



# WAG NEWS



## President's Message

By Heather Esdon

It has been a good year. I enjoyed being President of WAG and am pleased to hold the position again. I would like to thank this year's executive for their hard work and support. Meetings were fun, getting to know the members was the best part. What a great club!

Wishing everyone a Merry Christmas and looking forward to another WAGiffic year in 2014.

*-Heather (Amber and Cece)*

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## Meet our new PR!

My name is Sandy Edmonds, a long time Woodlawn resident. I've been a WAG member since 2012. I have 2 brown standard poodles, Charlie and Timber. You may know Charlie as the silly brown poodle with his own agenda and yes, browns are clowns. I can also be seen with Kacey the golden doodle, my part time dog. I'm really excited to be part of the WAG team and looking forward to a great year!

*Sandy*



## Thank You!

Thanks to all our hardworking volunteers, laying the gravel for our path in the spring went by much quicker than expected. Everyone who came braved the cold and wielded a shovel, wheelbarrow, and sometimes a pickaxe! We hope that come spring there will be no more muddy paths for us to step in keeping our boots and our dogs much cleaner. Good work guys, we are proud to have you on our team.

*Pictured here is our brave and fearless president Heather Esdon showing us that great leaders aren't afraid to get dirty and help out their comrades ☺*



# Editor's Note

By Lynda Graveline

## Bad dogs are Winners

As some of you know, I recently got a new foster dog named Sprint (Yeah, she's fast) and I have come to appreciate how some of my fellow classmates handle their dogs that like to run off and visit during class. Patience really is a virtue!

Most of you know of my cattle dog Bentley and my Australian shepherd Oz. Both of them are fairly quiet well-behaved dogs that are eager to please and generally do as they are told while staying out of trouble (mostly). Well Sprint is another story. This dog is 30lbs of pure concentrated chaos. Also, she is a ninja. Sprint gets what she wants and she doesn't care what she has to do to get it. I spent the first week clawing my ears out as she sang to me the song of her people 24hrs a day until she realized that yodeling, howling, screeching and making loud ear piercing screams will not give her what she wants. She knows exactly what the word 'come' means but chooses to weigh her options on whether it is worth it or not. This dog can steal objects off my desk WHILE I'M SITTING AT IT and I won't notice until she's chewed it to shreds. She fits in small places and can squeeze through that gate the second you realize you left it open. She is a terrible dog, but you know what? She is an opportunist. She sees what she wants in life and she takes it, which brings me to the point of my story.

I remember reading a book with a piece in it by a trainer named Mark Harden who trains dogs for movies. He said "Bad dogs are winners" and the words could not be truer. This is what he says when asked what he looks for in a movie dog.

*"I look for the dogs in shelters that I call winners. The people in shelters might not think of them as that. They think of them as losers and feel sorry for them. But to me, this is a dog that has succeeded in everything he's tried to do. He's succeeded in escaping the yard. He's*

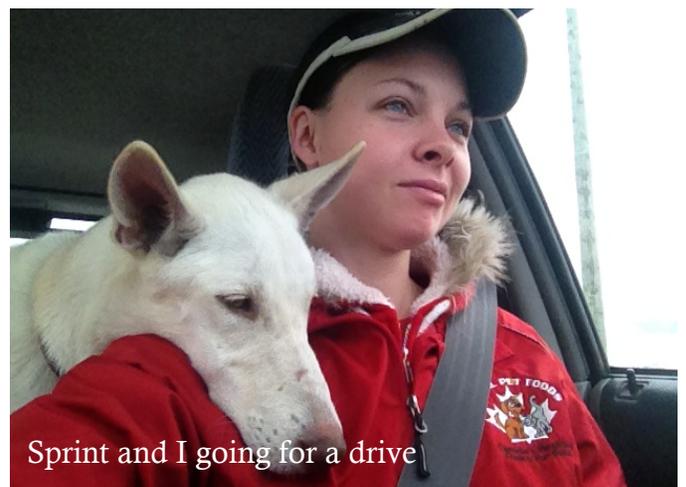
*succeeded in tearing up the living room. He sees himself as a winner... I see him as a dog with a great giving personality who's going to try and try and try until he wins. My job is to challenge him with new things to succeed at, then to pay him for what I want"*

And you know what? All the best sport dogs are winners. When people at the top of their sport are choosing a dog they want one with drive, courage, and a can-do attitude.

Sprint is a winner. And a genius. She is the smartest dog I have ever had the pleasure of training. She can pick up a verbal command for a trick in less than 5 repetitions. She can sit, stay, down, come and heel like a pro and learns tricks like nobody's business (she's currently learning how to do a handstand, no joke). I bet she would be a great agility dog if I can convince her that it is in her best interest. Bad dogs get what they want, we just need to figure out how to bribe them into wanting the right things! This brings me to agility, I often see brilliant dogs in the ring who are crazy at home and vice versa and it made me smile. Do you have a winner in your pack? I'd love to hear about it.

