



The Wolf's Den Kennel

The Howler

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*"You are not your mistakes,
you are your possibilities" - Oprah*

A Mind is a Terrible Thing to Waste

As we have started devoting ourselves to raising puppies, we have begun considering what is important to a dog's upbringing. To raise happy, healthy, confident, athletic puppies we have focused on providing the best possible nutrition, an extremely clean living space, a structured vaccination and worming schedule, a progressive exercise program, and, most of all, an education.

Over time, we have discovered that in order for a dog to readily learn as an adult, he must learn how to learn as a puppy. Much like it is important

for the puppy to be exposed to many people and situations in order to be well socialized, puppies need to be exposed to the idea of learning in order to know that learning exists. It doesn't really matter what you teach them as long as you teach them something. However, the easiest and perhaps the most useful thing to teach puppies is the word "no."

I firmly believe that "no" is the most important word in a dog's vocabulary. Knowledge and usage of the command "no" shows a dog that some behaviors are allowed and others are not. To use "no" correctly is extremely simple, you simply need to give the command "no" and prevent the unwanted behavior. This is especially easy to achieve with puppies because puppies are naturally very rambunctious and their ability to cause trouble



We choose to grind dog food (kibble) so that we can obtain a porridge like consistency without soaking the dog food. We feed our puppies three times a day until they are about 8 weeks old.

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seems endless. Hence, there are plenty of behaviors you may want to prevent. Likewise, they are easily intimidated by either a gruff tone of voice or the physical act of picking them up.

We have found multiple examples of when the word "no" is really important for a sled dog to understand. For instance, an excited puppy who considers chewing the harness or the line as an appropriate outlet for excitement and energy, can easily be taught not to chew on the equipment by using the word "no" which it already understands. Likewise, when an eager young sled dog approaches an intersection and goes the wrong way, if you tell him "no" he is likely to take the only other option (the correct way) since he understands that he can't go the first way and he is so enthusiastic to keep going.

Once a dog knows the word "no" he is prepared



One of the most important things in keeping puppies healthy is keeping them clean. We raise our puppies in upraised kennels, allowing the feces and urine to fall beneath the kennel. Because puppies live in a group and they are so active, we have found that this system keeps the puppies much cleaner than keeping the puppies in a pen on the ground.



Beautiful hand knit hats made from dog fur and wool

I handspin a mixture of 50% shed dog fur and 50% Alaskan wool on traditional style spinning wheels. I then hand-dye them with commercial grade dyes. Hats are hand knit and trimmed with either muskrat, beaver or otter; the crown is lined with polarfleece. Earflaps close with leather ties and a barrel lock.

I add a bead made from a shed caribou antler to the tassel, as a special Alaskan touch.

There are also different styles of hats using the dog fur/wool blend that don't have the fur trim.

Hats are guaranteed to fit.

-Brenda

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We begin exercising our dogs as soon as they can walk. We start by taking them on extremely short walks. As their athleticism improves, our walks grow longer. We cover all sort of terrain from off-trail bushwhacking to hiking the same trails our adult dogs run on. Eventually the puppies will get too fast for us, and we will have to use a 4-wheeler to keep up. Our goal is to expose our puppies to everything they will experience as adult dogs in harness. That way, when we are ready to harness break the puppies the only new thing will be the gangline.



to learn much more complex ideas. Not only has he been exposed to the idea that you plan to teach him things, but also the command “no” becomes a teaching tool. By teaching our dogs how to learn when they are young pups, we find that they are eager to learn, improve, and please us as adult dogs. We feel that the combination of these elements is a great recipe for raising pups. However, there is nothing as important as spending time with your dogs and learning from your mistakes.



Above: Jazz getting a manicure a couple of miles into an unplugged session. It's amazing how much easier it is to accomplish tasks like these once puppies burn a little of that youthful energy. Left: Joker, Jazz, and Jekyll jamming.

Summer Summary

As the fall snow has begun to fall, we have had a chance to look back on our busy summer in Alaska. Caitlin and I both spent the summer working for Jeff King's Husky Homestead tours, meeting and greeting people from around the world who travel here with a list of things they wish to do and see. Of course everyone wants to see a moose, a grizzly, and, "The Mountain," however at the top of almost everyone's wish to see list is an Iditarod dog.

It fascinates me to think that in less than thirty-four years, the dogs of Iditarod have become to the state of Alaska what the peach is to Georgia, or what the lobster is to Maine. Thankfully Iditarod dogs aren't as elusive as either the moose, the grizzly, or, "The Mountain," and it has been very satisfying to be able to fulfill so many peoples' curiosities.

We are truly thankful to Jeff and



The idea that two heads are better than one taken a step further. Originally an Inuit concept that was brought to my attention several years ago in an interview of Doug Swingley. He had mentioned training with three and four leaders to allow all of his dogs the opportunity for plenty of leader training.



Alberta, an old pro, teaching Grommit what being a leader is all about.

Donna King for giving us the opportunity to work in such a fun environment and with such a remarkable staff. It has really made our transition here to the state of Alaska an absolutely positive experience.

Another life altering experience has been the addition to the community of Jayne Hempstead, DVM. Jayne and her husband Bob combined their love of mountains with her veterinary practice, and now Cantwell now has a first rate vet clinic. Jayne has a tremendous amount of experience with sled dogs which comes not only from her clinical duties but also from the time she has spent on the runners behind a team of dogs. Not having to drive to Fairbanks when a dog needs medical attention that Caitlin or I cannot provide has been a blessing. Thanks Jayne!

