

SAMPLER

The

ULTIMATE

DOG
lover

The Best Experts' Advice
for a Happy, Healthy Dog
with Stories and Photos
of Incredible Canines



Marty Becker, D.V.M., America's Favorite Vet
Gina Spadafori, Carol Kline, and Mikkel Becker

EXCLUSIVE

ABC-TV's "Good Morning America" and
Dr. Marty Becker invites you to enjoy this
sampler from The Ultimate Dog Lover

Stories

The Runt by Marty Becker, D.V.M.

Operation Puppy Love by Rinda Pope as told to Carrie Pepper

Must-Know Info

Reduce Shedding and Keep Your Dog's Coat Huggable by Craig Griffin, D.V.M.

Good Dog, Nice Yard! Yes, It Is Possible! by Cheryl S. Smith

Photos

"The dachshund. . ." © Troy Snow

"Adopt Me!" © Troy Snow

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The dachshund was developed to hunt badgers, but today is a favorite family pet.





The Runt

By Marty Becker, D.V.M.

When the phone rang at 1:00 AM that summer night, I knew it could mean only one thing: an animal emergency.

Exhausted from several ten-hour days at my southern Idaho veterinary hospital, I didn't even open my eyes as I pulled my arm out from under our schnauzer, Bodè, and reached for the phone. Keeping a commitment I'd made to myself upon my recent veterinary school graduation—that I'd never make a person feel guilty for calling after-hours with a true emergency or even a heartfelt concern—I engaged my upbeat daytime voice and said hello.

On the other end of the phone was a young woman calling from a pay phone, judging from the sound of cars speeding by. (This was before the days of cell phones.) Breathlessly, the girl explained that their Pekingese dog had been in labor for many hours and was having trouble. The first pup's head was visible in the birth canal but it wasn't moving with the contractions, and momma dog was getting very tired.

“Would you please look at her?” implored the caller.

Honestly speaking, this is the kind of call that a veterinarian doesn't like getting at any time, let alone in the middle of the night. Not a regular client, calling from a pay phone—most likely too poor to have a phone in their home—about a very serious medical problem. But despite the potential problems of prognosis and payment, I agreed to meet them at the back door of my downtown hospital in fifteen minutes.

I had just opened the back door to the veterinary hospital when she arrived in a car that appeared to have been freshly plucked from blocks at a salvage yard. When she stopped the car and shut off the ignition, the car backfired loudly, scaring the day-lights out of me. I was now fully awake, that's for sure!

The young lady I'll call Barb held a cardboard box that served as a pet carrier. Barb appeared to be about eighteen years old. With her thrift-store clothes and home-cut hair, she could have been a poster child for the trials of living in poverty.

I motioned for her to follow as I started turning on lights and putting on my smock. In the exam room, I looked into the cardboard box and saw a dog in serious trouble. Upon preliminary examination, the Pekinese, whose name was Peaches, had shallow respiration, gray gums, a fever, and a pendulous abdomen. I knew the huge pup lodged in the birth canal would be stillborn.

Lifting her out of the box and putting her on the exam table, I started Peaches on some warm fluids, which rehydrated her and helped her get over the shock. Then I set about facilitating the delivery of the dead pup. Barb kept caressing Peaches's honey-colored body and speaking lovingly in her ear. *No doubt*, I thought, *this young lady really loves her dog.*

Often, the first puppy in a litter is the biggest, and it's common for large-headed breeds like Pekes to have trouble delivering puppies. With some lubricant and repositioning I made a pull, and the pup literally popped out into my hands. Not only was the puppy dead, but the amniotic fluid that surrounded it was off-color with a bad odor. This didn't bode well for the mother's recovery.

Barb must have been watching my furrowed brow because she asked me if everything was going to be okay. I was honest with her, explaining that Peaches had blood poisoning and only a 50 percent chance of making it.

I carefully palpated the little dog's now much smaller abdomen. To my surprise, I felt two more pups still inside Mom, both the size of golf balls. Based on the condition of the first pup, I was sure they were also dead but didn't say anything to Barb.

I gave Peaches an injection, and minutes later she started having contractions. Without lifting her head off the table she expelled another stillborn pup, significantly smaller than the first one. After several anxious minutes, the last puppy was pushed out. Although fully formed, the puppy was Lilliputian, even by toy breed standards. I laid what would have been the runt of the litter on the side of the table and turned my full attention to Peaches's survival.

