



Mastering Tools and Mindset

Technological Marvel

Most Marvel fans are familiar with the phrase “with great power comes great responsibility,” as these were the wise words Uncle Ben spoke to his nephew, Peter Parker, also known as Spiderman. Uncle Ben’s philosophy holds equally true in the context of remote training collars, or e-collars. I personally love e-collars and find them to be the swiss army knife of training equipment. However, they are very powerful devices and are often mistook as a solution for “bad” dogs. Think of the danger that comes with such a device in the hands a frustrated dog owner who is tired of endless barking, messes, and escaping. In order to be successful with e-collar training and avoid negative side effects (any training tool, even too much food, can have negative side effects) it is critical that we alter our perspective of how such a device is used. An electronic collar is nothing more than a way to maintain a dialogue with your dog. Just like any communication tool there is a language involved, this is the key ingredient that goes over most people’s head. There are four factors that play into how well this collar will work:

1. Dog has a good association with the device
2. Client and dog have clear understanding of the collar’s “language”
3. Dog is wearing e-collar unit daily or when supervised
4. Committed to speaking e-collar’s “language” daily
5. E-collar intensity must move parallel with training progression

When dogs are introduced to the stim at too high a level without previous conditioning they can develop PTSD or what’s known as superstitious association. Because they weren’t taught what the sensation means and where it comes from they will become overwhelmed with

anticipatory anxiety. Remember, the collar is just an extension of your voice and control. Your dog will understand that you have the ability to reach out to them regardless of how distracted or far away they get. Always lead your pack with patience and an understanding that learning takes time. Dogs are extremely impulsive and curious, they are governed by instinct and emotion. When aroused or overstimulated they usually struggle to recall information and will act without thinking. As a handler your primary objective is to manage their emotions at home and out in the world. As humans when we are overstimulated or anxious our minds race and we cannot function properly; dogs are no different, however they cannot rationalize and easily get stuck in behavioral loops. In the sections below, we will also go over slip leads, prong collars, and head collars. Here are some tips to ensure you and your pack maintain a healthy bond while utilizing today's most advanced training tool. *Fun fact: the first electronic collars were created in the 50's, but became popular in the 60's with bird-dog hunters. Today's e-collars are far more gentle and humane compared to their early counterparts. Older models were extremely aversive and only offered three levels. They were used exclusively for positive punishment without any prior condition.*

Which Tool is Right for You?

Let's start with the slip lead. It is simple, effective, and easily found at any pet store. It is nothing more than a piece of rope with a slip knot and a fastening device to keep its knot in place. A slip lead is generally a trainer's first line of defense, at least it is for us at METAK9. I'm picky when it comes to this type of leash as many are low quality and don't have a well made stopper that will keep the leash fitted properly. What makes the slip leash so effective is its ability to control the dog's head when properly placed. If you can control the dog's head then you can control the dog's body, thus influencing its emotional stability at home and in public. Think about the way a horse halter is positioned around the top of its neck and head. When tools are fitted properly it allows us to communicate and control animals that are much faster, larger, and stronger than us pesky humans. A thicker slip leash is sturdier, but gives less pressure and is harder to keep in place. A thinner leash applies more pressure and will stay positioned properly with greater ease. However, it's more susceptible to gnawing teeth and can be a little tougher to hold when you have a dog that pulls often. Experiment and see what works best. I personally prefer thin to medium

width slip leads. *Fun fact: Mary A. Delaney, an inventor from Manhattan, patented the first adjustable dog leash, known as a "leading device". This contraption invented in 1908 included a drum and spring that allowed the chain to extend in stages, and was intended to help women maintain control of their dogs while wearing long dresses and high heels.*

