

Understanding Your Beagle

A GUIDE TO LIVING WITH BEAGLES

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UNDERSTANDING YOUR BEAGLE

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Introduction

In this booklet, I'm trying to give practical help with some of the more common problems that people will experience when they bring home a beagle.

Some of the sections, including house training, apply equally to any breed of dog and others, such as recalls, are aimed a little more specifically at beagles. All of the methods are tried, tested and beagle friendly.

If you have a situation that's difficult to deal with, your first step should be a check-up by your vet. Sometimes there's a physical cause that no amount of re-training will help. Health problems are especially likely if you notice sudden changes in behaviour. An unexpected loss of house training could be caused by bladder disease, or a previously friendly dog getting unhappy when approached might be due to a flare up of uncomfortable joint problems.

Once your hound has the all clear from the vet then your next step is to recognise there's never a quick fix for any problem, but most methods will show a gradual improvement over a number of weeks or months.

To check that things are working, it's worth keeping a note of the timing and circumstances of incidents in a calendar or diary so you can look back and see clearly if things are improving. A change of plan may be needed if unfortunate events are becoming more frequent. However, try to look at the overall picture because there are bound to be stops and starts in progress along the way.

At the very least, if you decide to look for professional help, you'll have a clear and accurate history of events to pass on to a trainer or behaviourist. There's advice at the end of this booklet about where to go for more help.

Please note: to keep things simple we have referred to dogs as 'him' throughout this booklet. The advice does, of course, apply to bitches too.



Puppy biting

Using their teeth during play with other dogs is normal for puppies but they need to learn that it's wrong to use their teeth when playing with people

An adult dog that's cornered, injured or frightened may bite, but if he's learned as a puppy to inhibit this bite then he's much less likely to do any damage. This is especially important if your dog will ever come into contact with children. To avoid confusion and frustration it's best to teach a puppy to stop biting in three stages, each stage taking about a week.



Week 1

Every time your puppy bites your hands hard enough for it to hurt, you should yelp or shout 'ouch' and turn away as if you're nursing your wounds. Ignore him for at least 20 seconds before restarting the game or interaction.

Week 2

Continue as before, but this time yelp even if he bites you gently or if he tugs at clothing.

Week 3

Yelp and stop the game if he even brushes your skin or clothing with his mouth. If he touches your hand or clothing with his teeth whilst playing with a toy, then end the game immediately and put the toy away for that session.

STILL HAVING PROBLEMS?

This process doesn't work for all puppies. If he has learned to bite to get your attention or if he's well over 14 weeks old then he may get more excited when you yelp. If you've tried yelping for a week or two and things aren't getting any better then you'll need to change your approach. Instead of yelping, give a

calm and clear 'no' when he bites and then immediately pick him up and isolate him in another room or behind a baby gate for two minutes.

If he gets more excited when picked up, then just leave the room quickly and close the door behind you. After two minutes he can join you again, but don't immediately start playing.



ADOLESCENT PROBLEMS

As puppies reach adolescence they become much more independent and confident and are likely to be more interested in the world around them. This can be a difficult time as, until now, you have had the perfect puppy that was very attentive and eager to please you and now you have this unrecognisable, wild eyed monster who runs off at every opportunity, pulls on the lead, jumps up at

visitors, steals anything that isn't nailed down and chews everything in sight.

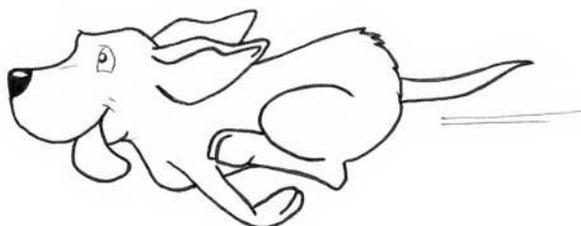
Adolescence is possibly the most difficult period of development for you and your puppy and is quite often the time when many owners give their dogs up to a rescue centre for re-homing. Research suggests that more dogs are put up for re-homing between the ages of eight months and 18 months than at any other time in their lives. This should not be the time to give up on your dog: it is the time to work hard with training and to practise good manners.



Try to remember that this stage does not last forever! With lots of patience and continued training you will find that, just as with human teenagers, it passes and it all comes good in the end. Try to remember when you were a teenager: elbows on the table, forgetting to say please and thank you, not tidying your room – manners learned were often temporarily forgotten, but they came back if they had been well learned originally.

If you have attended a good puppy class and taught your puppy good manners then this stage will be much easier but at times you may still wonder where it has all gone wrong and why your puppy has forgotten everything you taught him. Try not to worry – he hasn't forgotten; he has just put his training aside while he concentrates on other things.

If you have just acquired an adolescent puppy or were unable to begin training early, it's not too late. It will be harder than teaching a young puppy and you must be prepared to work hard and keep your adolescent puppy's attention. With a rescue dog, you may also have the added battle of undoing



the previous owner's training and then starting again from scratch.

Like all teenagers, adolescent dogs will want to try new things, such as

going further and further away from you when off lead as their confidence grows. They become more interested in other dogs and in all the scents that they experience on their walks or in their territory. With the increased confidence, some puppies will test the boundaries and begin to challenge their owners and for puppies with existing behaviour problems the increase in confidence usually means they will deal with things more forcefully, even using aggression to see off threats rather than running away. This is the stage that dogs can learn using aggression to guard important resources can be a very effective way of keeping hold of that resource. Teaching a good fetch, drop, swap or leave command can be helpful in these circumstances, and swapping the stolen item for a high value treats helps to manage the situation.

Solutions to get you and your dog through the adolescent stage successfully:

- Try to keep control and prevent your dog from running off, escaping and getting lost. Try using a long training line or exercise him in secure areas to prevent this from happening.
- Continue with your training, focusing your young dog's attention on you and channel his energies into learning, working, exercising and playing games with you.
- Continue with his socialisation – who better for your adolescent dog to learn from than older, well balanced adult dogs?
- Don't fight it! Adolescent dogs love to get their owners wound up – it often seems like their greatest pleasure in life. Try not to engage in their challenge, stay calm and rather than using physical strength or entering into a shouting match, use your brain! Dogs will only repeat behaviours they find rewarding, so without a reaction from you would their behaviour still be as rewarding for them?
- Think about diet: good quality food is important as your dog's diet can affect his behaviour.
- Let your dog be a dog – know what they are bred to do and meet their natural instincts through play. Teach nose-work games, hide and seek and hunt for hidden items. More advanced games could involve tracking a specific scent you have laid or hidden.
- Teach self-control. Like teenagers, young dogs would rather do what they want rather than what they are told to do. Settle down, sit-and-wait and leave are all commands that require a little bit of self-control from your dog. Young dogs need to learn to control themselves and to not just react or over react.

