

NATURAL FEEDING AND MANAGEMENT OF DOGS

How to manage and feed your dog naturally

Veterinary Guide

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British Association of
Holistic Nutrition and Medicine
www.bahnm.org.uk

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

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ISBN 0851317235

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A catalogue record of this book is available from the British Library

First published in 1999 by Allen London

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ABOUT THIS PUBLICATION

The information given here is intended for owners wishing to look after their dog in a way that is more in keeping with his evolved physiology and psychology. It gives practical alternatives to modern methods which are being criticised by many as not being in the best long term interest of the species. It covers holistic nutrition, evolution, choosing a breed, behaviour, training, common ailments and natural medicine. Owners needing specific advice on the way to embrace and integrate these principles in specific circumstances should contact the BAHNM free veterinary helpline for more information.

ABOUT BAHNM

The British Association of Holistic Nutrition and Medicine is a not for profit organization dedicated to the humane scientific research and promotion of holistic methods of animal management, nutrition and medicine solely in the pursuit of optimum welfare.

BAHNM promotes the use of natural products for nutrition which are compatible with the evolved requirements of the species in order to maintain homeostasis. The approach to veterinary intervention is broadly the same, which is to use natural methods such as herbal medicine, homeopathy and physio-therapeutic methods when this is a viable option. BAHNM is not against the use of synthetic drugs and chemicals, only their over-use and miss-use, both in foods and veterinary medicine.

A major research focus is concerned with the maintenance of good health in domesticated animals through properly integrated methods of prophylactic management and medicine. BAHNM collaborates with academic institutions, external technical advisors and practicing holistic veterinarians. Contributors are entirely commercially independent.

The Association provides consultancy to the veterinary profession on holistic nutrition, and integration of complementary medical methodologies. It also provides a free helpdesk for members of the public seeking advice and guidance on holistic management, nutrition and medicine.

HOLISTIC FOODS, FOOD ADDITIVES AND MEDICINES

There are BAHNM certified foods, food additives, and veterinary medicines available for dogs which are compatible with the principles of holistic feeding, management and medicine.

Practical advice on any aspect of holistic management may be obtained from the BAHNM veterinary helpline – 01252 843282 – www.bahnm.org.uk

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Introduction

Dog and man are capable of forging a bond that is quite unique. No other form of life on this planet has made an alliance with us in the way that the dog has. Whilst other ‘companion animals’ such as cats, rabbits, guinea pigs, etc. are just as popular as dogs and have much to commend them, they do not have the same relationship with their owners as the dog. He will give his master unconditional love, and follow him anywhere on earth, whether be he prince or pauper.

Despite the fact that the dog has been a companion to man for thousands of years he is often misunderstood — probably more so today than at any other time in history. One of the main reasons for this is that many dogs are treated almost as if they were human beings and, as we shall see, many problems can ensue as a result of this cardinal error. Because dogs relate so well to us, it is tempting to think of them in this way, but it is a mistake; dogs simply have their own agenda, which is not difficult to comprehend once the ‘nature of the beast’ is appreciated.

The dog has been accepted into the homes of mankind since the Stone Age, but humans have adapted mentally to the effects of civilisation in a way that dogs are probably not able to. Breeding has modified his shape and to some extent his temperament, but the dog’s basic nature remains largely unaltered. The non-descript canine that caught prey for primitive man and brought it to his master’s dwelling or cooperated with him in his hunting endeavours is essentially the same animal as the pampered poodle living in a modern high-rise city flat.

The natural behaviour of dogs has thus not been modified, to the same extent as man’s, during the process of evolution. Whilst we can train dogs to behave in a way which suits our life-style it is important to remember that their natural instinct is not far from the surface. Any training must take account of this or disasters may occur.

Today there is unprecedented interest in animal behaviour and welfare issues in general, together with a resurgence of interest in natural methods of animal management. This book discusses the nature and character of the domestic dog and how these relate to keeping him so

that he is acceptable in our homes. It also explains the prevention and treatment of common ailments, through the use of natural methods.

1. Man's best friend and his cousin the wolf

All domestic dogs are descended from one species of animal. Every breed of modern dog from the Chihuahua to the Great Dane shares the basic physiology and psychology of one common ancestor — the wolf (*Canis lupus*). The many species of domestic dogs in existence today are all a result of man's selective breeding of the wild wolf over a period of some 12,000 years. Despite this process of domestication which has reduced the dog's aggressiveness and increased his compliance, the wild nature of the wolf is never far from the surface, and most modern dogs would adapt quite easily to living as a pack independently of mankind should the need arise. In some parts of the world semi-wild packs of dogs are seen around urban areas where they become a nuisance. These groups have been formed by animals that have either strayed or been thrown out, or are the descendants of such dogs, and they live and behave in exactly the same way as their ancestors, scavenging for food around human habitations.

True nature

To see the 'true' nature of the domestic dog, therefore, take a look at the modern wild wolf. He is a pack animal with a very well-developed sense of his position within the group. Packs contain layers of dominance, with one animal, known as the 'alpha male', at the top, to whom all the others yield. Those below the alpha male will dominate others in their turn, and so on down the scale to those at the bottom of the social order. The hierarchy of dominance within the pack is gradually but constantly changing as the older animals decline in health and vigour and the younger ones rise up through the ranks to take their place. This whole process acts to ensure group cohesiveness, which is central to the survival of the pack. Its implications may be seen in many social activities, such as hunting, feeding and mating.

This point is central to understanding the nature of dog. When he is living with a human family, he regards all the family members as other dogs and, if there is to be harmony, he must know his place in the hierarchy. This must be below all the human members of the family, otherwise he will try to impose his 'authority' on those he considers to be beneath his position in the pecking order. One of the most common causes of problems is when a dog becomes confused about this; commonly because hierarchy has not been established during training, or because of a change in circumstances — such as when a new baby arrives in the household.

The wolf used to be common in most parts of Europe, but wild wolves are now only seen in certain parts of the world, for example Canada. He is much maligned and many stories exist of unprovoked attacks by wolves on human beings. Like most wild creatures of his size and capabilities he certainly needs to be treated with respect, but wolf packs are probably usually less interested in making a meal out of human beings than most stories would imply.

Asserting authority over subordinates

The way wolves exert their superiority over their subordinates is by standing aggressively, baring the teeth and growling. Aggressive mock attacks may follow. If necessary, the more dominant wolf grabs hold of the miscreant in his jaws, usually by the loose skin in the neck region, and shakes him robustly from side to side. This treatment usually has the desired effect, with the subordinate animal eventually signalling submission by lying on its back with all four legs in the air, before perhaps withdrawing with its tail between its legs. Although the animals may appear to be in mortal combat during such episodes, accompanied as they are by bloodcurdling growling and snarling, much of this is simply posturing. Whilst these battles have a serious purpose and sometimes blood is drawn, anything but very minor injuries are rare.

Teeth

The teeth of the wolf reflect his diet. The prominent canine teeth at the front of the mouth are designed to lock on to the prey during the hunt, to

bring the victim to the ground. The incisors, which are the small chisel-shaped teeth at the front of the mouth, are designed for stripping small tags of meat from bones. The pre-molars behind the canines are cutting teeth, and the powerful molars at the back of the mouth are adapted to apply maximum crushing and severing forces to large bones and for cutting flesh.

The skull shape and adaptation also reflect this role. Large temporal muscles for strong jaw action are located on either side of the head. The jaw is adapted as a powerful lever. The teeth are deeply rooted and angled to stand the forces required.

Vision

The eyes of the wolf, in keeping with many carnivores, are forward facing which facilitates efficient judgement of distance; an important consideration when pursuing prey. They are also very sensitive to movement although they probably do not see with great clarity at a distance. The wolf has a third eyelid between the outer lids and the eyeball itself called the nictitating eyelid, which serves to provide extra protection from dirt debris and injury.

