



# Spirit Ridge

## K9 Training & Rescue

... *because sit happens* ...



# RUFF STUFF



SPRING Edition 2010

[www.spiritridge.net](http://www.spiritridge.net)

vol.4, No.1



### From the Editor's Paw ...

Winter is well behind us and as we watch the snow recede and reveal all the spring treasures that await us and the yard work in store for us... it is also time for yet another Newsletter. You may have noticed the change in our logo – which now sports the actual digital images of two of our own dogs – both of which happen to be in the news in this edition of our Newsletter.

The dog on the left is one of our rescued dogs ("Tequila" – a Belgian Malinois) who we truly believed would never have the temperament to be around any people or external events. We had unfairly labeled him and had minimal expectations of him. However, that all changed as "Mrs. Spirit Ridge" and our agility instructor Suzanne, took our "Tikki" out to an AAC agility trial in March. To be fair, Tikki has always been a fast learner, and Suzanne has been playing agility with him alone to increase his confidence. However, expectations were, indeed, minimal as Tikki has always been very stressed around strangers and new environments – but not only did he manage to hold his own, but he also came home with two first place ribbons! The biggest joy for us, however, was seeing the huge smile on Tikki's face when he completed his first run. Not to mention the additional swagger and confidence that he has acquired ever since! Needless to say, Suzanne now has a starter dog to trial and compete with over the summer and I will once again become what they term "an agility widower". I have also noticed a stronger bond between my wife and Tikki since they have been working together. Tikki's focus has intensified, his eyes never leave my wife and he is always by her side. There is nothing like a working bond between a dog and 'his' person.

Meanwhile, our Belgian Shepherd and Therapy/Literacy Assistance Dog, "Koukla", assisted in a screening/selection event in January for volunteer/dog teams interested in joining our **Paws For Literacy**® community initiative. Seven new dog/handler teams qualified to join our programme and we now have a strong line up of twelve teams. Our next event is April 10<sup>th</sup> so be sure to keep an eye on our website for pictures. Going forward, there will be a column devoted to **Paws For Literacy**® where we will update you on our activities, growth and also profile our team members and their dogs.

We have also continued to 'groom' our new crop of clients whose dogs are getting closer to being ready to compete in both Agility and Obedience competitions – while I will be entering our own Belgian Malinois dogs Sonic (Boom) and Jesse in Rally Obedience competitions at the Advanced level under CARO rules. Not to be outdone, our 'old guy' Zorro (11 yrs old) will be competing in his Rally Obedience Team Novice – paired up with a client's dog. All this will be happening in April/May so stay tuned for news from the trial ring.

... Enjoy the spring!!! Jim Tsitanidis, K9 Trainer & Behavioural Consultant



### 'GOING ONS'

#### SPRING Group Classes in:

- Obedience – Beginner & Intermediate
- Rally Obedience - Beginner & Intermediate
- Agility – Beginner, Novice, Advanced
- Puppy Classes & Puppy Agility classes
- Tracking – Beginner & Intermediate

#### Other sessions:

- Private 'starter' puppy behavioural sessions (designed to get you started on the right foot with your new puppy!)
- Private sessions designed to help humans better deal with emerging or existing behavioural problems (such as lunging, jumping, barking, pulling on walks, aggression with dogs or humans etc)



"Tequila" & Suzanne, proudly displaying their 1<sup>st</sup> place ribbons



### Who's Walking Who?



Now that the weather is improving and everyone is more inclined to want to walk outdoors with their dogs, there is no reason to

not do so. Even dogs that are 'aggressive', 'dominant', pull on a leash walk and generally pick the walk to display their worst and most embarrassing traits can be taught to walk on leash in a more relaxed way. Going for walks is something that is healthy physically and primarily mentally for your dog! And remember, throwing a ball or a stick and playing fetch hours on end does absolutely nothing to relieve your dog's mental boredom – which is the source of the majority of dog behavioural problems.

### PUPPY BEHAVIOURAL TIP

Ever wonder whether it would be a good idea to teach your new puppy to 'ring a bell' when it needs to go out to do its "business"?

The answer, that may surprise you, is an unequivocal NEVER!

One of the most important behaviours you want to teach your young puppy is that EVERYTHING is initiated by you (as a leader) and the rest of the humans in the family. By teaching your dog to ring a bell, you teach your dog to control the "ins and outs" while at the same time giving up your authority, leadership and control of this important function. You are teaching your puppy that you will respond to its cues and NOT the other way around – which is the proper way to raise a puppy. It may initially be very cute and you may think your puppy/dog is "intelligent" but it will quickly get annoying when your dog rings that bell twenty or thirty times a day and learns it can go out (and back in) as many times it wants and controls your attention by ringing a bell.

There is absolutely NO substitute to hands-on training of your puppy – the old fashioned way. Not only does it teach everyone in the family responsibility, but it also teaches your puppy to wait for your cue to go outside. "Dog doors" – while very convenient for those that work long hours, is also a very bad idea and can cause a multitude of similar behavioural problems. Your dog, in its mind, no longer sees an outing as a human/dog activity to be done together but considers itself 'independent' enough to go out "on the hunt" on its own – whenever it pleases! Loss of human leadership, in these cases, leads to worsening dog behaviours such as continuous barking, digging, snarling and lurching at the neighbours' fences, to name only a few.

