

# DOG SPORTS

## People & Pets Play Well Together

by Sandra Murphy



With most exercise programs, while his person works out, a dog stays home alone, counting squirrels outside the window and wishing *Animal Planet* wasn't a rerun. How about bringing some of that exercise home so the pet gets fit, too?

John E. Mayer, Ph.D., a Chicago clinical psychologist and author of *Family Fit*, maintains that, "Fitness works best as a group event, including the family dog. They love to participate in many things, so be creative. Try swimming, touch football,

jumping rope, rollerblading, tag or hide-and-seek."

Diane Tegethoff Meadows and Susan Riches, Ph.D., each accepted a challenge to exercise with their dogs 30 minutes a day for 30 days. "I walk my three Scotties every morning anyway, so adding minutes was easy," says Meadows, a retired senior paralegal in Bulverde, Texas. "One of them is in charge of choosing the route, and we seldom go the same way two days in a row." Riches, a retired Fort Lewis College professor and archaeologist, in Durango, Colorado, doesn't let inclement weather interfere. "Inside, we play fetch up and down the stairs," she says. "I hide treats for tracking games of 'find it.'" The dogs also like to jump through hoops. "The Scottie and Westie go at it for 30 minutes; the Maltese stops after 15."

Jeff Lutton, a Dogtopia dog daycare/boarding franchisee in Alexandria, Virginia, conducts a popular running club. "On Sunday mornings we have about 15 people that run with their dogs. My golden retriever used to run six miles, but since she's 9 now, we've cut back to three."

"Treibball [TRY-ball] is herding without sheep, soccer without feet," explains Dianna L. Stearns, president of the American Treibball Association, based in Northglenn, Colorado. "All you need is Pilates balls, a target stick for pointing, a signal clicker and treats."

## Mercury-Free Dentistry

### Safe removal of

mercury/silver fillings (amalgam) utilizing the protocol recommended by the International Academy of Oral Medicine & Toxicology (see IAOMT.com)

**Dr. C. Frederick Smith, DDS**



Providing comprehensive and cosmetic dentistry in a mercury-free environment using dental materials that are safe and biocompatible.

46 Shelor Drive, Lynchburg, VA 24502

**434-237-6328**

[www.MercuryFreeDDS.com](http://www.MercuryFreeDDS.com)

## YOGA

with Lisa Wade

Stretch and connect your body, mind, and spirit with yoga.

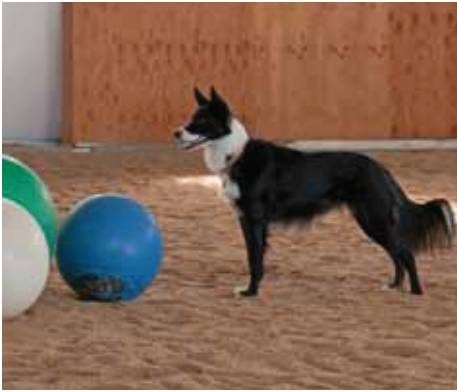
One and two student private classes suitable for those with physical challenges and beginners.

Call to begin your path to joy and harmony today!

**540-521-0313**

1415 Grandin Road  
Roanoke, VA 24015  
[lovelyliisa131@aol.com](mailto:lovelyliisa131@aol.com)





It's a fun, problem-solving game for all involved."

The idea is for the dog to direct rubber balls into a goal with its nose, shoulder and/or paws—eventually, as many as eight balls in 10 minutes. Treibball can be played in group classes or competitions or at home using a kiddie soccer goal.

Another exercise option is to turn the backyard into an obstacle course for the dog, kids and adults. Use a clicker to signal the next move. Four or five hula hoops spaced a bit apart provide a pattern for a sit/stay game as the dog moves into each one on command. A thin wooden dowel across two boxes and anchored to a stick-on photo hook on either end provides a hurdle. A child's oversized plastic golf club hits a tennis or plastic ball just far enough for the dog to retrieve.

For a doggie triathlon, add more elements, such as yard races between dogs and children on their tricycles or scooters down a straight path, with everyone cooling off in a hard-plastic swimming pool as part of the event.

For dogs that are older or have mobility issues, some stretching before or even after exercise is suggested. "Doga [dog yoga] has become a daily ritual with my 11-year-old golden retriever since the onset of arthritis in her hips and back. Besides keeping her joints limber, it's good one-on-one time for us," says latchkey dog expert Eileen Proctor, in Castle Rock, Colorado.

"Whenever she wants to stretch, she will come up and gently paw me," relates Proctor. "Her favorite is the upward dog pose. Before

practicing doga, this dear one had trouble getting to her feet, and then was lame for a minute. Now she is able to get up and move about immediately."

When exercising with pets, always keep plenty of water handy, start slow and watch out for how the weather or workout affects the participants. Scientists have changed from saying it takes 21 days to form a new habit to admitting it may take up to three times that long. That might be true for people, but try explaining it to the dog standing at the back door on day two—he's ready to do it again.

*Sandra Murphy is a regular contributor to Natural Awakenings.*



## Dog Running Tips

by Jeff Lutton

- ✓ Start slow
- ✓ Run warm-up laps
- ✓ Take breaks
- ✓ Always carry water
- ✓ Keep nails trimmed

■ Avoid running on hot pavement with longhaired or thick-coated dogs.

■ Shorten mileage for pups under 2 years, as well as older dogs.

■ Avoid concrete surfaces, which are rough on paw pads.

■ Stay away from winter road salt; it can cut and further damage paws.

■ Watch for hip or knee problems; if a dog lags behind, it's time to stop.

*Jeff Lutton, of Dogtopia, conducts a running club for people and their pets in Alexandria, VA.*

## The Importance of Exercise for Pets

by Lori D. Leonard, DVM

Regular, moderate exercise is a necessary part of maintaining pets' optimal physical and mental health. It provides weight-bearing of joints, thereby strengthening the bones, muscles and soft tissues. Exercise stimulates circulation of blood and drainage of lymph. Senses such as hearing, sight, smell and touch are heightened with exercise as well, providing huge benefits to the animal. Fresh air benefits everybody!

For indoor cats, we can encourage exercise by putting out paper sacks or boxes for the cat to hide in and to spring out of in pursuit of a toy, such as a catnip mouse or a feather on a stick. Even "lazy" cats usually can be enticed to follow a rope or shoelace. Treats can be hidden in the boxes or around the room to support their natural hunting instincts. Many cats like scented items for playing, such as a drop of pine essential oil on a piece of cardboard. Better yet, we can bring inside a piece of cedar or pine.

Dogs, too, like scent enrichment, so it's a good idea experiment with different "smells" to find which ones a dog likes best. To enhance muscle strength, we can take our dogs for walks and runs on varied textures that are smooth and rough, and different in other ways, such as carpet and pavement, grass and concrete, rubber matting and mud. Flat surfaces as well as inclines can help with balance. Swimming is a great exercise for dogs, too, and many dogs naturally love to swim.

As with any exercise program, it is recommended to warm up and stretch before exercising and to cool down afterward. Besides benefiting overall wellness, early morning stiffness in pets can be alleviated with regular exercise.

*Lori D. Leonard, DVM, is a holistic veterinarian who practices at Concord Veterinary Services, 8908 Village Hwy., Concord. For more information, call 434-993-2403 or visit ConcordVetServices.com. See Community Resource Guide, page 30.*