Mental stimulation is just as important as physical exercise and 20 minutes of puzzle solving can be equivalent to an hour's walk in terms of stimulation. Use your imagination and think of different puzzles for your dog to solve. A few treats inside a water bottle or a large cardboard box, stuffed with small treats, scrunched up newspaper and toys can provide hours of fun for your dog. However, it may take some time for you to clean up too!

Gradually your adolescent dog will mature into a young adult, will settle down again and you will see all your hard work pay off.

Written by Karen Adams Fdsc CBT Adv Dip TCM apdt 01060

Inappropriate elimination

There are four main reasons why dogs will eliminate in the house and the most common is lack of house training.

The reasons for elimination in the wrong places can be caused by the following:

- a) a lack of house training
- b) bladder, kidney or other health problems
- c) suffering from stress
- d) a desire to mark territory and attract bitches



LACK OF HOUSE TRAINING

This is by far and away the most common reason. I would always assume a rescue dog is not house trained, as sometimes rescues are given up for this reason and the previous owner doesn't want to jeopardise the chance of a new home so they 'forget' to mention it. Alternatively, he may have been kennelled previously and so be unused to the run of the house. For an adult dog the process is exactly as it would be for a new puppy, except it may be slightly slower. Older dogs may have to unlearn established habits as well as learning new ones. On the plus side, an older dog normally has much better bladder control and so can last a lot longer between trips outside.

Puppies are most likely to need to pee or poop when they wake up, have been playing actively or have just eaten or drunk. If you take your pup outside at these times you're much more likely to get the results you want. Most puppies need to eliminate every couple of hours, but with every month the puppy grows older, its bladder control will improve.

When you go outside with your pup take a few tasty treats and give them just as the puppy has finished eliminating in the right place. Once the pup is getting it right all of the time you can start to fade these out. Watch out for the pup circling, whimpering or sniffing the floor, because these are often signs that the pup needs to eliminate. Scoop him up and get outside quickly!

Ideally, young puppies should be left overnight in a crate or a confined space to limit their access to the rest of the house. If you're using a crate you may want to put newspaper in one end to help keep his bedding clean, but once he can stay dry all night you should stop using it. By the way, puppy training pads are not very helpful as they can confuse a pup into thinking it's appropriate to eliminate indoors.

OLDER DOGS

Older dogs may have been scolded for eliminating in front of their owners in the house and can think it's safest to avoid doing what's required when someone is watching. If your dog spends ages in the garden without doing anything and then urinates once he comes back inside when you're not looking, then it's likely he's doing this to avoid a punishment. To fix this you have to avoid staring at him when outside. Watch out of the corner of your eye or use a small mirror while pretending to prune the roses and reward quietly with treats dropped at his feet while he's using the correct area.

Avoid unsupervised access in the house and clean up any mistakes thoroughly. If you're starting house training with an adult dog then you should take him out every hour to begin with and at least two separate trips in the morning if you're planning to leave him for any length of time.

ACCIDENTS

Don't punish the hound by scolding, shaking, threatening with a rolled up newspaper or rubbing his nose in it. If you scare the puppy he may think it's not safe to eliminate in front of you and so he might sneak off out of your sight the

next time. This will make training take much longer. If you catch him in the act you could let him know you're not happy with a sharp 'ah ha' in a tone that makes him look up but doesn't scare him, then put him outside as you clear up.

Both older dogs and puppies are much more likely to eliminate in areas they've used before that carry a trace of a urine smell. You must therefore clear up any traces on carpet and hard floors with a special cleaner designed for the job. You can buy deodorising cleaners at most pet shops or, alternatively, a mixture made of biological detergent and vinegar in warm water also works well. Make sure that you test any cleaning mixture on a small area of the floor to ensure it won't do any damage. Remember also that a dog's nose is very sensitive and can smell any tiny traces left behind if you use a normal floor cleaner.

Dogs are also less likely to eliminate in places where they eat or sleep. Try rotating where you feed and play with your dog by including all the rooms to which he will eventually have access.

BLADDER, KIDNEY OR OTHER HEALTH PROBLEMS

This is less likely than a simple training problem but can't be ruled out without a visit to the vet for blood and/or urine tests. Increased thirst, blood in the urine, pain when urinating or the dog needing to urinate more frequently are all warning signs and he should be checked by your vet immediately. You should also be worried if a previously reliable dog suddenly starts having accidents in the house. If you've not had your dog very long and are not sure of the cause of a problem then it's sensible to be on the safe side and give him a full MOT from your vet as a precaution.

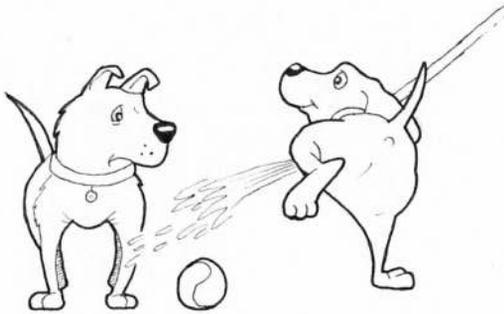
STRESS

This is also uncommon but is something to consider if the dog is only eliminating indoors in specific situations, such as when you go out or when the window cleaner visits. It's often seen alongside other problem behaviour such as incessant barking or destructiveness when left and could be a symptom of separation anxiety. If you suspect stress then you need professional help referred through your vet.

TERRITORY MARKING AND ATTRACTING BITCHES

This is most common in entire (un-neutered) male dogs and is most likely when there is a bitch in season nearby. The options are:

- Neutering the dog – if he is doing it to attract a mate, the behaviour will stop immediately
- Confining him in the kitchen, kennel or crate when unsupervised until the bitch is no longer in season
- Punishing the action with a jet of water from a water pistol as he cocks his leg can sometimes work wonders, but it has to be timed perfectly to be effective so make sure his leg is up when you hit! However, you should avoid this altogether if your dog is in the least bit nervous.