Prong collars, specifically of the Herm Sprenger variety, are phenomenal tools with a bad reputation. People have a habit of judging a book by its cover and the prong collar is no different. Herm Sprenger first patented the device in the late 1800's. They also appear in European training literature as far back as the early 20th century. While they do look like medieval torture devices they are in fact quite the opposite. The prong collar's success comes from its ability to mimic the natural corrective behavior of a mother dog. I personally believe that it calms them down the same way we feel a sense of nostalgic peace when we smell our father's cologne or mother's perfume. The prong collar has rounded contact points that, contrary to popular opinion, aren't designed to hurt the dog, but safely apply pressure evenly around the neck. This tool is far safer and more gentle than a choke chain or even a flat collar. A flat collar can influence an opposition reflex making your dog pull harder which can not only create reactivity, but also cause micro tears in their neck muscles as well as weakening the trachea with long term use. Choke chains have no self-limited tightening feature and can close indefinitely. They also hang low on a dogs neck making them less effective than a slip lead or prong collar. At METAK9, we prefer collars fitted snug right behind the ears similar to a slip lead. I personally find them most effective with the "D" ring facing the handlers left leg. This will allow for a proper correction with leash direction and keep the contact points in position with the neural networks of the spine resulting in greater performance from gentle corrections and more passive utility. I always aim to give a dog the benefit of the doubt and use the lowest amount of pressure possible to minimize the release of stress hormones. Although stress is a central part of life for all living creatures, there is no reason why we can't utilize our intelligence, as humans, to create humane training conditions for our furry family members. A prong collar that works for one dog may not work great for another. This is because they vary in wire gauge and the metal from which they are constructed from. Prong collars come in 2.25mm, 3mm, 3.25mm, and 4mm. Dog allergies are very common in the same way some metals turn our human skin green. This is why you can find these collars in Stainless Steel, Chrome, Curogan, and Brass.

The gauge of wire used will be determined by the size of the dog and their behavioral issues. I also highly recommend a 2.25mm prong for clients with mobility issues. A smaller gauge prong will allow for corrections greater or equal to their larger counterparts with much less human input. The downside is a smaller gauge is more prone to bending and warping over time especially with larger power breeds. When using a prong collar make sure that you also purchase a safety clip. You will connect one end to the “dead” ring (this is the ring opposite of the “D” ring a.k.a. “Live” ring) and the other end to a flat collar. In the case of a broken collar they will stay connected to your leash. There are easy on and off solutions, but I only recommend the traditional and the easy on buckle variant. ***Fun fact: Herm Sprenger possibly derived his first prototype from the Romans who used a more crude spiked collar that prevented dogs from chasing chariots in the gladiatorial arena.***

There is also a fourth option which is a Halti. We seldom use Halti head collars at METAK9. There is nothing innately wrong with them, but I don't find them to be as effective in terms of human to canine communication as the tools mentioned above. However, I always tell my clients to experiment and figure out what works best for them. I do like that a person with no dog handling experience can put one on a dog and quickly improve their walking. This is because the action of most head collars is one that pulls a dog's snout down anytime they pull against the leash. There are some trainers that will make leash corrections with a head harness on. I am not really a fan of this style of training as I feel it can be hard on their neck and spine. Head collars can cause chaffing on the snout with extended use and are difficult to fit on some brachycephalic dogs. The Halti can also be a tougher tool to transition away from if at some pointed you wanted to begin fading out training equipment. Head collars work in more of a passive way and their application falls short outside of walking. Slip leads, prong collars, and e collars are tools that allow for a constant pressure dialogue. They help a handler build focus, engagement, and boundaries in a language all dogs understand.

Think Before You Tap

Before even using the remote collar system you want to ensure that everything is squared away. The collar should be fitted snug, ensuring the contact points are through the fur and touching the skin, but not digging into the neck. Make sure the device is turned on, this varies from system to system. Generally you will either touch the red sensor dot on the