As I was tending to Peaches, I noticed a slight movement of the dead puppy's mouth. It was gasping for air! Alive! I immediately pulled the clingy matter from around its nose and throat. Hearing gurgling, which indicates fluid in the lungs, I began the standard lung-clearing procedure. Holding the pygmy puppy in

my hands, I lifted it above my head and then swung it between my legs and back up again. I repeated the motion. On the third swing, the slippery puppy squirted out of my hands and slid across the exam room floor. Barb gasped.

Mortified, I picked up the tiny puppy and was relieved to find it was unharmed. But it still wasn't breathing properly. At that point, I literally breathed life into it with my mouth, as none of the oxygen masks I'd normally use were small enough.

Against all odds, both Peaches and Thumbelina, as Barb aptly named the pup, survived the night. Before dawn's light, Thumbelina was avidly sucking colostrum from Peaches's ample udder and Peaches was giving her the traditional motherly sponge bath with her tongue. Tears of happiness streamed down Barb's cheeks as she high-fived me for the apparent medical miracle that had been bestowed upon doggy mother and daughter. Both Barb and I had grins so wide, we could have eaten bananas sideways.

Before I even mentioned payment, Barb told me that she had no money to pay me but promised to find a way to take care of the bill—eventually. I'd heard that story before and never expected to see Barb or her money again. Like many veterinarians, I figured I'd done the work of a Good Samaritan, albeit one who still had student loans to pay off.

Imagine my surprise when, almost a year later to the day, I walked Barb with a perky Peaches, lil' Thumbelina, and a heaping plate of just-out-of-the-oven chocolate chip cookies. She handed me an envelope and asked me to open it. Inside was a card and a money order for the entire amount owed for that emergency call. Barb told me she had raised it by walking the sides of

country roads for months, collecting aluminum cans for the recycling fee. The inscription on the card read:

Despite the fact I was a total stranger, you came to Peaches's aid in the middle of the night and saved her life. Not only that but, you brought Thumbelina, like Lazarus, back from the dead! 😊 You have my profound, eternal gratitude for what you did. We, in turn, have made a vow to harness this miracle and make a positive difference in the lives of others.

Love,

Barb, Peaches, and Thumbelina

Then Barb handed me a stack of photos from a local nursing home where this interspecies trio was now doing weekly visitations with seniors. In each of the pictures, I saw beaming faces that, though aged, glowed with joy. Looking up, I smiled at Barb and her two precious pets. Spreading love and happiness in this way surely fulfilled the mission of harnessing the miracle of life. They'd repaid their debt—and then some!



Operation Puppy Love

By Rinda Pope as told to Carrie Pepper

When my eighteen-year-old son, Alex, first joined the Army, I wanted to shake him and say, “Don’t go.” But I’d always tried to support him, and I didn’t want to hold him back from something he truly wanted to do.

After he was deployed to Iraq, Alex and I kept in touch through his MySpace page. One of the things Alex wrote about was making friends with a dog the soldiers had trained for base protection. My son had always loved dogs. He’d grown up with a seventy-pound German shepherd named KC, who’d been devoted to him. When the dog on the base had puppies, Alex told me that he and the rest of the unit were looking after them. From the way he described the puppies, I could tell they were like little pieces of home for the soldiers—something to love.

Understandably, Alex had other things on his mind besides keeping in touch with his mother. But his platoon buddies also had MySpace pages, and, eager for more news about Alex and his life in Iraq, I started visiting them daily. One day I saw a picture posted of Alex and another soldier holding two of the puppies. I learned the other soldier was SPC Matt Alford, one of the men

in Alex's platoon. I sent him an e-mail about the puppy picture and asked if he was a friend of my son's. He wrote back that he was, and we began corresponding regularly.

Matt became like my adopted son. He was always so open and willing to give me updates about what was happening there. When I felt worried because I hadn't heard from Alex in a while, I'd send Matt a message. He'd bang on the thin trailer wall that separated their rooms and yell, "Varela, your mom's online and says hi!" Alex would yell back, "Tell her I say hello and that I love her."