The Wolf's Den's Picks

The A-list of fun stuff to get in on or into to kick off the 2005/2006 mushing season.

Movie: *The Fast Runner*, by Zachrias Kunuk. Ebert and Roeper gave it a resounding, "Two Thumbs Up," and I have to say it's definitely a, "Tails Up," film. Perhaps the best movie I've ever seen. As a bonus to being a great film there is quite a bit of mushing knowledge to be gained from paying attention to the many scenes involving sled dogs. I plan to watch this film every fall as a part of my mushing season preparations.

Song: *A Little less Conversation*, Elvis. I'm certain that the King didn't have sled dogs on his mind, however the sentiment expressed in the following phrase;

A little less conversation, a little more action
 A little more bite, a little less bark
 A little less fight, a little more spark
 is without a doubt my favorite mushing paradigm.

Footwear: *Bunny Boots*, although they have become quite expensive and are getting harder to find, just having a new pair around makes me feel all warm and fuzzy.

Education: ADMA's (Alaskan Dog Musher's Association) Fall Symposium, I've seen the advertisements for many years now and always thought that it would be fun to go, however I never seriously contemplated attending. The price of the airfare and the time it would require to fly to Fairbanks always was a little out of my reach. It just dawned on me very recently that I'm actually in Alaska, and hey, the symposium is held a couple of blocks closer to us than the grocery store.

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Here At The Wolf's Den

In our last issue of The Howler I unleashed the phrase, "going unplugged," well summer has come and gone, and it's time to plug back in. Which isn't much to write about when dealing with experienced sled dogs, however, plugging in puppies for the first time is an entirely different subject. We've very recently plugged in Alberta's pups, (our I-litter) and all I can say is that patience apparently is not in their genetic make up. These pups are anxious to get moving.

Inca won the contest for the squirmiest puppy managing to free herself from her harness twice,



while Icarus apparently felt the need to warn the world that he's the new dog on the trail with his cocky, self confident barking. Ingot really does shine and Ice, who reminds us of a kid in a tuxedo,



Above: Indiana, Alberta, and Hook charging up what is locally known as Hanna's hill. Alberta's tugline is about three inches longer than the other two. Keeping the youngsters a half-step behind a veteran allows them to experience leading while affording them the luxury of having somebody to look up to. Another advantage to having your experienced leader on a longer tug is that it allows the dog to see and take turning commands without having to bully over a rambunctious pup or duck behind the pups tugline. Pups learn the turning commands rather quickly this way. Left: Iowa and Igneous during a short break during their debut in harness.



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*Tinkle's latest.
We're onto the letter K for names.
Anyone have suggestions?*

Cheenik, in the center, knows what stopping is for, while Icarus and Iowa get a little extra attention for doing such a great job leading.

has been really cool about the whole harness breaking process. We've affectionately started referring to them all as our Black and Tan team.

Not to worry, there's still plenty of jamming going on around here. Martina's litter, Joker, Jekyll, and Jazz just graduated from puppy walks to Unplugged sessions, and are excitedly ripping up the trails. Also, in a few short weeks Tinkle's second litter with us will be old enough to join in on all the fun.

This fall Caitlin has started her new job as a teachers' aide in Cantwell. The school



Above: Joker trying to determine if what's got his attention is edible or not. A puppy's curiosity never ceases to amaze me.

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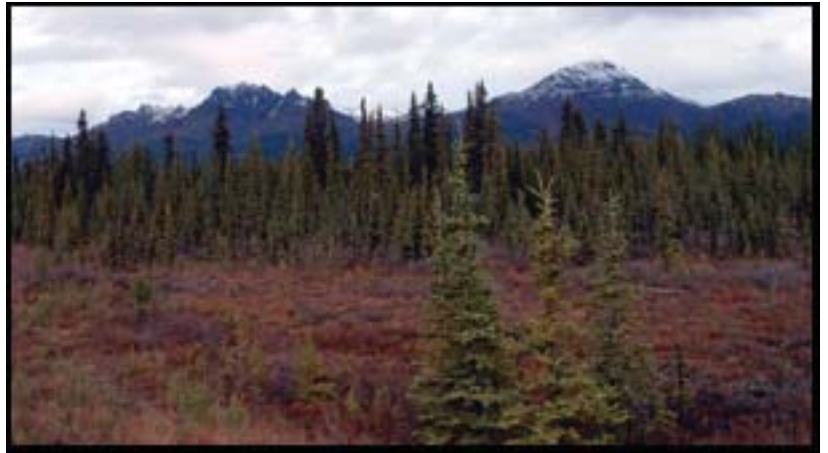
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harbors a student body of twenty students K-12th grade. Amazingly, she was able to learn all the students names within the first hour. She is definitely having a good time working with the kids. They are teaching her a lot about the community and culture of Cantwell and she is even able to participate in an Alaska State History course!

We are still looking for a place of our own, and hopefully by spring we will have found a spot where we can start spreading roots. We could, of course, settle in a different area of the state fairly easily, but these mountains have cast their spell on us and it is hard to imagine not being here. Even after a short day of grocery shopping in Fairbanks, it's amazing how our spirits brighten once we start the climb from Healy to Denali.

Until next time, I sincerely hope you are all



A glimpse of the spectacular fall colors. Due to the sparse and almost entirely spruce forest, the colors of autumn are on the ground. Quite a bit different than fall in New England.

having as much fun with your dogs as we are with ours.



The gang looking good considering there are only two dogs on the team over a year old.

The Howler

Mike Santos and Caitlin Brady

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