As always, this newsletter is dependant on your submissions. If you have any funny or inspirational stories, training tips, or photos you'd like to share email me at [LGravelinePhotography@gmail.com](mailto:LGravelinePhotography@gmail.com)

Wishing you the very best in the New Year  
-Lynda (Bentley, Oz, and Sprint)



Sprint and I going for a drive

# Head Instructor's Note

By Laura Scott

## Lyrical Learning

If you've been reading my head instructors notes for the last year or so, you've probably noticed a trend. Usually they are inspired by something I've read that has nothing to do with dogs or agility yet lends itself nicely to training. This month is no exception.

My inspiration this time came from a blog post by Leo Babauta ([www.zenhabits.net](http://www.zenhabits.net)) on lyrical learning. He reminds us that

"When we learn song lyrics, we don't just look at the written lyrics and know them, nor can we listen to a song just once and immediately sing it."

Learning song lyrics involves hearing the song, looking up the words, trying to sing along and getting some of it right, practicing, getting more of the lyrics correct, practicing some more, until finally you can sing along without needing the recording of the song to prompt and remind you. What's key about this, is that the whole process of learning the lyrics to your favorite song involves a lot of failure and mistakes. You get the chorus correct but struggle with the second verse. And even the experts make mistakes. At a concert this summer I listened to a singer, who was the composer of the song, make mistakes and mix up the verses.

So what does this have to do with agility? Well, like learning the words to a song learning how to do agility requires lots of practice and lots of mistakes. One of the steps Leo points out in his article is:

"Try singing the song a second time, but mess up a lot; when you mess up, you hear the correct version and so you know you messed up and

know the correct way at the same time."

Going to agility classes or practicing with a partner who can give you feedback is like trying to sing along while the song is playing. You know when you've messed up and you've got someone there to show you the correct way. Only because it's a team sport it's like learning a duet. Both you and your partner have to learn all the words and then put them together. And you're both going to make mistakes. You'll forget a word, miss a cue, and be off key. Just like you and your dog are likely to make mistakes. You'll choose the wrong handling move, be late with a front cross, and your dog will get distracted and miss your signal. And it's okay. It's part of the learning process. Only time and practice will fix it. Giving up when you make a mistake is like quitting after hearing the song for the second time. Of course you don't know all of it yet.

I encourage you to keep this in mind as you are practicing. Mistakes are a normal part of the learning process for you and for your dog. Don't let those minor errors keep you from continuing to sing.



**Trevi taking part in the festivities**

# Winter Training Tips

-By Laura Scott



With winter fast approaching, I'm sure most people have packed up their practice equipment and are looking for ways to keep their agility skills sharp without venturing out into the cold. Here are a few indoor training activities that take minimal equipment and space but provide maximum benefit!

**Stay proofing** – Keep your start line stays sharp by practicing faking out your dog. Set your dog up in their stay and lead out like you would on a course. Now see if you can fake out your dog...try using a word that isn't your release word or a command and see if your dog breaks. He should only release from his stay when you give your release word (okay, break, free, or whatever you use). If he gets it right (i.e. he stays) go back to him and give him a cookie, if he breaks, gently take him by the collar and put him back. You can try using the names of fruits and vegetables as your fake out words.

**Contacts** – Practice your contacts with your dog

on the stairs. Start out near the bottom and have your dog stop with his two front paws on the floor and two back paws on the stairs. Give him a treat on the target on the ground. Once he's good at one step, see if you can get him to stop after two steps. Slowly work your way up to having your dog race down 5-6 steps and stop and wait at the bottom.

**Table** – While you may not have a table in the house that your dog is allowed on, a mat or towel is a great substitute. Teach your dog to lie down on the mat, and then see if you can send him there from a distance or have him stay on the mat for a longer period of time.

**Distance** – Work on improving your dog's distance skills either indoors or out. Using a chair, tree, post or other large object, teach your dog to go around it. Then see if you can send him from a little further back. Gradually increase your distance (over a few training sessions), making sure to reward your dog each time they get it right.

**Weaves** – You only need two weave poles to practice with. You can use plungers, or dowels secured in a small bucket as posts. Set your poles up 24 inches apart and work on your weave entrances. Make sure you only work in one direction per session (no back weaving!) and you should be tossing the treat on the floor in front of the weaves. Again, once your dog is doing really well at this, you can start to add some distance.

**Fitness** – We sometimes slack on our dogs exercise in the winter when the weather turns bad. To help prevent injuries it's important to keep your dog in good shape. Make sure they are getting appropriate exercise. If the weather is bad, try some strength training. Teach your dog to bow, or sit pretty (beg), these tricks use muscles that your dog doesn't normally use when walking or lying around.

Have a great winter and have fun training!

# Product Feature

## Protect those feet!

The great outdoors can be great fun for your dogs in the Winter, but sometimes even the toughest dogs have to come in early because of the cold, salt, sharp ice, and snowballs building up in between their pads. These products have been tested by my Australian cattle dog and my Australian shepherd and get two paws up! Don't think that boots are just for wussies, these products help keep us outside for hours snowshoeing through trails and fields.