Smell

The wolf's olfactory system, which gives him his sense of smell, is very highly developed and invaluable in helping him locate his prey. During the hunt not only can the species of prey be identified but also its location. Scent is thought to be carried as molecules in the air, which are taken into the olfactory system during inhalation or sniffing, and receptors — many more than in the human nose — register the molecules, which are then analysed through a complex process within the brain. The wolf's sense of smell is also used for recognition of territory and to identify other individuals of the pack.

Hearing

Together with the sense of smell, the wolf's sense of hearing is very highly developed. Both of these are very important to him in being able to locate his prey and therefore vital for survival. The ears are large, upright

and mobile and they are capable of registering sounds that are inaudible to humans. Because they are mobile they can be used to pin-point the source of sound very accurately. Humans, on the other hand, with immobile ears, have to move the head in order to obtain even a vague idea of where the sound is coming from. The ears of the wolf are protected by hairs around their inside edge which are designed to prevent the entry of foreign bodies. They also contain wax to trap any fine material, such as dust and other fine debris, which may find its way into the ear canal.

Feet

The bones of the wolf's feet correspond to the fingers of the human hand or the toes of the feet. However, they have evolved for a different purpose. Tough pads have developed on the under-side to counteract the abrasive effects of solid ground. The nails are adapted to provide grip when running. The feet are a useful shape to scrape the ground when making a form in which to sleep and for digging when in pursuit of small burrowing animals. The joints in the toes are angled in such a way to each other to provide for effective shock absorption when the wolf is running.

Diet

As a carnivore (but not exclusively so) the natural staple diet of the wolf along with others of the same family (Canidae) is other animals, usually herbivores, which are chased and brought down by the pack. These are then consumed in their entirety: meat, skin, fur, bones, intestines, and all. The social hierarchy may be readily observed when the pack is feeding on a kill — each member may only feed if its superiors allow it to and any misdemeanour results in a fight. Several wolves may be feeding on different parts of the carcass at the same time, and pieces may be hastily ripped off and taken away to be hidden from the rest of the pack to be eaten at leisure. The pack may have to subsist on one carcass for quite some time and before the next kill is made they may be down to a few bones, having not eaten a satisfying meal for some time. Alternative feast and famine is a way of life for many wolf packs. Other natural

'supplements' to a wolf's diet are roots, berries, nuts, herbs, fruit, seeds etc.

Breeding

The wolf usually has several young in a litter which are unable to see when they are first born. They are protected and suckled by the mother until they grow larger and are capable of being weaned on to adult food. In the transition period, a mother will vomit part-digested food into the nest for the cubs. The young live and sleep together, being very playful both amongst themselves and with adult members of the pack. During this early period they learn the basics of social interaction in order to prepare them for integration into the group later. Adults are very tolerant of youngsters, letting them pull on their ears and tails, but if they go too far they are gently put in their place with a growl.

2. Why do dogs do that?

Man's best friend sometimes engages in habits that we may feel are inappropriate. Because we forget that he is a 'wolf in dog's clothing', we are often puzzled when he behaves in a way which may be inconvenient, unacceptable or embarrassing. Remember that whilst the dog is quite capable of being trained to become a well-behaved member of the family, he should not be treated as though he is capable of the human understanding of responsibility logic and reason. Dogs are dogs, and they should be loved for what they are, not for that into which we are trying to compose them.

Chew furniture and other objects in the house

The favourite time for chewing furniture and other objects around the house is when the owner is out. The cause is usually boredom and the remedy is training. The best way to teach a dog that he has done wrong is to catch him in the act and reprimand him in the way described below. If you discover that he has done wrong on returning home it is useless to reprimand him then, as he will not associate your actions with the deed.

Dogs of a highly strung nature are more likely to chew furniture and other objects than others. If the problem persists you may need to confine the dog to a room where he is less likely to do damage, such as the kitchen. Make sure he has plenty of toys that he knows he is allowed to chew and remember that a large bone will keep a dog amused for hours (and clean his teeth). Young dogs can chew objects, just as human babies do, in order to aid teething.

Jump up and make a mess of clothing

This is most often a greeting. It may also happen when the dog knows he is about to go out for a walk or to have his food put down for him. The reason he jumps is because he is trying to reach your face in order to get attention. Face contact, including licking, is a very important part of pack language for the dog. It seems to be more important to certain individuals than others, probably simply because some need more reassurance in the form of body contact than others. It is important for such dogs to know that you have noticed them by making a fuss over them, stroking their head and body, but at the same time not allowing them to jump up. If training is to succeed, you must always insist that on no account must the dog make contact with your lower body with his legs, whatever the circumstances. Some owners make the mistake of expecting the dog to know the difference between gardening clothes and evening wear!

Scratch the carpet and turn round and round before lying down to rest

The wild ancestor of the dog (together with his modern cousin the wolf) often formed a resting-place on the surface of the ground. If lying down amongst grasses or in wooded areas, containing leaves, twigs and other undergrowth, moving round in a body-shaped circle would both clear the area and tread down material on which to lie. If there is little in the way of soft material in the area, such as on bare ground, the earth could be scraped in order to make it more comfortable. It is easy to imagine what a dog is trying to do when frantically scratching at an unyielding carpet. Providing a soft bed, such as a bean bag, which can be 'made' according

to the dog's own requirements, and training him not to scratch in other areas is usually successful.

Chase cats and other animals

To chase other animals is an instinct deeply ingrained in the nature of the dog. As we have seen, chasing prey in order to catch it is vital to the survival of a wild pack so the development of this skill is paramount. Puppies love to chase and it is a great game for them, which they should be allowed to enjoy. The trouble starts when the animal matures and has not been taught that chasing everything it sees is not allowed. Animals that the dog is most likely to come across when out being walked are other dogs and cats; another dog will not usually be chased as they prefer to square up', but some cats will make a run for it and, of course, the untrained dog is likely to take off after it. Fortunately the cat will usually find a tree or other refuge in order to get out of harm's way, but occasionally there will be a confrontation. If the cat stands its ground and is accurate with its claws, the dog will get a sore nose as a reprimand (hopefully nothing worse) and back off. A dog that has been dealt with in this way by a cat quickly learns that cat chasing, although a great deal of fun, can also be painful, and he may think again next time.

Fight with other dog

When two strange dogs meet they will immediately assess each other in order to establish the basis of their relationship. This involves a complex series of signals and ritualised posturing which is usually completed in a short time. Sometimes this process involves aggression which, whilst alarming to witness, is usually harmless. The dogs normally get on once one dog backs off and signals submission. In rare cases, either or both dogs will receive injuries as a result of such a confrontation, in which case a visit to the vet may be indicated as bites can cause serious infection if they are not treated in the proper way.

When two dogs meet and either one or both animals are restrained on a lead, they may become more aggressive because their natural approach ritual is disallowed. In a situation where a restrained dog is approached by an unrestrained animal it is usually best to release the former, if safe

to do so, in order that they may square up' without human interference. If it seems that aggression is likely on no account must a restrained dog be picked up as this will stimulate aggression in both animals. Many owners have made the mistake of doing this in an effort to protect their animal and have finished up being bitten themselves. The other danger is that the loose dog may try to taunt the dog which is restrained on the lead by running round and round the owner. Those who are not fleet of foot may find themselves hog-tied in a matter of a few seconds.

Some dogs particularly like to display aggression towards other dogs when being walked on the lead. This can be because the owner has initially urged the dog to react positively to strangers, which has been misinterpreted by the animal as encouragement to be aggressive. Such dogs strain forward and bark furiously at the mere sight of another animal. This behaviour should be discouraged from an early age when the dog is easier to train, as once ingrained it can be difficult to eradicate.

Dig up the garden

We have already seen that the dog's feet and claws are ideal for digging and his wild counterpart would occasionally spend time in this activity, looking for roots and shoots to eat, bury bones, digging in pursuit of burrowing rodents etc. Apart from the practical benefits of digging, dogs appear to thoroughly enjoy the activity, and they are good at it — particularly at digging holes; the front feet scoop out earth and pass it under the belly to be flicked backwards and out of the way by the back feet. Dogs can get filthy during this kind of excavation, with soil entering the ears and getting into their eyes. This does not seem to bother them. A good shake will remove most of the dirt from the coat and the ears, and that which has entered the eyes will be drawn out to the corners with the aid of tears and the action of blinking and either fall away or be cleared with a paw.