Whatever you decide, it's crucial that you carefully follow the instructions for clearing up, mentioned in the house training section.

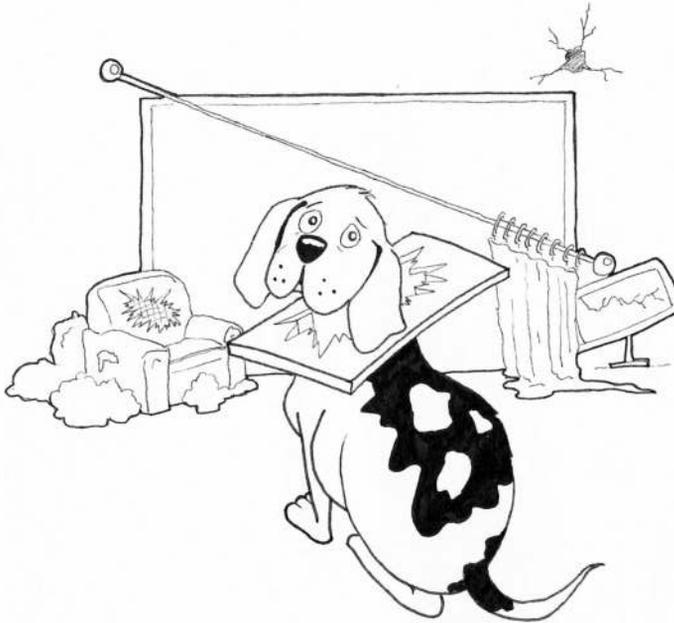
Attention seeking

Some hounds will also chew, dig or destroy items – even when you are there and they definitely aren't feeling lonely. Sometimes it seems as if they will go to great lengths to invent new and annoying ways to get you up from your chair

Attention seeking is as good a description as any, but it does have quite negative associations.

All normal people and dogs need and enjoy attention. Owning a dog is a big responsibility and shouldn't be entered into lightly. Expecting a young dog to

be satisfied with two half hour walks round the block on the lead and then settle quietly for the rest of the day is not reasonable and you should be prepared to spend a great deal more time than this to keep him entertained. For centuries, beagles have been selectively bred to follow a hare at a flat out run for up to five hours, singing as they go, several times a week. It's not surprising, then, that a fit and healthy hound can't sit still in his basket for 23 hours a day!



Having said that, some hounds do take attention seeking to new heights by taking objects and running away with them, but it's often the owners that are encouraging them without realising it. Even if the attention you give your beagle seems to be quite negative to you, for instance firmly telling him 'no', can be far better to many dogs than being ignored and they will work hard to gain your eye contact. If every time a beagle picks up the TV remote control you jump to your feet and chase him to get it back, he quickly learns that picking up the remote is the fastest way to start a game and get attention. If you then swap the remote for a dog toy and play with him, he's doubly

rewarded for picking up the 'forbidden item' and it will be the TV remote as his first choice next time. On the few occasions he picks up the dog toy first you may look at him and say 'good boy' then return to watching the TV. You have swiftly taught him that dog toys really aren't as much fun as remote controls!

If you know your hound is likely to start a game an hour after he's eaten, then why not bite the bullet and choose a toy to start the game ten minutes earlier. That way you'll be rewarding his quiet behaviour with lots of fun and the remote control will avoid gaining extra teeth marks. In fact, you should start to think a lot more about the type of behaviour you're accidentally rewarding on a day to day basis.

As an example, if your hound is jumping around as you prepare his food then you'll be rewarding jumping around with a very large food reward! Next time he's hungry he'll jump more. However, if you teach him 'sit' and he sits for 30 seconds before you feed him then you're rewarding the still behaviour instead. He's a little more likely to sit when he wants something in the future. In the same way, if he's jumping around and barking as you put on his lead and you open the door to be dragged out for a walk, then jumping and barking are being rewarded. If you wait for him to sit before opening the door, then you're rewarding sitting and he'll do it more often. If you're really smart you'll put the lead on ten minutes before you leave and go and watch a bit more TV or do the washing up. That way he'll have calmed right down and you can grab his lead and instantly reward calm, quiet, half asleep behaviour.

Everything that your beagle likes doing can be used as a reward for a bit of good behaviour. A sit before you let him run and sniff in the park, a short recall with the lead on before he greets his doggy friends, another sit before you fuss him when you come back from the supermarket – the list is endless! His day is probably full of rewarding experiences and all you need to do is help him pause a while before he gets them. Ignore him until he's sitting or lying down quietly before you reward him by restarting the game.

If you've an adult dog who is over enthusiastic with his teeth, then the second approach is the most useful. Older dogs are perfectly capable of learning that using their teeth recklessly when playing with toys or taking treats will end the fun stuff. If your fingers or hands are nipped when playing with 'tug' toys then the easiest approach is to say 'no' as you drop the toy and just walk away immediately. This only works if you're playing with your dog and

you need a different approach if you're trying to get stolen items back. (See the next section for more information about this.) If you don't take the time to let dogs know that you're unhappy then they can't be expected to realise they need to be careful. The easiest way to do this is to stop playing with careless dogs the moment they get too rough.

In the same way, if your fingers are bitten when you give him a treat, you should let him try to take it but instantly say 'no' and take your hand away without giving up the treat if you feel any tooth pressure at all. If he's very rough then you may need to wear gloves at the beginning. Praise lavishly when he starts to take the food more gently and gradually build up to the point where you don't feel any teeth at all. This is an exercise you need to work on when you aren't training other things (such as sit or down) at the same time. If you want to use food rewards for other exercises then keep your fingers well away by dropping them on the floor until the grabbing is under control.

Jumping up

Most dogs jump up because they're looking for eye contact and petting. If you look at your hound while you say 'no' and then push him off, you may be rewarding him with just what he wants!