So, please stay in control of your puppies and do not squish the most important tool you have to raise a well behaved dog – your leadership!!!

### Dog-Proofing Your Home



If you see something interesting on the floor, what do you do? Well, if you're a dog, first you sniff it, then you pick it up in your mouth. Not a problem if it's edible, but what if it's a battery, or a piece of chocolate, or a rubber band? You might think your house is perfectly safe, but to a dog, it's full of fascinating (although potentially dangerous) attractions. This is especially true for a puppy, since he'll be eager to explore (and taste!) everything in his new surroundings. You need to use the same precautions for a dog that you would for children. But remember that dogs are better at breaking open bottles and boxes.

#### The Kitchen

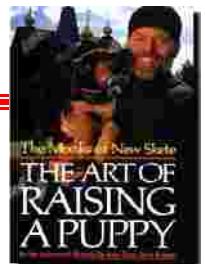
Here are some suggestions for making (and keeping) your dog safe in the kitchen. Remember that dogs have very agile paws and determined muzzles, so keep your cleaning supplies locked away. A good idea is to install childproof locks on cabinets where you store your cleaning supplies, or move them to a high shelf. Also, keep the garbage can safely stored away, or buy one with a tight-fitting lid. Garbage (such as chicken bones) can be stored in the freezer until garbage day. And PLEASE REMEMBER, as much as we humans love chocolate, it contains a stimulant (theobromine) which can make dogs very, seriously ill. And you'll want to keep towels and dish cloths out of your puppy's reach, because if your dog chews on it and swallows a big enough piece, it could cause an intestinal obstruction. Finally, NEVER feed your puppy/dog(s) ANYTHING in the kitchen and they will not habituate to 'hanging' around all the time!

In the next newsletter, we will discuss dog proofing your garage.

If you need assistance with dog proofing your house and the associated behavioural problems, please give us a call.

### Recommended Reading:

A 'must' read for those who are considering getting that cute puppy (or just got it) is:



"The Art of Raising a Puppy" by the Monks of New Skete. It is a book that will open your eyes to your puppy's potential and create the strong foundation you need to have a great adult dog. Remember, the more time you invest in your puppy (regardless of breed or origin), the greater the return on your investment and your adult dog will be admired by all!

### Good memory? Thank your dog!

Dog owners have better memories ... for dog names. Now, if we could just find a way to remember PEOPLE names....



### MEET THREE PAWS PALS®



**Matisse**, handled by Dr. Carol Graham of Graham Animal Hospital, is one of the original "Paws Pals"® being certified in 2008. Matisse has 5 events under his belt and is definitely a favourite with the children. He is a Great Pyrenees dog who is a Canadian Kennel Club champion and United Kennel Club Show champion. Matisse

loves to have a job so, at home, he is dedicated to keeping the squirrels off the bird feeders. He loves being petted and groomed – as long as no one tries to cut his nails! Matisse has also been taking tracking classes at Spirit Ridge and loves finding the hot dogs in the long grass.

**Ollie**, is a one year old rescued Havanese and is handled by our junior literacy coach, Amanda O'Brien. Amanda will be attending high school in the fall and has a love of reading and dogs. Amanda and Ollie have attended puppy agility and obedience classes at Spirit Ridge. True to his daredevil style, Ollie's favourite activity is going down the slide at the playground. His favourite toys are water bottle caps. Like Amanda, Ollie loves to sleep in.



**Bear**, handled by Sarah Chambers, is a Bernese Mountain Dog. Bernese Mountain Dogs were originally bred for pulling carts. Bear has learned to pull his human children around in a sleigh in the winter! Bear got his name because he is fluffy and so cuddly, just like a teddy bear. Even the 2 cats that he shares his home with, love to cuddle up to him and share his bed. We are sure that the children will also find him cuddly and a joy to read to.

Our next event is set for April 10<sup>th</sup> and if you have a dog with a temperament that you think would excel in this volunteer community-based activity, please contact me to be notified when the next screening date occurs.

Contact Information:

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## Bits & bites



### Dogs and Sunburns ...

Just like people, dogs can get sunburned – white dogs and dogs with very short or sparse hair can also develop sunburn where their skin is exposed. Sunscreens (SPF should be 15 or greater), including those developed specifically for pets and those containing titanium dioxide as the active ingredient should be used to prevent sunburn. For pets with skin exposed on their bodies a t-shirt should be worn (by the dogs, naturally!).



"Great. It's the call of the wild, and you've got me on hold."

### Weird Fact



When the Titanic sailed on its maiden voyage, there were three breeds of dog that survived that fateful day on April 14th, 1912 when the White Star Liner clashed with an iceberg. Two of these breeds were the Pomeranian and the Pekinese. These small dogs were allowed on the life boats very early in the evening together with their owners while the life boats were still very empty, and no one seemed to object. The third dog was a Newfoundland, owned by the first officer of the Titanic. The dog was found swimming in the icy waters and it assisted a lifeboat to locate human survivors.

**FRUGAL FIDO - Great money saving dog care tips ...** Add a little sage to your dog's diet to help keep fleas off. The little suckers hate the stuff!

Wishing you a happy mother's day