Some dogs seem to want to dig more than others and if at an early age the animal starts to do this in the garden, he should be gently discouraged from doing so. It is especially important to identify and correct this urge in the larger breeds, which are capable of making an

average sized garden look like a bomb-site in a very short time. It seems, the more pride one takes in a lawn, the more a dog will want to dig it up!

Eat cow-pats and other droppings, including sometimes their own

Many owners find this habit so revolting they are reluctant to discuss it. It is, however, very common and sometimes occurs unbeknown to the owner, especially if the dog has been told off for it. It is thought that the reason why dogs engage in this activity is because they are lacking in certain nutrients, which is not surprising given the absence of natural micronutrients in most commercial dog foods. Many dogs are keen to eat cow-pats and the droppings of other herbivores such as horses which contain natural minerals and vitamins in the pre-digested plant materials. Another reason may be that the dog is trying to disguise his own smell, which would be a useful trick for predatory animals.

If the dog eats his own droppings he may be trying to 'recycle' the food he has eaten, but if his diet is made up exclusively of commercial foods, this will be to no avail (see section on natural feeding). Dogs which eat their droppings on a regular basis should be taken to the vet for a check-up. It is normal behaviour for dogs to clean up their puppies' droppings by eating them.

Shake water everywhere when they are being bathed

The dog's coat is designed to provide protection from the cold by trapping air which forms a layer of insulation in order to prevent heat escaping from the body. In the wild, when the counterpart of the domestic dog gets wet he naturally wants to get his coat dry as soon as possible to avoid a chill, especially in cold weather. The first thing he will do, therefore, when emerging from water is to shake himself vigorously from head to tail; then rub himself in grass or undergrowth in order to dry himself further; and finally weather permitting, he will lie in the sun to dry out thoroughly

After a bath, the domestic dog, if left to his own devices, will try to go through exactly the same process regardless of the fact that he is in the house. Some dogs are also liable to struggle and shake themselves thoroughly and repeatedly during the bath, which is likely to fray the

temper of both the dog and the owner. This is probably one of the main reasons why dogs are sent to grooming kennels in order that they may be bathed professionally for those owners who wish to bathe their dogs at home, however, a few tips are worth remembering which may make the exercise less traumatic.

First try and pick a warm day when the dog can be bathed outside and afterwards lie in sun, but make sure he cannot roll in anything which will make him filthy again. Inevitably the dog will need at some time to be bathed indoors and this can be achieved within the minimum amount of mess provided you are well organised. Recruit someone to help if the dog is any larger than one that can be picked up easily and put under your arm. Place newspaper or towels on the floor. Run a bath at body temperature with the level of water only up to the level of the dog's belly with a rubber mat on the bottom of the bath to prevent him sliding around. Place the dog in the water and keep hold of the loose skin at the back of his neck which should prevent him shaking himself; it is important to maintain a grip on his 'scruff' during the entire operation. Rinse, shampoo as necessary and rinse very thoroughly. Lift the dog out of the bath and cover him quickly and completely with a large towel. Dry him thoroughly without removing the towel, or he will probably try to shake himself. Take him to a place where he can dry off completely, preferably out of doors because he will still want to shake himself which, despite your vigorous towelling, will still produce a shower of water. Some dogs will tolerate a hair-drier being used on them, which is useful for final drying.

It should be borne in mind that dogs should not be bathed too often as excessive shampooing will dry out the coat. A common reason for wanting to bathe the animal is if he smells too 'doggy', but this is the wrong approach. The more a dog is bathed, the more he may need bathing. A change in diet and regular grooming can often improve the situation greatly and should be tried first (see section on feeding).

Drag their bottoms along the carpet

This is another habit which causes great embarrassment to many owners. The dog has two glands, or sacs, situated below and at each side of the

anus. These are excretory organs, which collect and dispose of toxins circulating in the body and are analogous to all the sweat glands in the human. When these become overloaded they sometimes become blocked and swell which causes discomfort and pain to the dog. In some cases they can become infected, in which case the dog will show obvious signs of pain and discomfort such as yelping when sitting down, and constant bottom licking and tail-chasing. If there is something wrong with the glands, there is often a characteristic odour about the rear end of the dog. This smell may also be noticed when a dog panics since it excretes the contents of the anal glands as part of the fear response. A function of the anal gland, in addition to its excretory role, is to mark territory this is usually performed by the contents of the gland marking the faeces, but sometimes the dog will rub the anal glands upon a subject in order to mark it directly

There is strong evidence to suggest that anal gland problems may be related to feeding, in that they often disappear if a diet consisting entirely of naturally sourced ingredients is fed (see section on feeding). In many commercially prepared dog foods there are manmade substances, such as anti-oxidants, preservatives and colourings, which the body regards as alien and therefore tries to excrete. Constant feeding of products which the body has difficulty metabolising has a negative effect on the metabolic pathways and also overloads the excretory mechanism including the anal glands.

Pull on the lead

It is natural for a dog either to follow, or at least proceed in the general vicinity of, his owner, as he is regarded as the 'leader of the pack'. It is unnatural, however, for the dog to be made to walk constantly alongside someone whilst on a lead; therefore they must be trained to do it, preferably from an early age. Dogs pull on the lead simply because they would rather be somewhere else.

Early training is essential if the dog is to learn that he must behave himself properly whilst out on the lead, and most have no problem with it provided lead training is done properly. Adult dogs that pull need to be re-trained and if this is beyond the experience of the owner then expert

help should be sought. Choke chains or collars should not be used to try and stop dogs from pulling except under professional guidance, as they can hurt the animal both physically and mentally neither should collars which inflict an electric shock on the animal be used. Many owners have had success in stopping an adult dog from pulling by using a special type of restraint like a halter. This is designed to turn the dog's head if it pulls, rather than exerting pressure on the neck as a conventional lead and collar combination would do. If it is not readily accepted, however, it can cause great leverage on the neck. Some dogs will not readily take to a collar and lead, in which case a harness and lead combination could be tried as it avoids contact with the animal's neck. In case of neck injury or neck problems a harness is always preferable to either a collar or halter. Flexible length leads are useful to give some measure of control at a distance, but they are no more use than a fixed length lead if the dog is a confirmed puller, as he will still try to extend the boundary of his confinement, unless he is trained not to do so.

Eat grass, garden flowers and fruit

As we have seen the dog is an omnivore, which means that his natural diet should include ingredients from a non-meat source. The counterpart of the domestic dog will eat tree bark, roots, nuts, berries, wild flowers, grasses and herbs as a normal part of his diet. A dog fed mainly on processed food will probably crave these ingredients and relish various types of garden produce when the opportunity arises. Often dogs will seek particular ingredients if they have a nutritional deficiency and it is common to see them eating particular species of herbage and grasses. Sometimes this is done to produce vomiting, which most dogs do from time to time, and which is not necessarily a sign of illness (dogs which vomit on a regular basis should be seen by a veterinarian). Not surprisingly there is sometimes an identifiable link between the physical condition and illness of the dog with chemical constituents in certain plants being eaten. For example, the common garden plant, marigold, which is rich in sulphur, and is a traditional conditioning remedy, is often eaten by dogs whose coat and skin are in poor condition.

Vomit in the car

Young dogs are particularly prone to vomiting whilst travelling in a car, and this may carry over into adulthood in certain individuals. Car journeys for young dogs should initially be short and associated with something pleasurable at the other end, such as a walk. The journey time can be progressively lengthened as the dog gets older.

Motion is a contributory factor in car sickness and the vehicle should be driven sympathetically, attempting to avoid swerving and braking harshly. Also, the dog should have something to lie on that will not slide around during the journey, such as a bean bag. The addition of half a teaspoon of powdered ginger root (*Zingiber officinalis*) in the food may be helpful in that it has a carminative affect on the stomach. Avoid giving a large meal within a few hours of a journey. Always have plenty of old newspapers as well as an old towel in the car, just in case. Toys will be a useful distraction, as will a juicy bone.