Instead, if he jumps up, immediately turn your back with your arms crossed, your nose in the air and then ignore him until his feet are back on the floor. Praise and treat him for this and give him the attention he craves. If he jumps again, then turn away with your nose in the air once more. If you haven't already trained him to sit, then it's worth starting



this immediately, then you can ask for a sit whenever you greet him. This way, he'll learn a lot faster as you teach him for what you do want him to do instead of expecting him to guess at what he's doing wrong.

To train the sit you can start by putting a treat on his nose and slowly moving it up and back until he starts to tilt his head backwards. As his head moves back his bottom will go

down. You can praise him and let him have the treat as soon as his bottom hits the floor.

(If he jumps up to get the treat then you're holding it too high. Try a little lower). After a couple of five minute training sessions, you can try with no treat in your hand. Use the same hand signal and, as he sits, you can praise and get the treat from your pocket or a nearby pot instead. Once he is sitting every time you ask, just reward the fastest ones.

When greeting new people you can ask him to sit as he approaches them and then praise and treat as he does so. If you do the rewarding instead of the visitor, then he'll start to turn his attention towards you and away from them. If he's a serious jumper then keep him on the lead and gently pull him away from visitors if he jumps. Wait a few minutes until he calms down and then try again. Reward a sit with lots of treats and attention.



Destructive behaviour when left and separation anxiety

Often it is hard to tell whether your dog is destroying the house while you are out because he is bored and lonely or whether there is an underlying problem caused by severe stress and anxiety about being left on his own

Separation anxiety is rare but very distressing for the dog and owner. Symptoms include whining and pacing as you prepare to leave, dilated pupils, panting and drooling, house soiling, howling and barking once you've left and the destruction of door and window frames.

On the other hand if the symptoms include barking, destruction of furniture, cushions and dog beds and stealing food items from bins or worktops then it's more likely to be boredom – coupled with incomplete house training if you come home to find little 'gifts'.

As you can see, it isn't always clear! If your dog seems unconcerned as you prepare to leave and shows interest in a small amount of food scattered on the floor then it's probably boredom. If your dog is obviously under severe stress that visibly increases as you get closer to leaving then it's more likely to be separation anxiety. Separation anxiety will need to be diagnosed and treated with an individual treatment plan by a behaviourist, via your vet.

Fortunately, loneliness and boredom can be dealt with more easily and there is a lot you can do to alleviate it, even if you're regularly away from the house. If your hound is also eliminating in the house then you'll need to re-address his house training and confine him to a small non-carpeted area, such as the kitchen, while you sort it out. See the section on house training for more information about this.

It may be that your beagle isn't getting enough stimulation during the day



which means he has extra energy to burn off and so he'll entertain himself by chewing the cushions and barking at passers-by out of the window. This is especially likely if your hound is under three years old.

Increasing the amount of exercise he's getting on a daily basis will normally help and finding an agility or other training club will provide you both with an evening of bonding and entertainment. Another great way to fill in some time is to get a hollow, food-filled toy, such as a Kong, for when you leave your beagle alone in the house. If you can entertain a dog for the first 20 minutes after you leave he will have a much greater chance of settling quietly.

KONGS

These are odd shaped hollow rubber toys that can be stuffed with food and, with a bit of practice, can provide good quality entertainment for a dog on his own for half an hour or more. Be careful if you've more than one hound, as disputes could arise over ownership. Kongs come in a range of sizes and are available at most pet shops. You should make sure any food you do use is taken off your beagle's daily calorie allowance, since beagles are very prone to putting on weight. When first introducing a Kong toy to a dog, you should make it fairly easy for the dog to get at the food. Once he's hooked then the trickier you can make it to empty, the more entertainment it will provide.

IDEAS FOR KONG FILLINGS

Iced biscuits

Fill a Kong with dried food then place it in a bowl of warm water until the biscuit has gone soft. Next, simply pop it in the freezer overnight to provide a long lasting, cooling summer snack.

Tasty wedge

First snap a long hard dog biscuit in half. Next put a cube of cheese in the bottom of the Kong and then push the half biscuit all the way in, broken end first. (You may have to use a bit of force.) Serve!

Cheese sandwich

Alternate a squirt from a tube of low fat cheese spread with a small hard dog biscuit until you can't force any more into the Kong.

Buster cube

Other toys, such as a Buster Cube, dispense dried food as they're pushed around the floor and can also provide lots of entertainment. Do make sure that you're not over feeding, by taking the dried food equivalent from your hound's daily allowance.

Finally, remember that however entertaining these toys can be, they're still no substitute for company. If you're leaving your beagle alone for more than four hours at a time you'll need to arrange a dog walker or a sitter to make sure his welfare is not compromised.

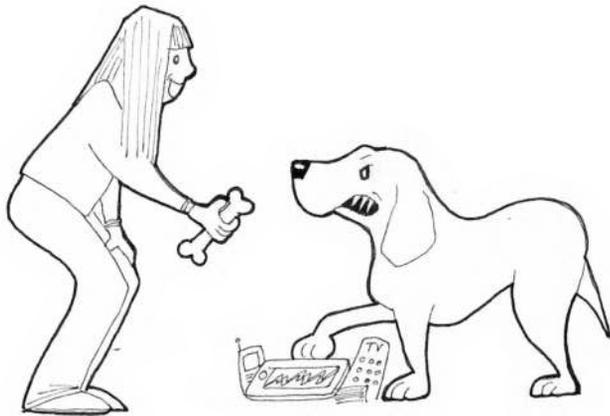
Possessiveness

One form of behaviour that isn't necessarily attention seeking is stealing food items, wrappers or other items that can be seen by your hound as being valuable

I use the word 'steal', but it's important to remember that theft is a very human concept.

Beagles tend to see it as having the opportunity to possess items or eat food that others have carelessly overlooked. After all, if you really wanted it you wouldn't have left it lying around on the coffee table! This has nothing to do with concepts of 'dominance' or status in the household – in fact, it's often the lowest of individuals that guards the most vigorously.

Once a beagle has a food item, it's probably a lost cause – though if it's a roast chicken, you may have a chance of



getting some of it back if he tries to swallow it whole, so prevention is more realistic than a cure. If your hound is stealing food from the bin, then move it out of his reach behind a cupboard door or at the back of a worktop, and never leave food close to the edge of kitchen worktops when you leave the room or turn your back. Removing temptation is the simplest way of avoiding problems.