From time to time, I'd hear more about the puppies, who by then had grown into young dogs. One of them, a female named Bradley Position (after a Bradley tank), or BP for short, used to walk with Alex's platoon when they were out on patrol, as if she were protecting them.

Alex came home to California on leave at the end of January, just in time to celebrate his nineteenth birthday. During his "eighteen days on the ground" (eighteen days of vacation plus travel time), he had a great time visiting with family and friends. We barbecued and played video games together, and Alex spent some time with his Dad in Nevada. The day I sent him back to Iraq was one of the hardest days for me. I wanted to keep him at home so badly, but I knew he had to go.

That was the last time I saw him. Alex was killed May 19, 2007, when his Bradley armored vehicle was bombed by an improvised explosive device.

The devastation and profound sense of loss I felt at losing my son is something only those who have shared that pain can fully understand. A bit of my heart and soul lived and died with Alex,

and while I was not alone in my grief, it was terribly lonely. I kept in touch with Matt after Alex's death. He, and the rest of the platoon, were always there for me and a source of comfort during that deeply painful time.

When I received Alex's possessions, I found a whole stack of photos of Alex and BP. I was so moved; looking at the pictures, I could tell that this dog had been special to my son. Knowing how she had stuck by the soldiers, even in the middle of the war zone, made her special to me as well. I asked Matt about her and learned that she was pregnant. Then, a few weeks later, in the beginning of November, I received an e-mail from Matt saying, "The puppies were born last night!" There were five puppies in the litter, but only one little female survived. They named her DJ after one of the guys in the unit, because both of them loved to eat!

That's when Matt had the idea to send DJ to me. BP was part of the unit and had to stay, but Matt wanted me to have her puppy. Matt would never take credit for Operation Puppy Love. He always said it was the work of the whole platoon, and I truly believe that. They didn't have much time because they would be leaving Baghdad within weeks, but somehow they made it happen.

When I think about what it took to get this puppy to American soil, I'm amazed they pulled it off. They did a lot of networking, and one of Alex's officers contacted Gryphon Airlines, the only commercial airline flying out of Baghdad. The airline's vice president got onboard from the beginning. He was so excited to help that he even e-mailed me personally to keep me informed of their progress. An embedded photographer attached to the unit took

photos of the operation. I don't know how they managed to get a kennel, but the pictures that show two-month-old DJ being loaded onto the plane are proof that they did. They also hooked up with BlackFive, a military blog, that helped coordinate an escort for DJ from Baghdad to Kuwait and then on to Washington, D.C.

To this day, I don't know how much Operation Puppy Love cost the guys in the platoon—and they won't tell me. But I know how much they make, and it's barely a living wage, especially for the ones with families of their own. Sending DJ is just one example of the kindness and generosity they showed me in those dark days after Alex's death. Focusing on the progress of DJ's journey gave me something to think about other than my grief.

DJ arrived at Dulles International Airport in early January. The animal transportation service I found told me the cross-country trip would take about ten days. While they were on the road, I got daily reports from the driver/handler.

Word of Operation Puppy Love spread through the Internet and became national news. When DJ arrived at my house on January 16, 2008, it was quite a show. People were everywhere—in the front yard, along the sidewalk, and out on the street. Members of Rolling Thunder, the motorcycle group that travels the country to honor veterans and fallen soldiers, came over four hundred miles to stand in honor, along with the Patriot Guard Riders.

The moment approached for me to finally meet DJ. I was nervous. All these people were watching, including a local television crew. *What if DJ doesn't like me?* I thought.

As it turned out, I had nothing to worry about. When the driver put the wiggling, black-and-white puppy in my arms, she

immediately started licking my face and wouldn't stop. The crowd broke into cheers as I hugged the little dog to my chest, tears streaming down my face.

After everyone left and the confusion and excitement of the day quieted down, DJ and I went out to the backyard. We'd both been through so much, and even though we couldn't communicate with words, our bond was strong. As I sat stroking her sleek coat, she showered me with puppy kisses. It seemed so natural to have her; it was like she'd always belonged to me.

Today it feels as though we were meant to be together. Having DJ with me helps to soothe the pain, at least a little. I feel as if I'm sharing something with Alex and that a small piece of my heart is being healed with every wag of her tail. She's such an affectionate dog and loves attention. Matt told me that the soldiers spoiled her over there; they treated her like a queen, sharing their chicken and rice with her, and giving her treats. She'd always had a buddy sitting with her or taking her out on patrol.

