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PURINA Pro Club

Great Dane Update

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First Aid for Canines Begins with Recognizing a Problem

Owners and handlers should be prepared to administer first aid to an injured dog whenever necessary. In some cases, half the challenge is recognizing when a dog doesn't feel well.

First Aid in the Field

Field dogs largely encounter problems due to the environment, says Bob West, Purina Director of the Breeder-Enthusiast Sporting Group. "Cuts and abrasions from fences or brush are not unusual, and neither are grass or weed awns that can penetrate the skin."

A tailgate inspection — putting a dog on the truck tailgate and giving it a thorough once-over check — can work well for field trial and hunting dogs, West says. The physical examination should include:

- Checking the eyes to make sure they are shiny and free of debris.
- Checking the inside of the mouth for puncture wounds.
- Looking for cuts and tears on the body. These should be cleaned with soap and water. If a cut is deep or long, it may require veterinary attention.
- Inspecting a dog's footpads.
- Running your hands through the coat.

- Inspecting the ears, particularly if the dog has been in water.

"When field dogs are hunting hard, they are very focused," West says. "They often don't give any indication of injury. It's important for a handler to find any cuts or tears and treat them. Otherwise, you may find an injury days later and it may be infected. It also could become enough of a problem to require veterinary care and lay the dog up for several days."

Though broken bones may seem likely to be a common injury in sporting dogs, they rarely are, says Purina Scientist Dennis Lawler, D.V.M. Injuries to ligaments and tendons occur somewhat more frequently, and are fairly common causes for lameness. However, if a dog does break a bone, the broken bone should be immobilized, the dog calmed down and then quickly taken to a veterinarian. Spending time splinting the leg may cause more problems than it solves, unless the handler has been trained to do it properly.

One of the biggest problems in the field is poorly conditioned dogs worked too long and too hard. "Bred to be hunting dogs, these dogs may overdo it if you don't keep an eye on

them," West says. "At least six to eight weeks of conditioning is needed prior to the hunting or field trial season to help build up muscle and cardiovascular systems so they can perform safely. Sporting dogs are athletes. The ones that work hard are very enthusiastic and really push themselves. It's the owner's responsibility to watch over them and not ask them to do more than they should."

A very real concern today is that many dogs are overweight and with that weight often comes a greater risk for overworking and in turn, overheating. It's important to keep dogs hydrated. "Give a little bit of water quite often," West says. "Don't let a dog gulp and drink large amounts so its stomach becomes distended."

As a dog begins to tire or stress, there is often less animation in its behavior. "Dogs have facial expressions, not unlike people, that show concern or apprehension, as stress or overheating become factors," West says. "A handler can tell fairly easily. The tail action usually slows and becomes less active. Dogs may slow

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Maitau's Never Better Wins GDCA Futurity and Purina Pro Plan Futurity Alliance

Maitau's Never Better has won the 2002 Great Dane Club of America (GDCA) Futurity. Co-owned by Patricia Ciampa, Helen Cross and Tiffany Cross, all of Hollis, N.H., the dog was named the Futurity Winner at the 2002 GDCA National Specialty.

Maitau's Never Better also is the winner of the first Purina Pro Plan Futurity Alliance, a pilot program being tested in select AKC national parent breed clubs. The dog's owners received the Purina Pro Plan Futurity trophy, a bronze art piece of Great Danes, which will follow the title.

Co-bred by Ciampa, Helen Cross and Virginia T. Friberg of Hollis, N.H., and handled by Michael Tenerello, Maitau's Never Better was whelped Feb. 5, 2002. His sire is Windyhill's Kodak Moment, and his dam is CH Maitau Never Say Never.

Under the Purina Pro Plan Futurity Alliance, funding will be awarded in 2003 to the GDCA based on the number of futurity-nominated litters and puppies. Additional



Purina Area Manager Carol Grossman, right, presents the Purina Pro Plan Futurity trophy to Michael Tenerello, handler of the Futurity winner, at the 2002 Great Dane Club of America National Specialty. Co-owners of the winning dog are, from left, Tiffany Cross, Pat Ciampa and Helen Cross.

funding will be provided for puppies that ultimately earn conformation championship titles. The funding supports the club's health research and education endeavors. ■

First Aid

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their pace even though they continue trying to do their job. If they wobble or pant excessively or excitedly, the dog is approaching a point where he'd better be slowed down."

A dog's respiratory and circulatory systems are very important to temperature maintenance, West says. Blood flows to organs such as the tongue, gums and lungs and is cooled by the panting action that moves air across. At the same time, critical gas exchange occurs as the lungs dissipate carbon dioxide and acquire needed oxygen. The cooled, oxygenated blood then recirculates to cool and supply oxygen to the internal organs.