A travel-sick dog may be helped by being allowed to travel in a different part of the vehicle or by being allowed to see out. Some people have found that an antistatic strip attached to the car bodywork will help. Homoeopathy can usually help in difficult cases.

Break wind

Unfortunately this habit is not usually found to be an endearing one by many and is a potential source of embarrassment for some owners.

Some dogs seem to be more prone to breaking wind than others, which is probably largely due to the type of food they are given, experimentation with various ingredients may be necessary in some cases. It is important to remember that it is not the dog's fault if this happens and a dog should not be chided.

Bark at pedestrians, other cars etc. when travelling in a car

This is a common problem which seems to be worse amongst certain breeds such as terriers. It is also seen in dogs with a particularly possessive or excitable nature. Unfortunately there is no easy cure for this as the dog must be trained out of it over a period of time.

Professional help is usually required, particularly if the habit is of long standing.

Have smelly breath

The dog's breath should generally be sweet, and if it is not something is wrong. The most common cause of bad breath is gum disease associated with plaque formation which is caused by incorrect feeding. Tonsillitis and sore throats may also lead to a bad odour and a liver or other digestive disorder is a common cause.

Dogs' teeth should be kept perfectly clean through the type of food they eat (see section on feeding). Natural tooth cleaners, such as bones, are often denied the dog, which means that after a meal, food particles can linger in the spaces between the teeth. Plaque will start to form on these particles, usually on the gum line, and this mineralises to form tartar which is able to erode gum margins and cause periodontal disease — and bad breath. The build up of tartar is often associated with the use of commercially prepared tinned or 'complete' dry dog foods, which are of a consistency which lodge and stick into the spaces between the teeth. The 'crunchy' varieties, which are claimed to avoid this problem by providing a measure of abrasion to the tooth surface, have been found to make the situation worse in some cases. Because of their consistency, once these break up, they are even more difficult to dislodge.

Digestive disturbances, leading to bad breath, should be avoidable by feeding a natural fresh diet. If a dog is changed on to a natural diet from a processed diet the beneficial changes may require some time to take effect.

Roll in vile-smelling substances such as animal droppings or dead and decomposing bodies

As we have seen, domestic dogs sometimes eat the droppings of herbivorous animals such as cows and horses and this may be partly to disguise their own scent; a useful function in a predatory animal. Rolling in animal droppings or, as is sometimes the case, in partly rotten carcasses that the dog may come across probably serves the same purpose. The favourite time for doing this always seems to be after a

bath, almost like a child who does not like being clean. Some dogs are more avid in their urge to do this and it is one of the unfortunate things that go with dog owning.

3. Choosing a new dog

This chapter deals with choosing a dog and gives the characteristics of some popular breed types, including dogs of no specific breed.

Gundogs

Gundogs are generally intelligent, willing to please and good with other dogs and people, including children. They are usually easy to train and make good house dogs, but some of them are quite large and unsuitable for small accommodation or for homes where exercise is not easily provided.

Large breeds include the Weimeraner, Pointer and Setter, all of which need plenty of space and exercise. Medium-sized breeds include the five types of retriever, including the Labrador which is one of the most popular house dogs. Other medium-sized dogs in this category include the spaniels, of which there are nine types, including the very popular Springers and Cockers.

Gundogs like plenty of exercise and they are best suited to people who have access to the countryside so they can gallop and hunt freely. Most love swimming and are natural retrievers, being easily taught to fetch objects to hand from either land or water. They are very gregarious and love fuss and attention but, because of their love of the countryside in all weathers, they are not suited to owners who are particularly house-proud.

Hound breeds

There are around 30 hound breeds, varying in size from the giant Irish Wolfhound to the diminutive Dachshund. In between are very many popular breeds such as the Beagle, the Basset, the Afghan, the Whippet and the Greyhound, to name but a few. All the hound breeds have a very

well-developed sense of smell and are most persistent when following a scent trail. This has given rise to their reputation of being untrainable. They are quite capable of turning a deaf ear towards their owner occasionally. The majority of the hounds are tolerant and forgiving animals and most are slow to anger, making them good with children. Because of their love of wide open spaces and their strong hunting instinct, the larger hound breeds may not be suitable for people living in urban areas. Like the gundogs, the majority likes to go out in all weathers, often getting extremely dirty during exercise and may well try to bring half the countryside back into their owner's house.

Terrier breeds

There are around 25 different breeds of terrier, varying greatly in size from the stocky Airedale to the much smaller and self-important West Highland White. Amongst the most popular are the Cairn, the Airedale, the Jack Russell, the Norfolk, the Bull Terrier, the Scottish, the Fox Terrier, and the Border.

All the terrier breeds have one thing in common which is their tenacity of spirit, and terriers are apt to become impatient rather quickly if they are being made to do something that they do not want to do. They can also be rather excitable and some individuals can be quarrelsome with other dogs. Terriers make ideal house dogs and, because of their size, small to medium breeds are well suited to car travel. It should be said, however, that the more excitable individuals can be a liability whilst driving as they may fly at the vehicle window at the mere sight of another dog on the pavement. They are also apt to try and take over the driving if they become bored with proceedings. Loyal and fun loving, terriers have much to recommend them but they are not entirely suited to novice owners as they may need firm handling. Most are excellent with children, but depending on their rearing environment, some have a reputation for snappiness. They are among the more jealous and possessive breeds.

Guard breeds

The guard breeds are strong, bold, agile, determined and potentially dangerous if not handled properly as they are bred to be quick to

respond aggressively in certain circumstances. Many such as the Rottweiler are particularly strong willed and, if not properly trained, may assume an inappropriate position in the pecking order, with dire consequences. Many of the guard breeds are used today for the protection of property these include the German Shepherd, the Rottweiler, the Doberman, and the Mastiff. Many of the European 'Shepherd' breeds come into this category, since they are for guarding the herds against predators and thieves, rather than for herding.

Temperamentally sound guard breeds are wonderful companions and will naturally protect their owner and other members of the family. However, it should be said that if the dog is to live as a member of the family, it is especially important to ensure that he is not from a line with a history of unpredictable aggression. Many individuals of the guard breeds need special training by someone with proper understanding and experience and are definitely not for novice owners. Specific breeds should not be taken on for appearance's sake alone. Proper selection is of paramount importance if problems are to be avoided in this respect.

Working dogs: stock breeds

The most popular breeds in this group are those which have been developed for sheep management. Of the several breeds in this category, the Border Collie is probably the most common. Other less prominent types are the Bearded, the Rough and the Smooth Collies.

Collies are particularly intelligent and easy to train and most, being of medium size, make good house dogs. Many rescue dogs are sometimes described as 'collie cross', and these can make wonderful pets. Collies are best suited to a large family, perhaps with other animals, because they love the company of other dogs and/or people. Their gregarious nature means that they are likely to be unhappy if they are left alone for long periods during the day. Collies also require a good deal of free-ranging exercise and will not be satisfied by a quick daily trip around the park.

The herding instinct is very well developed in the working strains of the Border Collie, and they are highly valued for herding sheep. It should be

said, however, that such dogs may not make good pets as they quickly become frustrated if they are not worked.

The herding instinct is also very well developed in some individuals of non-working strains and will quickly come to the fore when allowed to do so. If no sheep are available, anything will do — ducks, cows, horses, people, or anything else on legs. Collies are very quick witted, intelligent, sensitive dogs with an apparently well-developed sense of humour and fun. They love fast boisterous games and will play 'ball' for hours, often even to the detriment of their health. Caution should be exercised in this regard especially during hot weather, when they can become overstressed and also injure limbs or back during violent antics.