I think DJ's story says a lot about our soldiers in Iraq. The love my son and his unit had for these dogs gave them something to hold on to, and they generously shared that gift with me when I needed it most. I know Alex would have been glad that this sweet, rambunctious puppy made it here to be with me. It was a small victory, something going right against all the odds.

Must-Know Info

Reduce Shedding and Keep Your Dog's Coat Huggable

A dog's coat is like a neon sign showcasing his good overall health or lack thereof. A great coat is shiny and parasite-free and has no excessive scaling or dander, no mats or abnormal hairless patches, no foul odors and is normal for the breed type. "Normal" varies from dog to dog, of course, because different coats are normal in different breeds, such as the cords of pulik and komondorok and the hairlessness of the Chinese crested.



The most common mistake dog lovers make regarding their pets' skin and coat is not grooming their dogs enough—of course, "enough" will vary by breed. And to a lesser extent, providing dogs with diets that are too low in essential fatty acids can also have an adverse effect on coats and skin. The proper grooming regime and a proper diet will go a long way to ensure your dog's coat remains beautiful. Proper grooming will also help alleviate what seems to be one of the biggest concerns of dog lovers: shedding!

To understand shedding, you have to understand the hair cycle. In dogs, hair falls out and is replaced by new hair in a constant cycle that is different from breed to breed, so the dog's coat always looks full. Even the "hairless" breeds grow hairs, but these are

unhealthy and break off or are quickly shed.

In a normal dog, the hair is replaced as it is shed, so you never see a bald patch. What we call shedding is both hair falling out naturally and hair falling out before its time because of being disturbed, such as by the dog chewing, rubbing against things, or getting petted. Other causes of shedding include skin diseases and even chemotherapy. Hormonal diseases can cause hair to stop growing, and in some cases to not shed because of a lack of new hair to push the old hair out. In these cases the dog's coat appears thicker—at least temporarily. But as the hair stays on the dog too long, exposure to water, sun, and other elements cause the hair to become dry, discolored, and unhealthy.

While everyone wants a shed-free dog, there's really no such thing as a nonshedding breed. Some dogs do shed less because they are genetically programmed to keep their coats longer before new hair pushes out the old. These include poodles, Afghan hounds, and many terrier breeds. In general, breeds that require clipping or have very long coats shed less. Short-haired dogs (like Labradors or Dalmatians) shed more because their old hair is replaced more frequently with new.

If you're looking specifically for a dog who won't shed much, get a small, long-haired dog and keep the coat trimmed short. Why? Because the hair of long-haired dogs falls out less frequently, and a smaller dog has less hair to shed than a large one. If you keep the hair clipped short, the hair that does fall out will be shorter and result in less volume to deal with. Most people, however, choose the dog they want and simply deal with the shedding that is normal for that breed.

Products that promise to end shedding can't change the reality of normal growing and shedding of the coat. They don't decrease shedding; they just get you to groom your pet more frequently, which causes the hair to shed because of the friction. Petting, wiping down, and massaging are also grooming methods that create friction that causes hair to shed. The good thing about these methods is that the pet (and the owner) don't think of them as grooming!

Brush your dog's coat at least weekly with a tool recommended by your dog's breeder, a professional groomer, or your veterinarian. You can brush pets daily if you want to really take control of shedding; this removes the hairs that are ready to be shed and gets them on a brush or comb instead of your furniture.

While you are brushing, check for and break up mats by working in corn starch, cutting through the middle of the mat and away from the skin with sharp scissors, and then picking apart the mat gently with your fingers and a comb. Don't forget to check the fur between the toes of the paws!

Look for and remove plant material, such as burrs and awns, and if you see ticks, don't touch them with your fingers: use a tick-remover or tweezers or wear a rubber glove to remove them and dispose of down your sink. Having to remove a tick or two now and then is normal if you're out in the fields with your dog, but ask your veterinarian for prescription flea-tick preventive to help keep these pests under control.

As for the fur that "gets away," well, there's a reason those sticky rollers for clothes are a staple in every veterinary practice—

they work! Swiffers and other electrostatic products are great on wood, tile, and vinyl flooring. Try a lightly dampened sponge on furniture or car upholstery to pull the hair out.