EXPENSIVE REPERCUSSIONS

What's more of a problem is when a hound picks up an object that isn't edible, but could have expensive repercussions. This may be in value of the object (yes, the TV remote control again as well as mobile phones, wallets and so on) or from the vet's bill incurred by needing such items as peach stones, socks, gravel and so on surgically removed. Picking up this type of article can often start as attention seeking, but often things can escalate quite quickly and the hound ends up frightened by your reaction. You might think that a sensible dog will then avoid picking something up the next time. Unfortunately dogs' brains don't work this way and they often just learn to grab it faster, run under the dining room table and brace themselves for a confrontation.

FEAR

In these situations, aggression from your beagle when confronted usually stems from two sources:

- a) The fear of losing the object
- b) The fear of you taking it by using threats or force, and the dog's fear of getting hurt

The first fear, that of losing the object, is often made worse by our reactions when the object is first investigated. If we leap up and lunge for the mobile phone the first time it's sniffed, we're teaching the dog how valuable it's and if we're willing to fight for it then it really must be worth having! Instead, try to approach calmly and gently say 'thank you' as you remove it – and then remember to keep it on a shelf in future! Reward him with attention or a game and treats when he chooses to play with a dog toy instead.

Dogs learn quickly if they get a rewarding reaction when forbidden objects are picked up and no reaction when they play with their toys. Without knowing

it, we've accidentally taught them to behave in exactly the opposite way to the one we'd like. More toy play, toys that dispense food (stuffed Kong's, Buster Cubes and so on), loads of exercise and plenty of fun training sessions will help by giving more acceptable outlets for a hound's energy.

You may have inherited a beagle that already has a problem and has started guarding stolen objects, and this is when the second fear of getting hurt comes in. If you haven't trained him to ignore inappropriate objects, then it's very easy for confrontations to escalate and for the dog to feel the need to defend himself. In bad cases, just the presence of an object near the dog can trigger defence reactions and sometimes something as simple as staring at the dog whilst saying his name could have meant the start of a confrontation in the past, and may trigger growling or snapping.

SO WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Initially the dog's perception needs to be changed from 'my owner will use force to take things from me' to one of 'good things happen when I give up an object'. It goes without saying that you must be very careful with a dog that may bite. If you have a dog that has already bitten, or if you feel he could do so, then you must look for professional help. Under no circumstances should you ever allow young children near a dog with this kind of problem, even when supervised.

TROUBLESHOOTING

Let's now look at a few common difficulties such as:

- a) a dog that doesn't have a guarding problem and you want to keep it that way – perhaps if you're expecting a baby or young visitors?
- b) a dog that's starting to growl more as he or she hits adolescence
- c) a rescue or Welfare hound – you are noticing signs that he is unhappy about giving up objects although he hasn't bitten anyone



The first step is to teach a reliable command you can use to distract him when you catch the dog with something: 'sit' is probably the most effective. From now on you should hand feed the dog its meals; it's easier with dried food but you can use a spoon if you feed tinned. Ask for a sit before each piece is given, until your hound sits automatically when you are holding food. Don't teach him to sit by pushing down on the hound's bottom. Instead, hold the food just above his nose and then slowly move it back so he has to look up and back, and then feed and praise when his bum goes down. If he lies over objects, teach him to sit up from a lying position by using the same action.

THE NEXT STAGE

Alternate throwing the reward behind him for sitting, with rewarding from your hand. Throw the food far enough away so he takes at least ten seconds to find it and come back for more. As he starts his return you can call his name and get in some recall practice at the same time! His going away from you to get thrown food will give you a chance to pick up the object safely while his back is turned.

You may also need to make your hound more comfortable with hands near his head and mouth. Once he's sitting happily (with his mouth empty) gently touch his head and face before giving the treat. Don't go too fast – he needs to be happy with slight, gentle touches before you try longer strokes. Only when he's totally happy and has an expectant look that says he knows the treat is following can you gently touch his lips and teeth.

You must wait until his sit is immediate and reliable and he's happy about his face being touched before you start to work with an object near the dog. I really do mean happy – just putting up with it isn't good enough! If he freezes, growls or shows the whites of his eyes he may have more of a problem about being touched and you should seek professional help.

ON GUARD

Give him an article he can investigate, but not one that he's likely to scoot off with and guard. Drop it in front of him then let him take it or investigate before asking calmly for the sit. Confine him to one room so he can't disappear, but never chase him if he tries to take the object elsewhere. Most dogs can't sit and hold something at the same time unless specifically trained to do so and with

any luck he'll drop the object. If he doesn't then just stand still and wait. His jaws will get tired eventually! When he sits and drops the object you should throw the reward behind him and pick up the object before he comes back.

Now immediately give it back to him and repeat, repeat, repeat until he doesn't even look at the object but comes and sits for the reward instead! After ten minutes of this he'll be tired, happy and probably not want the object anymore! You'll need to do this same exercise over and over before you start to try it with more interesting objects. With loads of repetition this will teach him that running away from objects equals 'good thing happening'. Until you can do this with any object anywhere, you shouldn't even think about putting your hand near his mouth while he has something in it.

Gradually build up the type of object until you can do this with anything he has guarded in the past and only then you can go on to gently taking something from his mouth. Start with a low value object again, one he is happy to pick up but not one he has guarded in the past. You may have to wiggle it around to encourage him to play and hold it in his mouth. Give it to the dog and then (if it's safe) put a really yummy treat such as liver, chicken or cheese, by his nose and catch the object as he drops it to eat the treat saying 'thank you' as his mouth opens, and then give the article back. Do it all again! Take it slowly and build up to more interesting objects before going back to easy items and saying 'thank you' without the treat in your hand. When he drops it without having been shown the treat first, you should get a treat immediately from a nearby pot or your pocket to reward him.

HOW LONG WILL IT TAKE?

Well, it depends on a number of things such as how long he's been guarding and the strength of his reaction. You realistically need to think about hundreds of toy and food swaps in all areas by lots of different (carefully coached) people to make a reasonable impact. Mum swapping for socks in the kitchen will not mean the hound won't guard a chocolate wrapper from Uncle Fred in the garden. The good news is, although you'll have to start from scratch for each new person in each new place, progress gets faster and faster once the hound has learnt the 'game'. Once things are running smoothly you can stop him forgetting what he's learned.