Other working dogs

There are a variety of other working dogs, including those already mentioned in the guard breed section. Among the 'non-guard' working dogs are several very agreeable breeds which were developed for rescue work on mountains etc. These include the Pyrenean Mountain Dog, the Bernese Mountain Dog and the St Bernard, all of which are very large animals requiring plenty of food and house (or kennel) room. This category includes the Husky and several other breeds, some of which are fairly uncommon, such as the Finnish Lapphund. While certain individuals of these less popular breeds may make suitable pets, the fact that such breeds are relatively uncommon speaks for itself. Many novice dog owners make the mistake of acquiring an obscure breed of dog only to find that they have made a big mistake because of an unexpected quirk in the nature of the breed or a particular difficulty in specialised management.

Toys

There are some delightful breeds within the toy group. As the name suggests, most of them are small, having been developed as lap dogs. They are perfectly happy at home with the minimum of exercise and make a perfect companion for car travel, provided they are well behaved. The fact that many toys are small and finely boned leads to the misguided impression that they are rather delicate creatures which

should be kept indoors and away from more 'boisterous' breeds. While they are perfectly happy to stay indoors for most of the time, like most dogs they benefit from rough and tumble with other dogs, regular exercise and fresh air.

Unfortunately, many breeds within the toy group are susceptible to inherited ailments. It is, therefore, particularly important not to breed litters which may be predisposed to such problems. It is a sad fact that there are some unscrupulous breeders who are making this problem worse — independent specialist advice should always be taken on this matter. The toy breeds are full of fun and usually good with other dogs and people, but there may be a tendency towards over protectiveness and consequently aggression in some circumstances. This need not be a problem, however, if the dog is well brought up.

Prominent breeds in this category include the Yorkshire Terrier, the Pekinese, the Chihuahua, the Papillon, the Pomeranian, the Maltese, the Pug and the Bichon Frise, to name but a few.

Dogs of no specific breed

Many people favour dogs which bear no resemblance to any particular breed, believing that, coming from a wider genetic pool, they are more representative of the dog's 'true' disposition and conformation. While such dogs may not be as fashionable as their 'pure bred' cousins, being available in a large variety of shapes and colours, they are certainly less likely to suffer physical and psychological problems. The larger the genetic pool the better as far as health and a robust immune system are concerned.

The offspring from two dogs which are of different specific breeds, or breed types, will usually exhibit, to a greater or lesser degree, some of the breed-specific characteristics of both parents. Those with a knowledge of specific breeds will probably be able to determine what the parents of a 'first cross' were. As random breeding continues, however, the genetic pool becomes wider with each successive generation, which eventually dilutes artificially refined physical and psychological characteristics.

It should be said that when choosing a puppy of no specific breed it may not be possible to predict how big the dog is going to get. A fair estimate can be made by taking into consideration the size of both parents, but this is no guarantee of the size of the offspring. If size is an important factor when choosing a new dog, it is probably better to select one at around five to six months old, when a better estimate can be made of eventual size. If choosing from a dog's home it is a good idea to be guided by experienced kennel staff in this regard. A novice owner should always take reliable advice when choosing a new dog.

4. Settling a new dog in at home

Adult dogs

Adult dogs will obviously be more set in their ways than puppies. If the animal is from a dog's home, its new owners are unlikely to have any idea of previous circumstances. It may or may not have had basic training and may even have picked up a few bad habits. None of this should prove to be too much of a problem as most dogs can be trained or 're-trained' at any age.

An animal obtained from a dog's home may be very confused, having just been through a very traumatic and uncertain time in its life. The first priority is to give the dog a sense of security by being affectionate towards it. If it has been mistreated, great care and understanding will be required as the dog may be very wary of human beings. Although it can take a long time in some cases, most dogs will recover fully both mentally and physically. Time and effort spent during this period will be rewarded as the dog will develop a very strong bond with its new owner if treated properly. If the dog has suffered severe physical and/or mental trauma in the hands of a previous owner it may well take a long time to recover, but patience will be rewarded many times over in the long run.

All dogs should have their own sleeping quarters. Where there is more than one dog, they will sometimes share a bed, but this should not be forced upon them. A dog's bed will be regarded as his own exclusive territory and should generally be treated as such by others. The bed must

be warm and snug, lined with soft material and large enough for the dog to turn around at will. It must be absolutely draught free and off the floor by about 15cm (6 in.) to provide insulation from cold floors. Neglect of this may predispose the dog to rheumatism. Bean bags are fine directly on a carpeted floor but will get very damp on stone or a similar surface.

Puppies

It is normal to take puppies from their mothers at around seven or eight weeks. Anything less is undesirable. At this age the puppy should be capable of being totally weaned from its mother's milk and liable to live independently on semi-solid food. In the wild the weaning process happens at around the same time, but it is a gradual process, which is why weaning can be so traumatic in domesticated dogs. Wild puppies will have a mixture of mother's milk and scraps of food, often pre-digested and regurgitated by the mother. They will stay with the mother until they are gradually integrated into the pack and find their place in the hierarchy the mother will be able to teach them the ways of the world during this acclimatisation period. Domestic dogs lose all this.

Because it goes against these natural principles, weaning a litter of domestic dogs at, say, six weeks is stressful both for the mother and for the puppies. Newly weaned puppies will complain bitterly on the first night in their new home, but they will settle down more easily if they are treated properly

A snug warm bed is very important and it is a good idea to include an article of clothing that carries the scent of the new owner. An old shirt (with buttons removed) or pullover is ideal. A hot-water bottle preferably made from tooth-proof material, such as metal, could be filled with warm water and heavily wrapped up in the bedding. This will provide something to snuggle up to and will act as substitute for the warmth provided by the mother and the rest of the litter. The ticking of a clock can also be comforting. A safely sited night light can also help. Many experts say that if a new puppy cries out during the night he should be left alone, but there is no harm in 'camping out' with the poor little soul in some cases, until he settles down and gets used to sleeping alone.

One of the most essential items for a new puppy is newspaper, and plenty of it. They make a mess all the time, spreading their food about and emptying themselves at regular intervals. Getting them used to 'going' on newspaper will be useful later, when house training. It can be placed near the door and, after a while, whenever the puppy goes near the paper it can be let Out — they soon get used to the idea of going out to do their 'business'.

An ideal place to keep a new puppy is in a warm kitchen, or other room with an easily washed floor. It is a good idea to contain the puppy for at least part of the day in a 'play pen'. This should consist of a chew-proof, see-through screen about 60 cm (2 feet) high. Framed wire mesh is ideal for this, but it must be secured to the floor as puppies are great escape artists.

The puppy should be quite happy in its den, which should contain newspaper as floor covering, a tip-proof water container, and something to chew on like a large raw shin bone. Puppies should be encouraged to socialise from an early age with people and other dogs. Most adult dogs like puppies, but some can be aggressive towards them and this should be borne in mind as it could make the puppy nervous of other dogs. Above all it is important that the dog should be able to enjoy itself during this early settling in period and is able to build trust and confidence in members of the family and other animals. The puppy should not be scolded for any misdemeanours at this stage — the training comes later. Early bonding, through love and affection, is very important and will make training much easier. It is surprising how they quickly learn if you are pleased or not and take their cue from this.

5. Basic Training

This section is a very brief guide to techniques for basic training which should be easy for the dog and owner to put into practice as they are based on modifying the dog's natural behaviour patterns. If training goes wrong at any stage it is the fault of the trainer, never the dog. The most important thing to bear in mind is that we are imposing an artificial

behaviour pattern on an animal; dogs are very different creatures to humans and do not comprehend information as we do. The success of the training methods described below relies on mutual respect between dog and owner developed through love, patience and understanding.

Some dogs need special consideration, if they are to be trained to behave in a way that is compatible with our way of life. 'Difficult' dogs are, however, comparatively rare and if the methods below do not produce results easily, it is probably because the owner is not 'tuned in' to the animal. If things go wrong the dog should never be blamed and in these circumstances all training should be suspended until expert advice has been sought.