remote and collar together or you will tap the on button located between the contact points of the collar. Some collars have different modes that increase the stimulation on its dial's numerical range, i.e., a one becomes a two and a two becomes a three, etc. I always preach to start low and work your way up based on your dog's body language, level of surrounding distractions, and understanding of equipment. Take your time to get comfortable, building confidence and muscle memory around the remote takes time. Read the instruction manual and study the anatomy of your equipment until you understand the functionality of each button. A collar that is too loose will cause a handler to up the levels thinking the dog doesn't feel it. At some point the dog will turn its head and make contact with the device causing it to receive the e-collar's stimulation at a level unintended. I prefer the collar to be on the tight side when a dog is to go out in public, however there is a downside to this. If the collar is too tight and on the dog for too long it can result in sore spots, or pressure ulcers. It is important regardless of how tight the collar is to change its location on the neck every 4-6 hours. This is the same thing that can happen from wearing a piece of tight jewelry or pants for too long. Too much moisture and friction will cause issues. Moreover, while the e-collar units are waterproof, please make sure to take the collars off and dry their necks once they are done playing in the water, then refit the collar.

Back To Basics

Even if your dog already has a clear understanding of the equipment, spending time on the basics can work wonders as a refresher. A refresher will ensure that their relationship with the collar remains healthy and balanced. This exercise is especially important if you just finished training with us or you are somewhere around the six month post-training mark. I say six months as this is when people tend to fall off and stop practicing with the collar. If you aren't consistent with the e-collar the dog's knowledge of its language will fade. If only put on once in awhile it may start seeing it as a punishment tool. There is also the risk of the dog growing collar smart, where it only listens when you put it on. We want the dog to think that their mom and dad can get their attention at any time and place.

Ok, let's get back to work. Start this drill with a standard four to six foot leash. Have their collar on and step behind them while they are distracted. While behind them, continuously tap the stim button on the lowest setting. Holding the button is also an option; the stim will

shut off after ten seconds. I find tapping to be more precise, but holding can provide a consistent rhythm making it easier for your dog to catch on. You are looking for some type of reaction to the stimulus, e.g., ear flicker, head cocked to the side, neck twitch, head shake, looking around, or eye contact.

The goal here is to stop tapping as soon as they make eye contact, then mark and reward. If you find your dog is struggling to figure out what to do then give them a hand. You can use negative reinforcement by creating directional pressure with the leash toward yourself while tapping till they look back. Another method to elicit engagement is to crouch down while tapping and stop as soon as they look back. If they still struggle to associate the stim with the handler then use their name while utilizing one of the methods above. If your dog turns around and comes toward you while you are tapping then you are on the right track and often that is good enough. However, if your dog is reactive or you just want greater focus and engagement, you must mark and reward only eye contact. This way your dog understands that when it feels the e-collar's sensation it's like you are calling their name. They will learn to stop what they are doing and look right at you. This will give you a window to issue a follow up command. Another reason is when you have them in a stationary position, they don't break early when they feel the collar instead opting to "check-in" for instruction.

Repeat this process until you see consistency in your dog's performance then switch to a long leash and start over from a further distance. When you train with an emphasis on eye contact the dog will generally understand to come into your space as well when required. If you just train for the dog to come into your space, during introductory work, they often won't understand eye contact is a requirement. Teaching focus can help keep a dog close, but keeping a dog close doesn't always help teach focus. This is especially true for dogs that have exceptional problem solving intelligence; they can do what they want and what we want at the same time. I've worked with dogs that get very overstimulated around other pups. When I tell them to "come", they are able to fulfill the command while continuously staring at the other dog. ***Fun fact: if your dog's tail starts going down and they're losing motivation use movement and excitement every time you "break" to bring it back up while***

training. How you teach is how they learn. The more enthusiasm you have to teach, the more enthusiasm your dog has to learn.