"When the dog can't cool fast enough, the brain starts to protect its core by shutting down different body functions," he says. "The dog may get an apprehensive look on its face, and panting is accelerated, sounding dry and shallow with less effect, so it makes good sense to flush the dog's mouth and clear the tongue to allow for more efficient cooling."

"If a dog shows signs of overheating," says Lawler, "immerse it in cool water or spray it with a hose. If water is not available, apply ice packs to its head, neck and belly. Move it to a cool place. Use squirt bottles of cool water to flush its mouth. Monitor rectal temperature if possible, and consult a veterinarian quickly."

"To get on the right track for having a healthy and safe sporting dog, an owner needs to take his dog to the vet for its basic overall health, including dental hygiene and detection and management of any medical problems that might interfere with training and field performance," Lawler says.

To know when something is wrong with a dog, an owner or handler must know what is normal. What is the dog's normal heart rate at rest? What is

its normal temperature? What is its normal behavior?

"Don't try to be a shade tree veterinarian," West says. "Knowing your dog, where the nearest veterinarian is, and getting your dog quickly and safely there may be the best part of any canine first aid kit."

First Aid on the Circuit

The very nature of campaigning — being away from home, in a different environment and different routine — can be the biggest problem related to sickness on the road. Stress may show up in many ways. A dog may act depressed, not eat or pick at its food, lose weight, not show well and generally indicate unhappiness. Steps can and should be taken to reduce stress, says professional handlers Jerry Bryant of Granger, Ind., and Bruce and Gretchen Schultz of Riverside, Calif.

Bryant, a professional handler for 30 years who attends 100 or more shows a year with his wife, Dot, handles most breeds but specializes in Boxers. "It's important," he says that the "dogs' routine away from home be kept as close as possible to their normal home routine. When dogs are brought along on the road when they are young, they are pretty well acclimated by the time they are ready to show at 6 months."

The Schultzes handle Sporting, Hound, Working, Herding and Toy dogs and specialize in Golden Retrievers. "Often dogs that are not accustomed to traveling will experience homesickness but that lasts a relatively short period of time as they get into

the routine of being a show dog," Gretchen says.

"Many times a new dog will not eat for the first few days because it is in such a different environment than what it is used to," Bruce says. "But hunger soon ensures that the dog will start eating."

Bryant notes the importance of dogs maintaining their weight while on the road. He and Dot try to maintain a feeding schedule as close as possible to the home schedule.

Water from locations across the country, with different smells and tastes, can be a problem. "We try to carry our own water and mix the local water in gradually," Bryant says. "We add a little lemon juice and Gatorade® to disguise the taste and smell. Providing dogs with access to water 24 hours a day, both in the kennel runs and their crates at night, both on the road and at home, is important."

Keeping dogs happy on the road is an important part of keeping them healthy.

Bruce notes that their personal regimen "involves treating dogs as pets. While on the road, we and our assistants play with each dog and take them all on individual walks. We take along a bike and, time permitting, run them so they keep in top condition. The most important suggestion we have is to make each dog feel special. Even during the show day, at any given time at our set-up, you can find at least one dog lying on the grooming table or quite possibly sitting in one of the fold-up chairs."

Bryant agrees conditioning is very important. "At home, each dog might get two hours of activity in a paddock. On the road, if you don't maintain that schedule, a dog may lose their physical and mental edge. A lot of us carry bikes, electric scooters or mopeds, and we'll run the dogs. At some of the larger show sites in the winter, we lap the building after the show is over or when the crowds are gone. We bring along exercise pens, too."

Show campaigns may mean weeks away from home. Giving dogs toys and large chew bones to amuse themselves can work well. To help keep dogs safe and secure, Bryant suggests that each dog's crate be marked with the name of the owner and owner's phone number, that collars are placed on each dog and that each dog have a tattoo or microchip ID. ■

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DENNIS LAWLER, D.V.M.

First Aid for Canines

A well-stocked first aid kit is important. Here are suggestions from professional handlers in both the show and sporting segments.

- Anti-diarrhea medication as suggested by your veterinarian
- Antibacterial ointments
- Benadryl liquid and capsules for bee/bug bites and hives
- Ice bags
- Betadine or other cleansing solution
- Cotton swabs
- Thermometer
- Quick Stop (for cut nails, etc.)
- Gauze
- Tape

- Elastic bandages
- Bandages
- Eye cleaner/saline solution
- Large sterile pads
- Muzzle
- Squirt bottles filled with water
- Tweezers
- Scissors/emergency shears
- Safety pins
- Conform stretch bandage
- 1-inch adhesive tape
- Examination gloves
- Non-adhering dressing
- Ophthalmic ointment without steroid
- Soap