



## Enjoy A Happy Life With Your Dog

**By Dr Gretta Howard**

We all have great intentions when we first purchase a dog and the amount of time and energy put into training really affects the way the human-animal bond will develop and your dog's quality of life.

It is important that when you interact with your dog, they are taught what is acceptable behaviour and what is not. If a dog is left untrained, interactions become unwelcome because the dog will be overly excited and jump up to greet you and while this may be unacceptable to their human owner, they do not understand the boundaries.

If your dog is properly socialised, trained and has plenty of positive stimuli, then problem behaviours such as separation anxiety, fear aggression and excessive barking are less likely to develop. However, in some cases, behavioural disorders, such as anxiety, can develop despite the owner doing everything right from the word go. These cases require intervention from a veterinary behaviourist as soon as possible as they may require anti-anxiety medication before training can be effective.

**Here are some tips to encourage a great relationship between you & your dog –**

- **Does your dog pull you down the street when you walk him?** Simple lead training techniques with a dog trainer is important. Once your dog has learnt how to walk on the lead without pulling, then you will be more inspired to take him on walks, as the experience will be a pleasant one.
- **Is your dog well-socialised?** You may enjoy taking him to play with other dogs at a local off-leash dog park. Check out your local council's website for a list of off-leash areas. Remember, not all dogs are suitable candidates for off-leash areas – they can be very scary for nervous dogs and dangerous for dogs that do not get along well with other dogs.
- **Does your dog have good manners?** Training is certainly not just for puppies but should be ongoing, particularly in first 2 years. It is important to use a trainer that uses motivation and positive reward training rather than punishment. Punishment can confuse a dog and lead to mistrust and potentially aggressive behaviour, particularly if your dog is anxious. While shows such as “The Dog Whisperer” with Caesar Milan are entertaining to watch, the methods used to “train” the dogs are outdated and considered inhumane by veterinary behaviourists. The dominance theory has long been disproven. See [www.dogwelfarecampaign.org](http://www.dogwelfarecampaign.org) for further information. Delta Society dog trainers use modern positive reinforcement techniques which are humane and effective. For your nearest Delta Society trainer see [www.deltasociety.com.au](http://www.deltasociety.com.au)
- **Is your dog extremely active?** Dog sports can be a great way to exercise your dog as well as providing plenty of mental stimuli to keep him happy and healthy. Agility is suitable for dogs from 12 months of age and they can even compete. One agility event is where the dog is required to complete a course of obstacles in the correct sequence in the shortest time.
- **Playtime & Toys?** Dogs are extremely loyal pets and enjoy simply being in your company but structured play can be a great source of enrichment for your dog. Setting aside time each day to focus just on the dog is a great way to reinforce training. Playtime could include catching treats (good for improving co-ordination), hide and seek (with treats) or ball games. Be creative!

Most dogs like a routine so they know when to expect their meal times, play times and regular exercise. For further information, visit these handy websites listed below.

Dog Welfare Campaign [www.dogwelfarecampaign.org](http://www.dogwelfarecampaign.org)

Positive Training Techniques (Dr Ian Dunbar) [www.dogstardaily.com](http://www.dogstardaily.com)

Agility NSW [www.agility.org.au](http://www.agility.org.au)

Delta Society [www.deltasociety.com.au](http://www.deltasociety.com.au)