Recalling The Recall

In my opinion, the “come” command is the most important part of training. The longer we work with a dog, the better its recall will be. The tough part is ensuring the dog’s owners are able to get the same results. This will come with doing post-training lessons, homework, and showing the dog that you’re not just a roommate, but their guide in this world. The cherry on top is, as I mentioned before, dog’s don’t generalize well so it’s crucial that their recall is worked on in as many places as possible, especially around the home and surrounding neighborhood. The other obstacle is they must be taught how to recall from various distances. Just because they generalize a 15 foot recall at the park does not mean they understand a 50 foot recall. Now, before using the e-collar, your dog should already know the mechanics of this command and understand its association with the word “come”. Begin in a controlled environment with minimal distractions. Use the e-collar at the lowest effective setting, pressing the button as you give the recall command. Continue pressing the button and as soon as the dog begins to move towards you stop adding the stim. Once they get into your spatial bubble use your marker (“break” if you want to terminate command and “good” if you want to build duration and continue rewarding for staying in your space) then reward them with praise and treats upon arrival. Gradually increase the level of distractions and distance of the recall as your dog becomes more consistent in responding. One thing you guys have heard me say often is motion creates motion. If your pup is struggling to understand then add motivation movement, or body language. If your dog feels the stim, don’t be hasty in upping the levels during the learning phase as this will not help them understand what you want. Use more body language as this is the easiest thing for a dog to understand. Even when they are further along in training, I generally prefer to use more motivational movements before elevating levels on the remote. You are always better off facing the consequences of too little pressure over too much pressure. First tell the dog the command while tapping the e-collar stim. Then slow run backward to get your dog to follow. This will trigger their drive and curiosity. Make sure to have a brief pause between the stim-command combo and movement. I will explain this further below. A

secondary method is replacing moving backwards with crouching down. Give your command while tapping, pause, then crouch down to entice fido into your bubble. Getting low is an invitation for a dog to get into your space. It's crucial during the learning and distraction phases of training to always use the e-collar for negative reinforcement rather than positive punishment; this will ensure your dog associates the command and the collar with positive outcomes. There will be more flexibility in how you can apply pressure to commands the further your dog get into training, because by then they will thoroughly understand it. Consistency, patience, and positive reinforcement are key to successfully building motivation for an e-collar recall and obedience in general. *Fun fact: dogs naturally understand energy and body language. Image a pack of wolves with one leading the formation. The first wolf freezes upon seeing a bear two hundred yards away. The rest of the pack freezes as a response to feeling the tension of the lead wolf and seeing it halt. Understanding nonverbal communication is critical to all mammals.*

Four Phases Of Training

The four phases of training are essentially milestones that reflect progress. They are also guidelines for training your dog in a fair manner, as they take into account the way in which a dog thinks. Canines are inference learners, they store data from short to long-term memory bases on repetition and association. This is why operant condition is so important, it allows us to motivate the behaviors we seek and steer them away from behaviors that are inappropriate in our human world. The learning phase is for shaping and luring any behavior we are trying to teach. This is a time to bust out the tasty treats or toys and create the foundation of your dogs obedience commands. I do not recommend using an e-collar at the start of this phase unless you are a dog trainer or you were advised by a dog trainer. There are a multitude of reason we do not offer e-collar training for less than two weeks. It is not that we can't do it, it simply goes against our moral compass and creates a situation where dogs and clients are left with little understanding of the technology. Once your dog has a solid understanding of its basic commands, you can then gently fold the e-collar into training. You will tap the stim button of the remote with the command and through the command until the dog starts to perform the desired task. When you are confident in your

e-collar skills and your dog's performance, it's time to enter the distraction phase of training. I firmly believe that this is the most important phase of training.

The distraction phase allows for a combination of exposure therapy, impulse control, prey drive calibration, indirect socialization around other dogs, and a chance for you as a handler to sharpen your leash work. Pick the areas that you frequent the most with your pup to start generalizing their obedience commands. Make sure your collar is fitted correctly and turned on before embarking to your destination. Upon your arrival begin trouble shooting to find your dog's working e-collar level. This level will change moment by moment based on the surrounding stimuli, but for now just find a level that helps them focus, but doesn't cause unnecessary stress. Continue using lots of positive reinforcement and helpful body language cues to work through distractions. The more you move around with enthusiasm, the more you will hold your dog's attention. Use your terminal marker or release command "break" after a command and then run to get them excited. This not only builds more eagerness and speed into the command, but also helps them stay engaged with a moving target, which is you! Your movement will also help them further understand that "break" means they are clocked-out and free to be a dog.

