

The Paramus Post

Dogs Need Proper Exercise Regimens Year-Round, Even in Cold Weather

By Mel Fabrikant Wednesday, October 28 2009, 02:52 PM EDT

Pet's Best Friend



From the Founders of
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Proper Dog Walking Brings Peace to the Pack, Simulates Primal Pack Hunt for Food

Colder weather often means less exercise for dogs, which need at least 30 minutes of daily aerobic exercise. According to Chris Rago, owner of Pet's Best Friend NJ, a division of Oradell, NJ-based Doggy Deuce Removal Service, www.doggydeucerm.com, "Dogs, like people, are healthier and happier when they get proper exercise, even when the temperatures

drop.

Yet dog owners may not realize that letting the dog roam around the back yard to relieve himself and get fresh air isn't giving dog the aerobic fitness they need to keep healthy and agile, plus it also causes the dog to miss out on an primal need: hunting for food with the pack, something dogs are hard wired to do and what a proper walk with the pack leader/owner, simulates. Dog walking replicates a dog's inherent need for the hunt, and taking that away is damaging not only to the dog's health, but to his emotions and instincts as well."

Rago and his team design and implement dog fitness and walking programs for over 30 area dogs, from 10 pound puppies to 150 pound large breed adult dogs. "People are often unaware that a dog walk with the pack leader is a critical component of pack behavior," explained Rago. "Because people don't like being out in the cold weather, they often simply let the dog out solo in a fenced in area rather than take him for a structured, proper walk. Most dog owners are unaware of the power and importance of the walk, how to handle the dog, how to hold the leash, how to behave and convey a leadership position."

Proper dog walking involves a structured approach and continuous leadership from the owner/pack leader. "A dog walking and sniffing 15 feet ahead of his owner is not being walked properly. A proper walk involves the dog walking next to, if not slightly behind, his owner, the pack leader and all his attention is focused on following the leader's cues," Rago continued. "The walk is a minimum of 15 minutes in length and involves a brisk pace that is cardio-challenging without causing the dog physical stress. Dog behavior data shows that dogs follow a pack leader, the alpha male/couple, and that the hunt is what keeps dog part of the pack, healthy and fed. Without the proper walk/hunt, dogs may be prone to poor behavior, obesity, cardio system weakness and aggression."

Dealing with the Elements

Other considerations for cold weather walking include icy surfaces and protecting your dog from hypothermia. While ice melt can prevent dangerous slips and falls during the winter months, it can also create blisters, sores, and infection on your dog's exposed paws. The American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA) recommends dog owners do the following outdoor activity in icy conditions:

- o Cleanse paws with warm water to remove harmful chemicals and salt. Do this immediately following your walk to ensure the dog doesn't lick and ingest any of these toxins.
- o Apply Vaseline to paws before walking in icy conditions. Vaseline will act as a barrier between dog's paws and ice melt.
- o Consider dog booties for very sensitive dogs.

Working Out Like A Dog

In the midst of a Nor'easter? Consider a half-hour of indoor rigorous play in an open area with some aerobic exertion such as running or playing fetch. The ASPCA reports daily exercise has the potential to:

- o Improve agility and movement
- o Build trust and confidence in shy canines
- o Maintain a healthy weight
- o Diminish digestive problems
- o Reduce typical behavioral issues such as hyperactivity, excessive barking, and digging

Outerwear for Dogs

Some dog owners adorn their dogs in sweaters and other seasonal garb as the mercury begins to drop. However, are these articles of clothing really beneficial or necessary? For larger dogs and canines with double coats, the answer is no as their coats offer ample warmth during the winter months. However, small breed dogs, hairless breeds, and dogs with thin coats are more sensitive to the chill of winter than other dogs. If you notice that your dog begins to get cold (as indicated by shivering) rather quickly, a good fitting sweater may be indicated.

Source: www.loveyourdog.com

About Pet's Best Friend NJ and Doggy Deuce Removal Service

Now, in its second year of business, Pet's Best Friend NJ, a division of Doggy Deuce Removal Service, www.doggydeucerm.com, offers 24/7/365 pet waste removal and cat litter box maintenance, dog whispering, dog walking and customized exercise programs, pet-sitting, an extensive array of at-home vet tech services, concrete cleaning and disinfecting, and indoor disinfecting air treatments. For a complete list of services and a free estimate, visit the Pet's Best Friend NJ website or call (201) 663-1879.