### Ultra Paws Dog Boots

Looking for boots that ACTUALLY stay on? Look no further! Ultra Paws are unique boots that have a stay on guarantee or your money back. The secret is the small pieces of foam on the inside of the boot that stop them from moving and slipping off, combined with the double straps to make them extra secure. Because they are a bit stiffer at the top I find them way easier to put on compared to most other boots. They have many different types ranging from soft fleece ones to extreme heavy-duty rubber for the dogs that are tough on their boots. Remember though, boots should fit dogs the same way boots fit us, and there should be just enough room for your dogs paw to fit with little wiggle room

\$14.99- \$39.00 Available at most Global Pet Foods and individually owned pet specialty stores



### Mushers Secret

For dogs that hate getting their feet touched but still need protection from the salt, cold, and ice Musher's Secret is the perfect solution. This natural wax repels cold and salt and moisturizes the paw pad at the same time to help repair damage caused by harsh winter chemicals. This stuff is also great for preventing snowballs from building up in-between the pads of longhaired dogs (extra tip, rub some on their 'feathering' on their front legs to further prevent snow build up). Added bonus? They don't leave residue on your floors!! What's not to love?

\$14.99-\$59.99

Available at most pet specialty stores

# WAG Fun Trial Results

What a great turnout we had for the fun trials this year! Because of this we had five fun trials instead of the usual four. I hope you all had a blast and hopefully these low key trials have helped you gain the confidence your dogs need to progress to bigger trials! Congrats to all our competitors and a HUGE thank you to all our volunteers, we couldn't have done it without you!

Bailey



Skye



## First Place

Sinead and Bailey



## Second Place

Andrea and Skye

## Third Place

Anne Marie and Morley

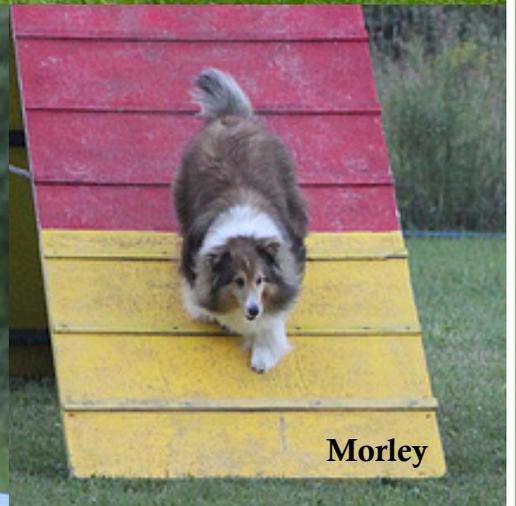
## Fourth Place

Nicky and Hershey

Hershey



Morley



# Congratulations!

# Winter Break

WAG is taking our annual winter break. We find that it's too cold for the dogs and humans (especially the instructors!) in January and February. We're using the time wisely to plan for another great year of WAG classes and events and to do some training with our instructors. Classes will resume at the end of February and students will be contacted by the beginning of February with their class options. If you have any questions, please contact WAG [info@wagottawa.ca](mailto:info@wagottawa.ca)

See you in the New Year!

## 2014 WAG Executive

**President – Heather Esdon**  
**Head Instructor – Laura Scott**  
**Secretary – Cathy Sheridan**  
**Public Relations – Sandy Edmonds**  
**Equipment Manager – Sam Caldwell**  
**Treasurer – Barb Vincent**  
**Newsletter Editor – Lynda Graveline**

## Thanks to WAG members from Dave and Nicky

Dave and Nicky would like to extend thanks to WAG and its club members for their concern, support and many offers of help since their house fire. It is wonderful to belong to such a caring community and to know that everyone is interested in the developments. The house build is coming along well and we should be in and set up early in the New Year.

Hopefully by the time we have the spring move we'll be able to BBQ at the house instead of Pizza!

Thanks again everyone, Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to all

# WAG Xmas Party

The annual WAG Christmas party was another huge success! We had a great turnout and because of this had plenty of delicious dishes to choose from with our potluck. The games this year got extremely competitive with a lot of variety of dogs claiming the prize for different activities. We started off with musical 'down', where the dogs had to lie down as soon as the music stopped or risked getting kicked out. Last dog standing wins! We had some pretty well trained dogs in this class. Next we had the 'cheese race' which was probably the highlight of the party, groups of 4 dogs had to race to the finish line back to their owners, while avoiding the line of cheese in their path, first dog to reach his owner wins. Many dogs said 'Not today mom/dad' and stopped to enjoy a snack despite the cries and pleas of their owner. Next we had a demonstration of tricks, a team relay match, and a distance competition to see who could send their dogs out to the tunnel the furthest. We had a 5-way tie for the distance competition because the dogs just kept going. Impressive! We thank you all for joining us and voting for our 2014 executive (which can be seen above).

Have a Happy Holidays and a Happy New Year from WAG!

# WAG Xmas Party Photos



The contestants line up for the extremely competitive "Cheese Race"



Aaaaand they're off!

Team relay races



The owners calling frantically, praying their dog makes it over the line of cheese.