Training should be fun both for the handler and for the dog. Dogs learn surprisingly quickly if the lessons are kept short and sweet with lots of praise and fuss when things are going well. It is important that lessons end on a good note. If things begin to go badly, abandon the session and try again another day. Most things required of a pet dog can, and should, be learned as an integral part of daily life and do not require a 'training session as such.

The most important thing for the owner to try and develop when training and handling a dog is an understanding of how he thinks. Remember the wolf in dog's clothing? If the dog is treated properly it will develop a deep respect for its owner, being easier to train because it wants to learn and please its 'alpha male'. The most successful trainers know their dogs 'inside out' and succeed far better than those who treat the dog as if it 'thinks' like a human being.

Both novice dog owners and their dogs will learn a lot from joining a local dog training club. These can usually be contacted through veterinary surgeries and animal sanctuaries such as the RSPCA or National Canine Defence League (NCDL).

Praise and punishment

Praise is one of the most effective ways of encouraging a dog to do what the owner wants. When a dog responds in an appropriate way to an instruction, it should be fussed and given lots of praise and

encouragement. As the dog begins to respond more automatically to instructions a simple 'good boy' or 'good girl' will suffice.

If a dog commits a misdemeanour on no account should it ever be struck with the hand or any other object to reprimand it. The kindest and most effective way is to hold it (not pick it up) by the loose skin at the back of the neck, commonly called the 'scruff', and 'growl' whilst making eye-to-eye contact. This will not hurt the dog in any way, but imitates the natural behaviour of wild dogs. It should not be done too harshly, particularly with sensitive dogs, and only used very occasionally. Tone of voice is the most effective way of communicating your approval or displeasure and, if in the main this is not effective, appropriate advice should be taken. Remember that, provided the dog regards the owner as 'alpha male', he will want to learn; if he does not, something is going wrong.

The dog's name

It is a good idea to choose a name that is short, with one or preferably two syllables. The dog's name should be used frequently when socialising with a new puppy that will soon learn by association to identify itself with the word. Later on, use the dog's name as a prefix to an instruction, as it gets the dog's attention and makes it ready to respond.

The dog should be taught that no means 'stop what you are doing'. This can be combined with a 'growl', drawing out the word if required in order to give it more emphasis. The way to instil the meaning of the word is by using it from an early age when the owner can physically prevent the dog from doing something it is not supposed to do.

'Bed'

The word 'bed' is one that should be learned as soon as the dog is beginning its training; a dog should be expected to go and lie down in its 'quarters' when asked to do so. Again the association can be made from an early age, by physically placing the dog in its bed and repeating the word 'bed' clearly and slowly. There is usually no problem with this aspect of training as dogs like their own 'place'. The dog should never associate being made to go to its bed with punishment.

'Sit'

One of the easiest things to teach a dog is to sit on request. This is probably best left until the dog has become used to being on the lead, as some control will be useful. First the dog should be put on a short lead and made to stand by the handler. Then on the word 'sit', the dog's hind quarters should be gently but firmly pushed downwards until the sitting position has been taken up. The dog can then be walked on a few paces and the lesson repeated up to a maximum of three or four times. If the dog resists the downward movement, it should not be forced and the lesson should be abandoned for the time being. When the dog knows what is required of it, the hind quarters will go down without any physical encouragement and the dog will eventually sit by itself both on and off the lead.

'Come' and 'Heel'

Getting a dog to return to the handler when asked to do so by the use of the word 'come' is a simple matter and should be instilled from an early age. Puppies will naturally want to follow their owner and this should be built on, associating the action with the word 'come'. In the early stages, repeated slapping of your thigh as a form of encouragement may also be useful if the dog becomes distracted. Eventually the dog should return to the owner spontaneously when asked to so.

To walk to heel is to walk close by the handler's side. This can take a little practice as the dog may become bored after a relatively short period. It can be taught quite easily, however, using a lead of flexible length which can be adjusted to allow some freedom, or shortened to bring the dog alongside with the command 'Heel'. The dog will soon respond without the use of the check lead.

Some dogs may become overenthusiastic upon their return from afar and may excitedly jump at the owner. Whilst this may be tedious and damaging to clothing, the habit usually dies down as the dog gets older and further into his training. While this habit should be gently discouraged, the dog should not be made to feel rejected, as he may then be less likely to return when asked to do so.

Ball/stick play

Many dogs and their owners engage in ball and stick play from time to time and the activity can be very beneficial in that it provides both exercise and enjoyment. Many other articles, such as old slippers, may also be used for this game. However, there are a few things to remember if accidents and injuries are to be avoided. Care is obviously required when throwing potentially damaging objects towards the dog as injuries could ensue, especially if he is likely to want to play catch. Sticks should not consist of wood that is likely to splinter, as sharp pieces may become lodged in the dog's mouth and throat. Balls should be small enough for the dog to carry, but large enough to prevent them being swallowed. They should be of the solid type which are easier to throw a combination of their composition, size and shape preventing them from being chewed up and swallowed.

Certain breeds of dogs, such as Collies, may be tireless in their enthusiasm for this type of activity and some individuals will go on to the point of exhaustion and collapse. It is important, therefore, that the owner is aware of this danger and knows when to stop the game.

6. Natural Feeding and holistic nutrition

There is an increasing trend to avoid feeding commercial pet foods because of concerns about the ingredients used in their manufacture. Ingredients in common use and considered to be unsuitable are by-products, unsuitable grain carbohydrates, dairy products, added sugars and salt, potentially toxic synthetic additives including artificial vitamins. In addition, commercial pet foods are thought to be generally lacking vital elements from green vegetable sources. Alternative methods of feeding are popularly known as Natural Feeding.

Natural Feeding is intended to mirror the diet of the un-domesticated dog and is highly recommended by holistic veterinary surgeons. Natural feeding not only maintains robust health but it is used for both the

prevention, and as part of the treatment, of many ailments. It can be achieved through the following methods.

A. Use BAHNM certified holistic products

B. Make up food from individual ingredients.

C. Use a mix of the two

There are many health benefits to be had from natural feeding, but if diets are being home prepared it is obviously vital to ensure that the correct nutrients are being provided. A guide to this is to provide a variety of ingredients which mirror the natural diet. That is in basic terms, meat, carbohydrate and vegetables. Some owners, following variations of Natural Feeding methods (BARF) do not use grain cereals and give totally raw food. This is an acceptable way to feed but needs careful consideration, is not easy, and is by no means necessary.

The natural diet of the dog

The natural diet of the dog in the wild is animals, usually herbivores, which they have brought down and killed. These would be consumed in their entirety and nothing, except perhaps the teeth of the animal, would remain. Meat, bones, skin, stomach contents, intestines, hooves and all would be devoured. Dogs are omnivorous; they would also take fruit and dig for roots as well as taking rodents and other small animals.

In practice this diet cannot of course be easily or satisfactorily replicated for our dogs. Domestication forces compromises whether we like it or not. Whilst it is not easy to provide the range of nutrients which would be present in a natural diet it is possible to provide a diet which is along similar lines. This can be as certified holistic product or by making up the diet from individual raw materials at home or a mix of the two.

If the diet is being prepared from scratch, knowledge of basic nutrition is required in order to avoid various pitfalls. A happy compromise for the modern busy dog owner is to feed BAHNM certified commercial products

during the week and prepare food for their dogs from individual raw materials such as vegetables and other meats at the weekend when they have more time.

A. BAHNM Certified products

Some dog foods are approved under the BAHNM certification scheme. The scheme is designed to provide an informed choice for the consumer. Certified holistic foods follow Natural Feeding principles. They contain no ingredients that are incompatible with the physiology of the dog and provide a nutritional profile that reflects the natural requirements of the animal. The BAHNM operates a free helpline for dog owners who wish to keep and feed their animals using holistic principles including Natural Feeding. It also maintains a list of suitably qualified and experienced holistic veterinary surgeons – 01252 843282 – www.bahnm.org.uk.

B. Making up food from individual ingredients

Grain cereals

The wild dog has always ingested grain carbohydrates from the stomach content of its prey and so feeding grain in the diet is generally compatible with its evolved physiology.