You will very likely only be in the correction phase for a few areas to start. This is usually the local park along with your front and back yard. Taking your time to get there is more important than getting there fast. As you progress into this phase, start holding your dogs more accountable for their behavior. At this point, you have spent time with and without a trainer ensuring your dogs understand their commands and can pay attention around various distractions. It is also equally important that you feel confident in your understanding of leash pressure, leash handling, markers, and corrective measures before progressing.

Now that you have worked your way to the correction phase it is fair to utilize light positive punishment to make sure they take their handler seriously when out in the world, especially with traffic, rattlesnakes, coyotes, and unfamiliar dogs that are abundant in our areas. I like to say, "command and then demand." You are going to ask twice and then make it happen. Continuing to repeat the command will diminish its value and confuse your dog. When correcting with positive punishment you are going to say the command "no" and pop your

leash or prong collar. This will condition our positive punishment marker and give meaning to a word they otherwise wouldn't understand. Many new dog owners shout "no" and simply assume that their dog speaks English and understands when it has made a mistake. If you are using the e-collar then there are two ways to go about it. You can adjust the e-collar levels based on how distracted they are and use it how you have been, as negative reinforcement. Secondly, you can use it for positive punishment and issue a higher level stim after using your marker "no". It is best that you aren't overzealous when using your e-collar for positive punishment, it should only be slightly higher than what you would normally use to get them engaged.

Finally we come to the maintenance phase where you will be keeping your dog up to date on all that it has been taught. You will rely less on your equipment at this point. It will only be used to make the occasional correction when your dog gets tempted to chase a squirrel or go after a competing reward. Once a dog has received positive punishment and understands what happens when it doesn't follow direction it will listen with less pressure. There are times you have to go up to go down with the e collar. If your dog hasn't been conditioned to higher levels of stim then it doesn't know that the tickle on its neck can become more uncomfortable if they decide to blow you off. Exposing them to these levels will decrease their stress in the future, but keep them under your influence like an invisible leash. I cannot stress this enough, never shoot all the way up to the highest level when making a correction. The act of going above what they are used to will bring them out of their tunnel vision and back to focusing on you. At METAK9 Academy we never advise using any aversive training tool to inflict pain. These tools are used as a "snap-out-of-it" reminder. Although the term positive punishment is common dog training vernacular, we prefer to correct the dog and show them what to do as punishment is punitive by definition. You must remember, as the owner you are mother or father wolf and everything you do or don't do will create a new behavior. Wild dogs and wolves do not let bad behavior slide, the perpetrator becomes a liability to the pack and puts everyone at risk! ***Fun fact: a bitch does not follow around her pups with a fanny pack full of treats. They are not worried about being nice, their kindness is teaching survival skills and fulfilling maternal obligations. They take their job as a parent and life coach very serious. It is the education they provide that will determine***

their litter's odds of staying alive. Take this mindset, mix in some affection, and balanced empathy, and you and your beastie will be ready to take on the world.

Markers, Timing, Luring, and the Conditioning Sequence

One of the toughest aspects of training for a new handler is timing. Timing is everything when it comes to training a dog. Dogs possess a short-term memory that lasts approximately two minutes, allowing them to quickly forget random occurrences unless deemed necessary intel for survival. Nevertheless, dogs are capable of retaining certain memories for an extended period, including episodic and associative memories. To condition a verbal and physical cue with a desired behavior we have an even smaller window of several seconds to build associations between words, food, and actions. This is where the marker comes into play.

A marker is a sound, think clicker, or a word, think “yes” or “good”, that is conditioned with a reward to have value to the dog. The marker predicts either a punishment or reward event. It will help your dog mentally capture the behaviors you want to increase or decrease. To give this marker value we must charge it, hence the dog training term charging the marker. To charge this marker you will spend time saying your chosen word, we use “good”, quickly followed by the primary reinforcer, which is a treat. You have now created a marker that will help you mark and reward whatever you are teaching. It is important that you allow a brief pause of one to two seconds in-between the marker “good” and the delivery of a treat. Our physical movement will always overpower our verbal cues. When you pause it helps the dog understand that you are giving a reward after saying the marker, not rewarding the movement of your hand. If I was to say “good” at the same time as extending out my hand with the treat, my dog would end up confused as to why it is getting food. Because they are masters of nonverbal communication, they would infer that the reward was linked to the most obvious movement they can perceive.