TRICKS OF THE TRADE

- a) Keep up the hand feeding for sits and remember a dog that sits reliably on cue can't jump up or run off either.
- b) Reward him with treats and attention for sitting and giving you his toys, then give the toys back and play with him.
- c) Ignore him if he picks up inappropriate articles (see the section on Attention Seeking for more ideas) or gently take expensive and dangerous objects and put them out of reach. If it's a really lovely object (such as a food wrapper) then reward heavily (with better food) for giving it up.

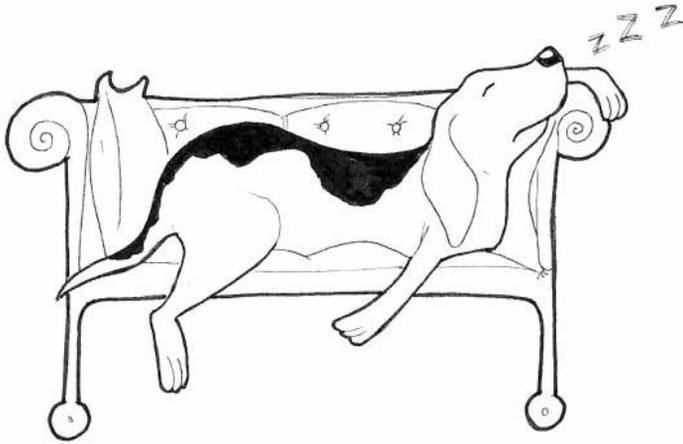
Don't be tempted to test him by taking away his food bowl while he's eating. Instead, approach it occasionally (if he is happy to let you) with a few extra tasty treats and pop them in the bowl as he eats. He will soon start to welcome your hands near his bowl!



Guarding furniture

Beagles that show aggression over toys or stolen items often demonstrate it when owners try to move them from the furniture

People often assume that dogs instinctively know that they should get down from furniture when told to 'get off' without having any training of what 'off' means. An owner staring and speaking harshly is often seen by the dog as a totally unprovoked threat of aggression, since dogs never move each other around in this way. Some dogs can get very growly if they think you're likely to wander up and 'start something'. It's so much easier to simply call your dog from the furniture for a food treat when you want to move him.



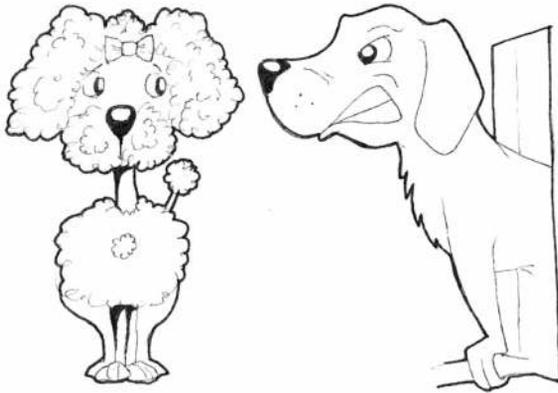
If he has a comfy bed of his own, then the sofa will become much less appealing. Make sure that his own bed is warm and cosy and out of the way of banging doors and clumsy feet, but still close enough to family activity. Reward him for using it by feeding, praising and giving attention when he's in it but don't touch him if he's tired, sleeping or has reacted badly to approaches in the past. If you're worried he'll react badly when disturbed, simply stick to dropping food treats to him as you pass by and he'll soon start to look forward to you coming near.



Aggression to other dogs

This is one of the most distressing of behaviour problems and there are never any simple answers or 'quick fixes' so I can only outline what is normal and what is not and give suggestions for the type of help you might need

It's important to understand that occasional aggressive displays between well-adjusted adult dogs are a normal part of dog behaviour and they are designed to keep order rather than cause problems. Dogs that terrorise others or bite repeatedly, drawing blood, are not behaving normally and you should seek help.



AGGRESSION TOWARDS OTHER DOGS IN THE HOUSEHOLD

This is most likely when introducing a new dog to the household, as each dog has to learn what they can and can't do in their new social group. A certain amount of bickering over food bowls, toys and sleeping spots is perfectly normal, especially if one or other of the hounds has not lived with another dog before. If there's no actual biting, just lots of noise and lunging and most of the time the dogs are getting along fine then there's probably no cause for concern.

These minor arguments should reduce in intensity and frequency over time. If they become more frequent, if one or both dogs are drawing blood, or if one or both start to behave more fearfully then you may want to seek professional help. If you're not sure whether or not things are improving, then the easiest way is to mark down a description of any incidents on a calendar. You should be

able to see clearly if incidents are increasing, any pattern is emerging or if triggers are becoming predictable.

Dogs will sometimes bicker if they feel the other is getting more attention from a family member. The easiest way to deal with this is to swiftly and quietly leave the room, closing the door in the dogs' faces. Often just a few repetitions will get the point across. Hormonal changes in bitches can also be a common cause of aggression and trigger problems between any males that live with them. Neutering can help in these situations and talking this over with your vet should be helpful.

AGGRESSION TOWARDS STRANGE DOGS

There are two main reasons for aggression directed towards strange dogs. One is fear due to a single frightening incident or a lack of socialisation when the hound was a puppy and the second is frustration at not being immediately able to approach and greet other dogs. If your hound is straining on the lead, screaming and trying to bite other dogs, or trying to run away in terror, then you'll need to get help that involves gradually teaching the hound that the presence of other dogs can be rewarding. Dogs that react like this should not be taken to training classes until you've found a sympathetic trainer to do some preliminary work to make him calmer and happier with other dogs.

If the aggression is a lot milder and just involves a bit of barking without you worrying that someone will get bitten, then distracting with food treats when you see another dog often works well. Scattering treats on the ground for a beagle to sniff out will stop things escalating, but don't do this when your hound is off lead because dogs nearby may come over and start a fight over ownership! Alternatively, when you see another dog you can jog briskly backwards away from it and reward your hound when he takes his attention from the other dog and is looking up at you. You'll need to jog back twenty paces or so to begin with – a couple of steps is not good enough – until he starts to look at you in anticipation of his reward. Improvements will only come after many repetitions and special, tasty rewards could include sausage or chicken roll, which are saved for this situation only. There are no 'quick fixes' for aggression so never try and punish an aggressive dog, as you run the risk of making the situation much worse and you may get bitten yourself. You may also like to look into training classes to help socialise him in a more controlled environment.

