

## *Old Dogs..... Young Dogs*

No, this article is not about our dogs that have aged, or our young and upcoming puppies in training; but, rather, I've been thinking about the experienced trainer and the new "Novice A" trainer.

New people to the sport of dog training come into obedience, rally or agility with little knowledge of our sport/hobby/passion. Frequently this "newbie" buys a puppy and then – after they've bought the puppy - they decide it might be fun to try some type of performance activity.

This is wonderful! We want new people into our sport, and frankly that is probably how most of us got into dogs. HOWEVER, I think that most of us "old dogs" don't realize these new trainers need some guidance along the way. They need help in many areas of dogs; and, if we keep our eyes open we can smooth the path for them – and make new friends as well. Just think how intimidating an entry form is to the uninitiated! How do you find out when dog shows are? Why can't you enter the day of the show? (Horse people can!) What's a trial secretary? Why bring a crate to a show?

The newbie has no idea of the "language" we use. I'll bet most newbies don't even know what we mean when we describe them as "Novice A" people! (*For the strictly conformation people and the newbies on our mailing list – Novice A simply means that you are training your very first dog. Novice A is the name of the first obedience class one would enter. We commonly use this term when talking about or introducing a new person to another "old dog".*) Our training terms are very specific to our sport and in many cases so confusing that they have no idea what we are talking about! Us "old dogs" tend to take so much for granted. I know that my friends and I must sound like we speak in a foreign language when within earshot of a non-dog person.

In Agility – "tighten the line", "front cross", "rear cross", "back chain", "go on", "Exc. B", etc, etc etc are all terms we toss out without thinking. In obedience – "straight front", "stand for exam", "long sit", "front & finish", etc. etc. etc. are terms we commonly use in training and constantly talk about losing points for. In Rally – "serpentine", "course map", "stations", "Advanced follows Novice", etc. etc. etc. are terms used regularly.

If we "old dogs" keep our senses tuned to the new trainer we should find many opportunities to teach and educate them in our chosen sport. An invitation to tag along with you at an event could be just what that new person needs. What an opportunity to chat, learn, watch. I fondly remember my first dog show – a friend invited me and my young Mini, Shannon to an obedience trial at the fairgrounds. Wow!! Look at all those dogs, I thought! And, my friend seemed to know everyone! My dog was higher than a kite because of all the stimulation and I thought that there was no way she could ever do what those obedience dogs were doing!! But, I knew I wanted to try.

Of course, the most important thing we can teach the new person is to have fun with their dog when training. And, we should always encourage them to ASK! There are no dumb questions in dogs – just "old dogs" and "young dogs".

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