What about bathing? Any dog who isn't bathed at least every month or so is going to develop its own unique body odor, which will vary greatly from one breed type to another. You'll want to bathe your pet as often as needed to offset the smell, using products designed for dogs, not human shampoo.

It's important to catch skin problems early. Too often, dog lovers don't notice a problem until hair loss, a rash, or sores are so bad they can't be missed. Watch for excessive skin flaking or a change in coat color and quality, and have any change in coat condition checked out by your veterinarian.

Taking good care of your dog's coat and skin will help keep your pet healthy and beautiful—and up that “huggability” factor.



Craig Griffin, D.V.M., is a diplomate of the American College of Veterinary Dermatology and the founder and co-owner of the Animal Dermatology Clinic. He is a frequent lecturer and clinical instructor of veterinary dermatology, and he has published many articles and books on small animal skin disease. Dr. Griffin has received the ACVD Award for Excellence for outstanding contributions in veterinary dermatology. The Animal Dermatology Clinic has four permanent locations: Tustin, San Diego, and Marina del Rey, California; and Marietta, Georgia. There are also eleven satellite clinics. The website for Animal Dermatology Clinic and Dr. Craig Griffin is www.animaldermatology.com.

Must-Know Info
Good Dog, Nice Yard?
Yes, It Is Possible!

If you're a dog owner who dreams of a beautiful yard, take heart: dogs and lush gardens aren't mutually exclusive.



But you can't just plant whatever you want where you want and throw a bored, unsupervised dog into the mix. Instead, plan your yard to take your dog into account, and mind your dog's needs to get him to leave the plants alone. Here are the basic guidelines:

Exercise your dog. A dog with too much energy is more likely to engage in search-and-destroy missions, with your yard in her sights. A dog who gets vigorous exercise on a daily basis will be more likely to nap. Which would you rather have in your yard? In addition to daily exercise, keep your dog busy with food or puzzle toys when you can't be with her.

Supervise your dog. Don't leave your dog unattended in any part of the yard you want left alone. Keep your dog in the house when you can't supervise him (in just part of the house, if he's destructive overall), or provide him with his own yard away from the choicest parts of your property.

Work with your dog's habits. Observe how your dog uses your yard, and plan accordingly. For instance, many dogs consider it their duty to run the fence line, leaving a well-worn trail where many people hope to put flowers. Go with her natural instincts. Place your beds and plantings away from the fence line, and let her do her guard-dog patrolling behind those plants.

Redirect digging. Some breeds were developed to dig, and expecting them not to indulge in it is unfair. You can find most of these digging dogs in the terrier group—the word “terrier” comes from *terra*, for “earth.” Put a dig zone in and praise your dog for using it. Make it the most enticing place to dig by burying treats for your dog to find. Limit access to dirt elsewhere, or supervise until your dog gets the idea.

Put special plants in safer places. Raised beds and hanging planters are the place to put your most precious plants. In areas where your dog will roam, put the plants that can take being stepped on in front. Ask your garden center for suggestions.

And what about the Number 1 thing people want fixed—yellow spots on the lawn? The easiest solution is to provide your dog with an out-of-sight “potty zone” and train her to use it. Take your dog directly to the potty patch and give a command, such as “Hurry up” or “Go potty.” Praise for proper performance. Don't let your dog into the main part of the yard until she understands that her bathroom is around the corner.

If your dog does squat on the choicest patch of green, flush the area promptly with lots and lots of fresh water, which will dilute the urine and minimize its damaging effect.

What about products you can feed your dog that are supposed

to eliminate this problem? It's not a good idea to feed your dog anything that's not expressly for her benefit. One common recommendation of upping your dog's salt intake to encourage more water intake, causing urine dilution and thus a greener lawn, fails the common-sense test when it comes to your dog's health.



Cheryl S. Smith is an award-winning author, top dog trainer, and popular radio-show host who lives in the Pacific Northwest. Her book *Dog Friendly Gardens, Garden Friendly Dogs* earned rave reviews from dog trainers, gardening experts, and dog-loving gardeners. Her most recent book is *Grab Life by the Leash*. For more information visit her website, www.WriteDog.com.

What are you waiting for? Can't
you read the sign? Adopt me!