The second reason for aggression directed towards strange dogs arises from frustration. This normally shows up as a dog that will howl and bark at another from a distance, but is friendly when up close. Sometimes frustrated dogs will greet others enthusiastically and only snap when they are pulled away from their new friend. For this type of dog you need to make things more interesting when out on walks, so meeting another dog is not the only source of interest. Play 'find the biscuit' games and encourage him to play with toys when he's out and about. Teaching him a good off lead recall, so he can socialise with boring elderly dogs rather than exciting youngsters, often works well too. A good, fun training class will be invaluable in helping the hound find the owner more interesting in the presence of other dogs.

Neutering can sometimes help with aggression problems but it can also make things worse in some cases. If you have an entire male who is only aggressive to other entire males then this is one situation where neutering can be beneficial.

Recall off lead

One of the most common questions asked by new or potential beagle owners is, 'I've been told beagles run away, so will I ever be able to let my new hound off the lead?'



The answer to this question will be different for every owner and hound but I'd like to give a few practical tips – most of which have been learned the hard way – to those who would like to let their hounds run free in safe, open spaces but are not sure how to start.

It's important to understand that hounds don't often have a natural recall like most other breeds of dog that have often been selectively bred to stick close to their owners. 'Running away' was a desirable trait in the ancestors of our pet hounds and a beagle that refused to leave the feet of the huntsman was not much use on the hunting field. So instead of thinking of your beagle as stubborn for not paying attention you should bear in mind that he's only doing what he's been designed to do. However, it's not always easy to remember that when he puts his nose down in a single-minded fashion, shuts off his ears and leaves you calling plaintively in the rain for a few hours.

Compare this to the average golden retriever. It's unlikely that you'll hear many complaints that he's stubborn and won't stop fetching the ball, because doing what he was bred to do is simply more socially acceptable in the park. Incidentally, retrievers generally suffer from many more problems caused by possession aggression over household objects than beagles do, so they don't have it all their own way.

COME WHEN CALLED

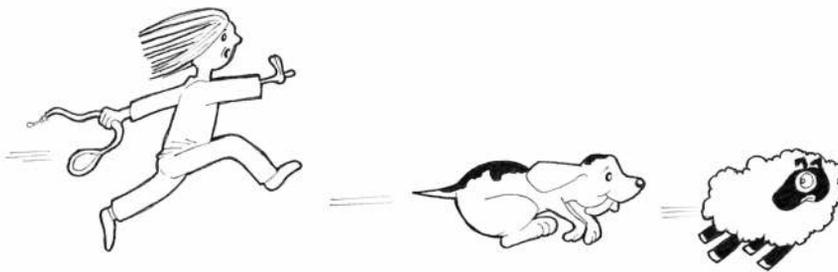
So how do you teach a beagle to come when called? First of all you make sure it's always more rewarding to come to you than stay away. However, convincing a worldly-wise beagle that the tiny chocolate drop you're offering is worth giving up a rabbit track (for rural hounds) or the discarded fish and chip wrapper (for the urbanites) is never going to work. So the solution is simple. Train your beagle that he can normally have access to both the rabbit and get a chocolate drop if he comes when called and he loses both if he fails to respond.

Start by having your Beagle on either a long line or flexi lead and while he's sniffing something interesting call him once in a happy tone of voice. When he ignores you totally, you should gently and firmly reel him back to you without repeating your recall command, take hold of his collar, give him a yummy treat and then release him, still on the line of course, to carry on sniffing. Associating holding his collar with a food treat is important as, in an emergency, you may need to grab your hound quickly without him skipping around at arm's length. Repeat this until your beagle looks up most of the time when you call. This may only take a couple of tries with a young pup or a few weeks of repetition with an older hound that doesn't pay attention.

THE NEXT STEP IS CRUCIAL!

You will need to provide a consequence for not paying attention or your beagle will still decide whether or not to listen to you! Wait until he's really engrossed in a sniff and then call him. If he fails to respond, reel him in gently but firmly, and there is no need to yank. Show him the treat but then put it away again without letting him eat it and either walk away from the distraction on a short lead for a minute or so, or hold his collar firmly but gently whilst ignoring him for a one minute 'time out' – whichever your hound would find less rewarding. Try the recall again after a few minutes and, if he responds, give lots of treats and release him again straight away. If he still doesn't respond go back a stage, move somewhere less distracting and build up a few correct responses again.

Once he's coming every time you call on lead you can try him off lead in a secure but boring place – a tennis court is ideal. As you have no lead, it's crucial that he learns immediately that the rules will still apply. If he ignores your first command off lead don't call him again but walk briskly back to him, put him back on the lead, walk him to where you called him from and give him the one minute 'time out' before trying again. If at this stage you're half way to him and he suddenly runs towards you then this counts as a recall for the first few times and so should be rewarded. Build up distractions gradually until he can be let off in safe, open, more interesting spaces. Do remember that there are still many places where it's not safe to allow even the best trained beagle to run free. These include near roads, anywhere near livestock or in fields full of sheep, deer – or curry cartons! However, with a little common sense you should be able to get a reliable recall in most situations. Once your beagle is reliably coming when called:



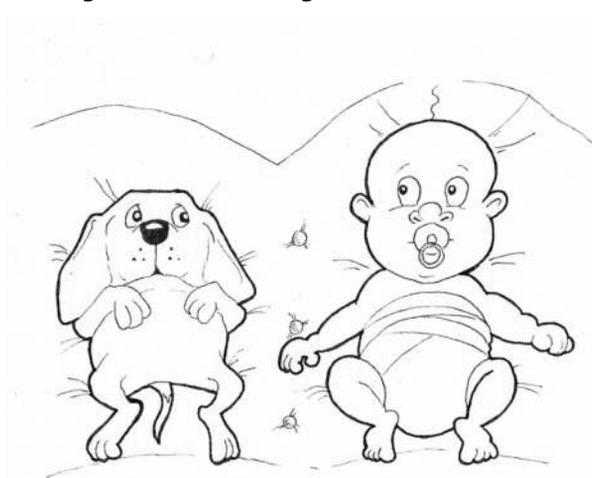
- a) Keep him in the habit of listening by only calling once and 'timing out' immediately if he ignores you.
- b) Remain calm if there's a serious 'disappearance'. Once you get him back, praise him lavishly and resolve to go back to basics for a bit. **Never** punish a beagle for coming back minutes or even hours later, however angry or frightened you feel at the time. Expecting a punishment will always make running off more enticing in the long run.
- c) Vary the rewards to reflect the difficulty of the recall. Use praise, small treats and big food jackpots for acceptable, good and great responses respectively. My beagles get up to a third of their measured daily food ration whilst out and about and there's no rule that says you should always feed from a bowl in the kitchen!
- d) Make yourself more fun to be with by playing games whilst outside. This will help to keep your beagle from thinking about wandering off in the first place. Retrieve is a good energy burner, but it may need a bit of extra training input.
- e) Let him hunt for thrown biscuits in the long grass. This usually goes down very well and needs minimal training. Recall after each find, then throw again as a reward.

If in doubt, get him back on the lead quickly and walk the long way home to compensate.



New baby? A common sense approach

Probably the most important thing to do before your new baby arrives is to deal with any behavioural problems your hound may have now, rather than trusting to luck and leaving it until the last minute



Get your beagle used to being confined behind a child gate, so you can separate him easily when you can't supervise. Teach him to go and settle on his bed for a food treat while you pretend to change a nappy, and sort out any lead pulling problems before you start to walk him beside the pram.

When you bring the baby home, it can help get things off to a smooth start if you ask Grandma or a friend to carry in the new baby while you greet the dog. He'll be excited to see you and you risk the baby being scratched if you're holding him while trying to get through the door. A good idea is to have a food stuffed Kong toy ready to keep him busy while you get yourselves settled in.

Few dogs have any problems settling in to their new routine, as long as you make sure they're still getting enough exercise and you set aside some time each day for 'dog time'. Once the child starts moving around, things can become more fraught and it doesn't hurt to be reminded that you should never leave a small child alone with a dog, however friendly the dog may have been to a non-mobile child. It's important that a toddler is prevented from chasing the dog because the dog may be forced to warn the child off by growling or snapping if his exit routes are blocked. Young children are unable to read dogs'

moods and back off themselves, so total supervision is essential. Children can also be bitten by falling on sleeping dogs, poking fingers in the dog's eyes and ears or by shouting or blowing in dogs' faces. The best way to prevent accidents is to keep everyone separated by using a child gate.

Children learn by copying those around them. Be careful about how you interact with the dog. If you shoo him away from the table by slapping his face and shouting then this is what your child will do if the dog sniffs his toys. Maybe your hound won't react if you do this – but if your child does the same can you be absolutely sure that the dog won't challenge him? Children and dogs learn best when they're rewarded for the right behaviour so give treats and praise to the dog for behaving gently with the child and the same for the child behaving gently with the dog. Intervene and separate them calmly if one or the other starts to get silly or over-excited.

A little bit about rewards

Most beagles would sell their souls for food treats, but you do need to be careful that you don't get carried away and end up with an overweight hound



If you measure out your beagle's daily food ration at the start of the day, you can use it to reward good behaviour whenever this occurs. There's no rule to say beagles need to eat from a food bowl, and a pocketful on walks will certainly help with recall training. If you have a particular problem you need to work on then using small bits of sausage, cheese or cooked liver should be fine – as long as you take it into account when you're measuring out the day's food.

Once your dog fully understands an exercise and gets it right almost every time, you can make the rewards much more unpredictable. It's a bit like getting him hooked on gambling – he never knows what reward, if any, is coming so he stays in the game to find out.

Reward the best responses to a command such as the fastest sit and the quickest recall with the things he likes best such as high value treats, tug games and greeting his friends. Reward the average responses with lower value treats such as praise and dry biscuit and the poorest responses should earn him nothing. This way you will always be polishing up his behaviour.

Finally, don't forget to reward your hound for sometimes just doing nothing at all around the house. Otherwise he may feel that relaxing quietly while you watch the TV doesn't ever earn him any of the good stuff!

Where to get help

Getting the right sort of help for a problem hound

There are no regulations about who can call themselves a behaviourist and you need not have any formal qualifications to do so. You don't even need to have owned a dog! Some training classes are run by incredibly knowledgeable people with a wealth of experience and others by folk who just shout out instructions to 'about turn' as you march in circles. Choosing a beagle-friendly trainer isn't always easy, as the types of training that work with dog breeds selected to obey instructions aren't always a good choice for the independent hound. Clicker training works especially well for beagles so if you can, try to choose a trainer that offers this.

PET BEHAVIOUR COUNSELLORS

Someone who is a member of the APBC (Association of Pet Behaviour Counsellors) is a good choice if you have behavioural issues such as aggression or other potentially dangerous problems. They will only see your dog through a referral by your vet, since a visit to the vet to rule out any medical causes is a vital first step. Visit www.apbc.org.uk for more information.

GENERAL TRAINING

For general training issues and classes, you should look for an APDT member (Association of Pet Dog Trainers) at www.apdt.co.uk Some APDT members also offer behavioural advice and this is listed next to their names on the website.

Look and Learn

Before signing up for any class, you should visit without your dog to see if you think it's somewhere you and your hound would enjoy. Here are some things to look for:

- a) Dogs and people should look relaxed and happy.
- b) Punitive methods or equipment should not be in use. Choke or check chains, tight slip collars and prong collars are not necessary.
- c) Noise should be kept to a minimum – shouting is unnecessary and lots of barking can indicate that the dogs are stressed.
- d) Instructors should be approachable. Do they appear friendly and caring, in the best interests of owner and dog?
- e) How many dogs are there in the class? Bear in mind the size of the venue, as well as the number of assistants. Can the instructor keep an eye on everyone?
- f) Methods should suit the dog and handler in question. Food and toys are excellent motivators. I've never met a beagle that would work for praise alone.
- g) Interaction between dogs should be carefully supervised and controlled, and combined with gentle, effective training.



The BEAGLE WELFARE Scheme
Registered Charity No 328633
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