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Today's Breeder

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Issue 58



ALLEVIATING
CANINE ARTHRITIS

BOTH ENDS
OF THE LEASH

REDUCING
KENNEL STRESS

BREEDER PROFILES
Open Range Kennels
Proctor Dalmatians

Reducing Kennel Stress

Kennel stress appears in dogs in many ways. Fortunately, if steps are taken early when signs first appear, problems can be averted before becoming serious. On the other hand, prolonged severe stress can compromise immune function and put an entire kennel at risk.

Stress is defined as anything that challenges a dog to change or adapt to new circumstances, says Laurel Gershwin, D.V.M., Ph.D., professor of immunology, pathology and microbiology at the University of California-Davis School of Veterinary Medicine. "There are many causes of stress in dogs, just as in people. Some breeds are very easy going; others are high strung and unable to adapt readily to anything new. Stress factors also can vary for individual dogs."

Some stress is considered good for dogs and necessary for development. Short-term low-level stress that occurs when puppies and adult dogs are vaccinated is necessary to provide protection from diseases such as parvovirus, distemper, hepatitis and rabies.

Having Fun at the Kennel

Three things are imperative to help reduce stress for dogs in a kennel environment: plenty of room to exercise, plenty of room to eliminate and plenty of room to lie down and relax, says breeder and boarding kennel owner Linda Linnemeyer-Batts.

A newly built kennel on five acres in Union, Mo., helps Linnemeyer-Batts achieve her goals of providing optimal care for boarding clients and her own conformation champion Siberian Huskies. Forty-one

indoor-outdoor runs can accommodate up to 90 boarding clients plus Linnemeyer-Batts' 18 Sibes. The Sibes also take turns staying at the Linnemeyer-Batts' home, which is adjacent to the kennel.

"Dogs have fun here," Linnemeyer-Batts says. "By the second visit, they are pulling their owners toward the door as soon as they get out of the vehicle. But, when a new dog or new person arrives, all the dogs start barking and this can be overwhelming for the newcomer. When we see new dogs are scared or stressed, we play with them in their runs and bring them into the office. We give them lots of attention. Once they realize they are safe, they start relaxing."

Signs of stress include depression and not eating, although Linnemeyer-Batts notes that it is not uncommon for a new boarder to not eat well the first day. Other signs of stress are shaking, drooling and curling up in a corner to avoid socialization.

Kennel comfort starts with spacious runs. "Dogs get stressed when there is too little space," Linnemeyer-Batts says. To avoid stress due to cramped conditions, Linnemeyer built two sizes of kennel runs. Suites are 4-by-5 feet inside attached to 4-by-15 feet runs outside; lodges are 6-by-5 feet inside attached to 6-by-15 feet runs outside. All runs have doors allowing the dogs to go outside whenever they wish. Some families have more than one dog, and these runs are large enough to hold several small- to medium-sized dogs. Chain link fencing separates the kennels with plastic sheeting preventing urination and fighting between runs.

Having first built Linny's Kennel in nearby Hermann, Mo., in 1990, and with 12 years' experience operating a boarding kennel, Linnemeyer-Batts knew what would work best to help keep dogs comfortable and happy when she built her new kennel. She added "man doors" that enable kennel workers to access dogs in the outside runs from the inside. "Before we had to go outside around the kennel and through the catch pen to reach the outdoor kennels," she says.

A 130-foot-long metal roof completely covering the outdoor runs was another new feature. "Before we had a 3-foot overhang over



Linda Linnemeyer-Batts feeds biscuits to dogs boarding at Linny's Kennel.

In contrast, an individual dog is likely to experience long-term severe stress in response to a health condition, such as cancer or autoimmune disease.

Reflecting on the findings from a study of the effect of stress in mice conducted while he was at The Ohio State University, Firdaus Dhabhar, Ph.D., associate professor of psychiatry and behavioral science at Stanford University, says, "In many situations of acute stress, the body prepares the immune system for challenges. Immune function may actually be boosted under these conditions.



Linda, breeder of Linny's Siberian Huskies, holds three 10-week-old puppies.

the outside kennels with the rest of the runs uncovered. We found that in storms the dogs would not go outside to eliminate. Now with the roof over the entire outdoor runs, the dogs are more comfortable and they don't get wet," Linnemeyer-Batts says.

Air conditioning and ceiling fans throughout the kennel help to keep the kennel cool and control odors. Both contribute to making the kennel more comfortable – and less stressful – for the dogs. Though electric heating is expensive, it was a must.

"Most of our clients bring their house dogs. Many of them sleep with their owners at night. Their owners expect them to be comfortable," says Linnemeyer-Batts. Linny's Kennel attracts clients from a 50-mile radius, which includes St. Louis.

Odor control also is important. Kennel runs are power-washed daily with water and a cleaning agent containing bleach that aids in disinfection. Fecal matter is picked up two times a day – first thing in the morning and in the afternoon after feeding.

Optimal Nutrition

Nutrition is particularly important in a kennel environment, where the goal is to feed a highly digestible dog food that produces

Signs of Stress in Dogs

Some signs of stress in dogs can be readily observed, while others are less apparent, says Melissa Shyan-Norwalt, Ph.D., CAAB, Behaviorist at the Purina Product Technology Center in St. Joseph, Mo. Here are signs of stress:

- Repetitive behavior;
- Extreme or abnormal behavior, such as hiding or cowering in the back of the kennel, excessive neediness or clinginess;
- Excessive self-grooming, such as occurs with lick granuloma;
- Increased heart rate, panting or shallow breathing;
- Change in eating habits, such as not eating, eating too little or too much;
- Diarrhea or constipation;
- Restlessness or sleeplessness;
- Chronic vocal behavior, such as barking, whining or crying; and
- Total shut-down behavior, almost appearing catatonic.

tight stool. Feeding a complete and balanced diet also is important. Boarders are fed *Purina Dog Chow* brand dog food, although *Purina Pro Plan* brand Performance Formula or *Purina Pro Plan* Beef & Rice Formula are offered at an additional fee of \$1 a day. *Purina Pro Plan* Canned Entrees are available for finicky eaters.

"We have converted so many people to *Purina* dog food," Linnemeyer-Batts says. "Some owners come in feeding junk food that offers little nutritional value. They may feed two cups of food a day, but their dogs defecate one and a half cups and the feces smell horrible and leave an oily residue on the concrete."

Linnemeyer-Batts has been feeding her show Siberian Huskies *Pro Plan* since 1988 when she realized the impact of *Pro Plan* on producing healthy, vigorous coats. "My Siberians are very healthy," she says. "During the first year when they are fed *Pro Plan* Puppy their growth rate is superb. As they age, they maintain their weight and seldom have problems with obesity."

Bedding at Linny's Kennel consists of raised pallets for larger dogs and oval beds with blankets for smaller dogs up to 30 pounds. The idea is to get dogs off the concrete flooring for a good night's sleep. Owners often bring toys and bedding from home, although they are discouraged from bringing valuable items.

Siberian Husky puppies are whelped in the nursery near the reception area. The nursery contains spacious areas with whelping boxes. "The dedicated space apart from the main boarding kennel helps to put new dams at ease," Linnemeyer-Batts says. Windows allow kennel workers to check on new litters without disturbing the dam, and two ceiling fans in the nursery help to reduce odors.

With help from one full-time assistant, her husband, Randy, and five children, Linnemeyer-Batts says the dogs in her care receive ample love and attention. "We don't put them in their kennel and forget about them. Our goal is for them to have fun while they're here. If they have fun, their owners feel good and will bring them back." ■

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