The act of luring your dog into various positions will make training a much smoother process. It will allow for more flexibility in training as well as add a greater level of polish and refinement to the final product. Start by getting your dog to follow a piece of food. Keep the treat close to your pup's nose, move it a few inches, say “good” immediately

followed by a one second pause, and then release the tasty morsel. Add longer durations of movement over time until your dog begins to understand the mechanics of what you want them to do. Now that they understand the concept of following food in hand, you can lure them into any desired command with more accuracy than using leash pressure alone. If I wanted a sit either in front of me or in the heel position, I would lure the dog to my desired location and then move the food directly up to a twelve O'clock position from their nose. As its head goes up, its bottom will go to the ground, mark, pause, reward, and repeat. The goal here is to eventually fade away from the use of food as a lure; when you fade out the food, your hand becomes the primary target. To do this, simply start the same luring process over again from scratch, but use an "air biscuit". Act like your hand is holding a piece of food, move it a few inches, mark, pause, and reward. When luring, I like to start the entire process with a closed fist, making it harder for the dog discern what is in your hand. This will allow for an easier transition away from food as your hand will already smell like the treats you've been handling, empty or not. If they struggle to follow your fist then start with it pinched between your fingers and then close after a couple repetitions. If you are still having a hard time then I highly recommend training during mealtime with kibble.

The conditioning sequence is a very critical piece of intel that all trainers need to keep in mind. I say trainers and not just handlers, because all my clients must act and think like dog trainers in order to achieve their desired goals long-term. As I've stated before, a physical movement or gesture will always prevail over verbal cues. A dog's mind and therefore eyes, are attracted and always searching for movement. Training will get more complicated as we add in more motivational movement, verbal cues, physical cues, and markers. Let's say I'm working on my dog, Santino, but he doesn't quite understand the verbal cue for a recall yet. I'd then add in motivational movement such as running backwards to get him to follow into my space. This would help paint him a mental picture of the new behavior I'm teaching. The motivational movement, verbal, or physical cues that come first in a conditioning sequence will be reinforced by whichever come after. Let me break that down, this is what the sequence would look like:

Conditioning Sequence	Recall	Sit
Verbal Cue	“Come”	“Sit”
One Second Pause	Pause	Pause
Physical Cue	Arm Extended Out, One Foot in Front of Hip, Palm Facing Dog	Arm Extended Out, One Foot in Front of Hip, Pointing Finger Aimed at Ground
One Second Pause	Pause	Pause
Motivational Movement/Negative Reinforcement	Fast Walk/Run Backwards	Leash Pressure to 12'Oclock or Make a Claw To Push Down Where Tail and Butt Meet/ Both
One Second Pause	Pause	Pause
Marker	“Good”	“Good”
One Second Pause	Pause	Pause
Positive Reinforcement	Praise/Treat/Pet	Praise/Treat/Pet

METAK9 Commands

Come: Get into my space and stay there until given a release or follow-up command.

Sit: Bottom touching the ground until given a release command.

Down: Belly to the floor with elbows touching the ground. They must stay there until given a release command or follow-up command.

Break: Dog is allowed to "clock-out" and go have fun. The command has been terminated and break marks the completion.

Place: Go to designated spot that is elevated with clear boundaries and stay there until given a release command.

Off: Get off of furniture or stop jumping on something or someone.

Wait: Do not pass this boundary until given a command, e.g., doors, gates, kennel, car.

Heel: Walk on my left side and keep up with my pace, noes to toes.