Whilst dogs would probably exist happily with no grains (as they would do with no meat if they have to), they are a perfectly acceptable source of energy and can form part of the dog's daily intake.

Modern cereal crops were developed from wild grasses and, whilst the grains from these crops are larger and harder they are basically similar to the uncultivated species. Whilst it is generally accepted that high levels of certain modern varieties of cereal grains, such as wheat and soya are not desirable and can cause digestive problems, clinical experience suggests that it is not the grain carbohydrates itself that is a problem, but the quantity and types that are present.

In modern times, grain cereals such as wheat, have been available in large quantities relatively cheaply and have been a major ingredient in many modern commercial dog foods. They have been associated with a range of symptoms which are similar to IBS in humans, including

irritability, colitis, diarrhoea, constipation and a range of associated problems such as eczema and allergy.

Dogs with gluten allergies and other grain associated digestive problems can recover by adjusting both the amount and types of grain based carbohydrate. It is a question of correct balance of different carbohydrates, protein and vegetable matter that is important. Unless the dog is predisposed to digestive problems, the general feeling is that one third of the total volume of food could be good quality mixed carbohydrates, the other two thirds being a variety of green leaved vegetables and a variety of meats. Variety is the key to avoiding intolerance to one particular substance. It also helps boost the immune system.

Provided the types of carbohydrate are appropriate the levels can be as high as one third of the total volume of the food although for some dogs it should be less. If there is intolerance to certain types of carbohydrate the system can recover, but specialist advice may be needed to boost the immune system. Many dogs have recovered from intolerances and allergies to specific grain cereals such as wheat and have been re-introduced to the substance over time with no problems and provided it is fed in the right proportions the problem does not re-appear.

Meat

Lamb, beef, boneless fish, chicken, plus other types of meat except pork, are all suitable. This can be given raw, but many owners cook it, which is not a problem. A convenient way to add meat is to use a naturally prepared canned product.

Vegetables

Part of the dog's diet should be from a vegetable source; again these are available to the wild dog through the stomach of its prey. Whilst many dog foods contain valuable herbage and vegetables of one sort or another, fresh lightly boiled/liquidised green vegetables, such as cabbage and broccoli, are a valuable addition to the diet and most dogs enjoy them. Starchy root vegetables such as potato and parsnip should be kept

to a minimum. All vegetables should be lightly cooked or liquidised or the dog cannot digest them properly.

Bones

Some professionals do not recommend the use of bones because in some circumstances they can cause problems related to their sharp edges. If the rules are followed the benefits of giving bones far outweigh the risks. All dogs love bones especially large knucklebones, which they will gnaw on for hours.

Bones provide calcium and other nutrients in the correct form provided they are not cooked. They also keep the teeth and gums in top condition. Cooked bones should never be given as they have an increased tendency to splinter. If you have more than one dog, make sure that they do not fight over bones as this can cause them to be eaten too quickly. Puppies should be introduced to large knuckle bones from an early age. Some dogs may have to learn to chew if they have always been given processed foods and no bones.

Cooking

It is generally accepted that food should not be overcooked because this may reduce the nutritional quality (and taste) of food and in some extreme circumstances can make it toxic. But it is incorrect to suggest that any cooking makes all food worthless, it depends on the quality of the raw materials and the methods used.

Whilst raw meat is easily digested by the dog raw carbohydrates and vegetable matter is not. Normally these are broken down through pre-digestion in the stomach of the dog's prey, so these ingredients have to be pre-processed in some way otherwise the dog's digestive system cannot utilise them. Cooking has the same effect as the digestive juices of the dog's prey breaking down the components in the same way.

As well as making carbohydrates digestible for the dog, cooking provides several practical advantages especially for meat as it renders harmless, potentially damaging organisms, such as salmonella. Whilst the digestive

system of most healthy dogs would not be affected unduly by a low level of contamination, this certainly could not be said of all dogs.

Whilst for the most part cooked meat is perfectly acceptable, some raw meat from a reputable source should also be given as it helps keep the digestive flora healthy. Chicken wings are ideal for this or any other meat, except pork, or boneless fish may be given.

C. Feeding a mix of complete commercial dog food and home prepared food – a convenient alternative.

Sourcing and preparing the proper range of individual items for the dog's diet at home can be very time-consuming. A more convenient alternative is to use a good quality complete food as a base diet, say 75–80%, with the addition of other fresh and raw ingredients.

A happy compromise for the modern busy dog owner is to feed BAHNM certified commercial products during the week and prepare food for their dogs from individual ingredients such as vegetables and other meats at the weekend when they have more time.

NB Many commercial foods use terms such as 'natural' and 'holistic' in a way which is misleading. The ingredients in most are not what the consumer would choose to buy if they were making up food from individual raw materials. BAHNM certified complete foods are manufactured according to Natural Feeding principles given here and they may be used with full confidence, either as a complete food or mixed with home prepared ingredients as described above.

The BARF diet and Holistic feeding

BARF is an acronym for Biologically Appropriate Raw Food. It was coined by an Australian veterinary surgeon by the name of Ian Billingshurst who suggested that many modern dog foods were causing problems basically because –

1. They contain high levels of unsuitable carbohydrates, depleted by-products and artificial additives.
2. Cooking reduces the nutritional value of the food

Billingshurst therefore proposes a diet of raw meat and vegetables together with raw bones. The basic tenets of the BARF diet appear to be consistent with holistic science in that it follows the evolved requirements of the species; by-products and artificial additives are certainly not consistent, however Billingshurst is against the inclusion of any grain carbohydrate in the diet on the grounds that it is not digestible and the dog has not evolved to cope with it. Grain cereals can certainly cause problems and attention has been drawn to these recently, but it is usually not the presence of carbohydrate in the diet which causes the problem, but the type and the amount. Cooking need not cause problems if it is done properly. See Grains and Cooking above.

Main points for Natural Feeding

- Carbohydrates from cereals can be a part of the dog's diet. The point is to give a range of different types and not too much.
- For a dog in good digestive order about one third carbohydrate, one third meat, and one third vegetables is about right. This may have to be adjusted according to other factors, such as age, life style, or other factors.
- Feeding dogs is a simple matter provided the food given reflects the dog's natural requirements. If good quality raw materials are used, complicated regimes and specialist commercial diets are not usually necessary.
- Dogs will live happily on a raw food diet without grain carbohydrates, but may have to be changed over from cooked diets very slowly. Some ingredients such as vegetables will have to be

pre-processed either by cooking or liquidising or the dog cannot digest them properly.

- If the food is being prepared from scratch it is important to ensure that all nutrients are provided in a proper form. Knowledge of canine nutrition is required to provide a balanced diet.
- The BARF diet is not inconsistent with holistic feeding in that all ingredients are compatible with the evolved physiology of the species. It is possible to combine aspects of both, as a highly preferable alternative to modern commercial dog foods.
- It should be remembered that all dogs are individuals and they like variety. Boredom with the same diet on a daily basis is one reason for 'fussiness'.
- If bones are being fed it is vital that should be given raw.
- If supplements are being given they should either be prepared from scratch or bought from a trusted manufacturer. Many are sold as natural but are not suitable to be used as a part of an holistic diet.
- A more convenient alternative to home preparation of all individual ingredients is to use a certified holistic food as a base diet, say 75–80%, with the addition of other fresh and raw ingredients.

General

Dogs should be fed either once or twice a day, and the amount given should vary. The dog should eat every scrap of food put in front of it in one sitting. If it does not the food should be taken away. Dogs should need no encouragement to eat good food. With the exception of elderly dogs and puppies, healthy animals should have food withheld completely for 24 hours every seven days or so. This may seem unkind but it suits the dog's physiology, which has evolved to cope with feast and famine. The dog's wild counterparts will gorge themselves and then go without

food for some time. Fresh clean water should always be available (changed daily) and if this is hard or excessively chlorinated it should be boiled first and allowed to reach room temperature before putting it down for the dog. Food and water bowls should be made from glazed earthenware, pottery, china, stainless steel or enamel. They should not be made of plastic or aluminium, as materials from these types of containers may leech into food and water and they have not been proven safe to ingest.

