

Who's the boss?

■ BY HARRY KALAJIAN

In general, dogs without any training are the boss. They do whatever they want. Yes, many owners think that by yelling at the dog they are controlling and stopping it from misbehaving. That's not true, because five minutes later the dog will go back to misbehaving.

Your dog from day one should know and understand that you are its alpha, the pack leader. If the dog is getting away with misbehaving, then it's time to shift the dog's position in the hierarchy. The dog must understand that

you are in charge.

A professional dog trainer should be called in to help with the change in behavior through obedience training. (No treat trainers; they rely on bribery methods. That will not change the hierarchy of leadership.)

Readjusting the hierarchy has many benefits for the owner, whether indoors or when out in public. Many people believe that because they have a little dog, it doesn't need any type of training. That's far from the truth. All animals, domesticated or wild, go through a disciplinary phase by their

mothers in the wild, or by their owner. Left on their own without guidance or corrective measures, not only do dogs become unruly but they can also become aggressive.

Here are some examples of the dog that is in charge: It asks to go in and out constantly, barks constantly, steals everything and has you chasing it; never comes when called unless you have a treat "bribe," pulls on the leash, bites the leash, bites at you, pees or poops in your home and on furniture including your bed; chases anything moving, tries biting other dogs or people, chews up whatever it can grab; destroys phones and remotes, and becomes aggressive if you try to get something out of its mouth. And the list goes on.

Sometimes it does happen that during and after the training to teach who is boss, things don't work out. The reason is that the owner is not being as persistent or consistent as needed. Discuss the issue with your trainer to see where the mistake is.

The best advice is to get a professional trainer with many years of experience for proper guidance in all aspects of training and behavior. It's less expensive to get a professional trainer than to replace your furniture.

An issue you may have when you're trying to cut your dog's nails is that it won't stay still. Sometimes putting your dog on a table or elevated platform will simplify the nail cutting, because

the height helps prevent the dog from moving around a lot. Why do groomers and vets always use higher platforms? It's easier on the dog and the person.

From day one, show the dog you are the leader. Obedience training with correction of any undesired behavior will result in your establishing alpha leadership. Obedience training does wonders in establishing the dogs' position in the hierarchy of the home. When professionally trained, it will maintain harmony in the home and outdoors.

Something to know:

If your dog likes to gnaw on its tail, see if there is something that's causing it to do that. If you see nothing visually, then try simply spraying the area with vinegar or lemon juice. If the gnawing persists, there could be a behavioral or medical issue. Most of the time it would be more behavioral than medical. Seek a professional trainer with many years of experience in behavior training to find the cause and the solution.

Have a woof woof of a month.

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