa, Cristina, Aurélien, Elise, Jo, Michelle et Florence for sharing their opinions, ideas and advice



## **To my constant advisors**

- 🐾 Marina GATES FLEMING, *Happy and relaxed dogs*
- 🐾 Elise MONTFORT, *Empreintes animales-dans leurs pattes*

## **For her interview**

And all the good care she regularly lavishes on my three loustics: Nathalie BARRIÈRE, veterinarian specialising in osteopathy

### **For the website**

The provision of the necessary tools and hosting: Christophe BURTON,  
*H.M.C.S. Informatique*

### **For photos and videos**

- 🐾 From the training group: Laure, Cristina, Térésa, Aurélien, Séverine, Jo, Pilar and Elise
- 🐾 From the supporters of Koumack: Nathalie and Vanina
- 🐾 From my almost neighbours: Brigitte and Laura
- 🐾 From the social walks: Mathieu WILLEMS - *Youkis heureux*, and all participants in the walks (known or unknown)
- 🐾 Last but not least, from my teachers (previous or present): Marina GATES FLEMING – *Happy and relaxed dogs*, and Els VIDTS – *Freedogz*

### **For their responses to the survey**

To all those who agreed to participate in the survey on the activities offered to their dog(s): “What activities do you offer your dog, and how often (daily, weekly or monthly)?”

**To all those who will participate in the future in improvement of [www.activiteschiens.be](http://www.activiteschiens.be) website (especially Sabrina Klob for English translation)**

**To all those whom I forgot to mention...my apologies**



## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- 🐾 Marc BEKOFF : The emotional lives of animals
- 🐾 Barry EATON: Dominance in dogs, fact or fiction?
- 🐾 Anders HALLGREN: Stress, anxiety and aggression in dogs
- 🐾 Alexandra HOROWITZ: Inside of a dog
- 🐾 Rosie LOWRY: Understanding the silent communication of dogs
- 🐾 Ann Lill KVAM: The canine Kingdom of scent
- 🐾 Ann Lill KVAM/ Turid RUGAAS: Nosework (DVD's)
- 🐾 Julia ROBERTSON: The complete dog massage manual - Gentle dog care
- 🐾 Turid RUGAAS: Barking, the sound of a language
- 🐾 Turid RUGAAS: On talking terms with dogs: calming signals
- 🐾 Turid RUGAAS: My dog pulls, what do I do?
- 🐾 Pr. Bernard SABLONNIERE: Le cerveau, les clés de son développement et de sa longévité
- 🐾 Pr. Anil SETH: 30-SECOND-BRAIN (the 50 most mind-blowing ideas in neuroscience, each explained in half a minute)
- 🐾 Christina SONDERMANN: Playtime for your dog, keep him busy throughout the day