METAK9 Markers

Uh-uh: Predicts a negative reinforcement event. EX: dog pulls ahead on leash in a heel, I would tell the dog “uh-uh” and create leash pressure back into heel. When the dog complies the pressure turns off, thus reinforcing the behavior. Using negative reinforcement helps to preserve motivation while a dog is still learning. This is closer to a pull of the leash rather than a “pop”, although the idea is the dog takes action to make leash slack. It is meant to be less aversive and serves to give the dog a second or third chance to figure something out. It would not be fair to punish a dog that doesn’t understand the curriculum it is being taught.

Good: Predicts a positive reinforcement event. EX: I ask the dog to “sit”, when it does I say “good” and produce a reward. This reward can be a treat, praise, scratch, or toy. You can even use excitement and movement as a reward. All are various forms of positive reinforcement.

No: Predicts a positive punishment event to stop inappropriate behavior. EX: My dog lunges at another dog passing by and I assertively tell it “no” before popping my slip lead or prong collar. The same result can be produced with a greater level of pressure control using an e-collar.

If you are having trouble please call, text, or email your trainer anytime, day or night. The key to training is patience, time, knowledge, and balanced empathy. I say balanced empathy because as dog people, our hearts were born with strings that dogs can pull anytime like nothing else in this world. We all know what happens when you give a mouse a cookie. Some of the toughest dogs I’ve worked were in homes with a “fuzzy wuzzy” can do no wrong mentality. I want everyone to remember that dogs are descendants of WOLVES! The more we relate them to ourselves, the harder it will be to hold them accountable. They are essentially carnivorous, scavenger children with giant teeth that don’t rationalize and have no moral boundaries. Dogs will make mistakes, don’t take it personal. They are also our first security systems and earliest hunting partners that never took a break in a mutual agreement to keep one another alive in the harshest of environments; at a time where our odds of survival was nothing more than a coin toss for mother nature. If you treat a dog like a person, they will treat you like a competing canine.

Almost all dog issues come from the complexity of the canine-human relationship, both behavioral and health. Dogs feral and wild, will very quickly sort out disputes to ensure harmony within the pack. They are all working and understand how to play their positions. Their primary roles are hunting, gathering, protecting, reproducing, and rearing offspring. In a domestic setting their purpose and mission becomes skewed. They no longer hunt or scavenge for calories and nourishment. This is extra problematic as now they are eating more resulting in a surplus of energy and often limited on ways to expend this energy. Reproduction is no longer necessary, but sexual hormones are still at work, most notably problematic in males. Male dogs, especially power breeds and those still intact, that are not raised with proper human parenting and boundaries tend to be more territorial, competitive,

dominant, and will wander off in search of a mate. Female dogs under going a heat cycle will deal with some of these same traits due to hormonal fluctuations.

My final point is that dogs are carnivores and while they can tolerate plant material, their genetic predisposition is no different than any other animal that needs to compete for protein. Now picture your dog in its domestic setting with a genetic profile telling it to reproduce, hunt, gather, and protect. The only purpose it sees available is to protect resources and territory. Now you have one of nature's most successful predators coupled with raging hormones, an unlimited surplus of energy, and long days of unemployment. To avoid having issues with your pup you must stick to your training and stay vigilant. Make sure to practice at least ten minutes a day so that you are always reminding them that you are in charge and there to keep them safe. If you are still having trouble then refer to our troubleshooting guide in the Client Resources section of our website. ***Fun fact: Dogs exhibit a unique form of empathy towards humans that wolves, their wild counterparts, do not possess. This difference is largely a result of the domestication process, which has shaped dogs to be highly attuned to human emotions and social cues. Dogs have developed the ability to read human facial expressions, understand tone of voice, and respond to emotional states with behaviors such as comforting or seeking to soothe their human companions. This empathetic behavior is not observed in wolves, who, despite being closely related to dogs, have not undergone the same evolutionary process of living closely with humans. Furthermore, wolves are better hunter and problem solvers, but do not display the same level of understanding or responsiveness to human emotions, highlighting the unique bond between dogs and humans that has been cultivated through thousands of years of co-evolution.***