The amount of food a dog needs will vary depending on many factors and it is probably best to feed by 'eye'; if the dog is getting ribby' give more, if he is getting fat, give less. Add or subtract one third of food volume as appropriate until the desired effect has been achieved. Changes in weight should not happen quickly, and are best brought about over a period of around two to three months. Many dogs are overweight, either because their owners are unaware of the fact, or because they do nothing about it, which is being unkind to the dog. The most natural and therefore the healthiest condition for a dog to be in is lean and fit. One of the most common causes of early demise in dogs is overweight.

Supplements

Owners often wish to supplement the dog's diet and this can be done very effectively using herbal products. Supplementation with anything other than natural products is not recommended.

Dogs at different stages in life, such as pregnancy and old age, may need special consideration, particularly if they have not always been given a natural diet. Expert help should be obtained in these circumstances from an holistic veterinary surgeon or nutritionist.

Under normal circumstances, commercially produced, synthetically derived supplements are neither desirable nor necessary. Supplementation with synthetic vitamins is especially to be avoided unless under veterinary supervision; there are more effective and safer alternatives available.

Beware of all supplements (whether or not claiming to be 'natural') which promise perfect nutritional balance for your dog. It is not possible to

design a general supplement to feed to all dogs to balance their diet, since dogs are fed differently.

Treats

Unfortunately many bought treats contain undesirable unnatural ingredients which are often difficult to identify as an alternative, fresh bones make an ideal treat, as do dried strips of tripe, together with some of the ingredients mentioned above, such as fruit or scraps of meat. Chocolate, alcohol and spicy foods should not be given; neither should too much rich food such as pastries and puddings containing high levels of sugars. Avoid salty foods.

Bones

A good bone will keep a dog amused for hours. The bigger the better, provided it can still be carried by the dog. The best are raw knuckle bones, which the dog will gnaw, being of a size, consistency and shape to prevent splintering and potential damage. Cooked bone should never be given.

Caution is needed when giving a dog bones which are liable to splinter into sharp pieces, as they can damage gums, become stuck in the throat or damage the digestive system. Certain types of bones, such as chicken, will splinter more easily than others. The risk is highest when the dog is not used to eating bones. If this is the case they can be supervised until they are. Bones are a source of natural nutrients supporting healthy skeletal development and maintenance as well as keeping the dog's teeth clean. The slight risks involved when feeding bones are far outweighed by the benefits they provide.

7. Natural medicines for dogs

Along with natural feeding, there is an increasing interest in natural medicines amongst dog owners. Orthodox treatment generally sets out to modify specific processes within the body in order to suppress a particular symptom. Natural medicine, applied in a proper holistic

manner, views the patient as a whole in terms of combined physical and mental symptoms. It takes into account the patient's environment, life style, management, nutrition and so on. Many people find alternative therapies difficult to understand because they are used to the modern 'one pill' approach to disease. Holistic practitioners use a variety of different therapies, including homoeopathy holistic nutrition, herbal medicine and acupuncture. Any one, or more likely a combination, of these may be used as an effective alternative to conventional treatment. One of the most important things to remember about the use of these therapies is that they must be applied by a suitably qualified and experienced practitioner, and, in the case of disease, only by a veterinary surgeon. The credentials of people offering alternative therapies should always be checked (the BAHNM maintains a list of suitably qualified and experienced therapists). Consulting non-veterinarians for ill animals is not only dangerous but illegal.

Acupuncture

Acupuncture stems from one of the oldest systems of Eastern medicine known. It has been part of Traditional Chinese Medicine for many thousands of years. The essence of Chinese medicine is that all things should live in complete harmony with nature. It places great emphasis on the movement of energy within the body which may be influenced through acupuncture.

Acupuncture is not regarded as a system of medicine in its own right, but as a therapy which, when integrated with others, may be used to rebalance the energy within the body. Disease is seen as a manifestation of an imbalance of energy. If this occurs, the acupuncturist can stimulate various areas of the body using fine needles, with the intention of rebalancing the energy flow. Acupuncture points are at various parts of the body which correspond with the flow of energy through channels known as meridians, not necessarily located at the perceived site of the symptom.

Acupuncture can be put to dramatic use in the control of pain and many operations in human medicine have been performed by using acupuncture alone as a means of local anaesthetic. Acupuncture needles

are unlike other needles used in medicine in that they are solid, rather than hollow, and rather finer. Most dogs show no sign of discomfort during acupuncture; in fact some appear to become relaxed and drowsy during the procedure, a sign of a most promising treatment session.

Aromatherapy

The term aromatherapy can be misleading as it implies an exclusive involvement with the sense of smell. In fact it is the therapeutic use of plant essences or volatile oils, either massaged into the skin or administered through the respiratory system. They may also be given orally in some circumstances. Its origins go back 5,000 years to the early Egyptians who administered some of their plant remedies in this way. The term 'aromatherapy' was coined by a French chemist who became interested in the subject when he noticed the effect of certain oils on the skin. He began experimenting and proposed the use of essential plant oils in the treatment of many conditions. The advent of antibiotics dampened enthusiasm for aromatherapy but we now know that it can be a viable and safer alternative in many cases.

In use the oils are very versatile. They are readily absorbed by the skin and dispersed through the tissues to other parts of the body in this way they may be used to heal many internal problems, both by stimulating the body's own defences and to treat the infection itself. While related to herbalism, the medicines used in aromatherapy are different from herbal medicines in which whole plants or extracts of whole plants tend to be used. Essential oils may also be used to discourage external parasites, in particular fleas. A good anti-flea lotion may be made by mixing equal parts of essential oil of terebinth and olive oil and applying one or two drops of the mixture to the dog's fur around the ears or down the centre of the back daily during the summer months. Be aware that some dogs are sensitive to essential oils and discontinue use immediately if there is any sign of reaction to the mixture (see also External parasites 54). Other oils may be useful in this regime, but a suitably qualified veterinarian should be consulted.

Bach flower remedies

These are known by this name after the physician, Dr Edward Bach, who is responsible for the development of the therapy. Bach trained and qualified in orthodox medicine at the University of London. Bach, however, found it restrictive to concentrate on the physical symptoms of disease and, since he found that happy patients made a quicker recovery he deduced that the body is a mirror of mental condition. The patient therefore could return to health by overcoming the negative psychological emotional or mental processes which are central to the imbalance. He conducted research at the Royal London Homoeopathic Hospital and developed several medicines from plants which were successfully used for chronic diseases.

During his research he made a significant discovery. He found that there was a connection between the type of medicine required and the emotional state of the patient, and by experimenting on himself he identified the potential for the remedial action of thirty-eight different plant species. The Bach system of medicine is now being successfully used for the treatment of ailments in dogs.

There are many individual remedies available, which may be found in health food shops and chemist's stores. One of the most commonly used is called 'Rescue Remedy', which is intended for use after a shock to the system, such as after an injury. One or two drops of this remedy should be put into the dog's water daily for the duration of the problem.

Herbal medicine

Herbal medicine is another therapy that has its roots in antiquity. One of the earliest herbal pharmacopoeias (reference books) is the Ebers Papyrus, which is reputed to have been written about 1500 BC. It lists 800 remedies, many of which are plants. One of the most famous physicians to make use of herbal medicine was Hippocrates, who lived around the fifth century and is known to the modern world as the 'father of medicine'.

The use of herbs in medicine has been well documented down through the ages and the therapy has been developed to a high level of sophistication and effectiveness in some cultures. Herbal medicine was

studied by those entering the medical profession in England until the middle of the twentieth century. A great many modern pharmaceutical medicines are based on herbs and we are still finding medicinal applications for a growing number of plants; notably those in some remote areas of the world where herbal medicine is still a central part of the culture of the local people.

Although the use of herbal medicine declined in the face of the expansion of the modern pharmaceutical industry in the middle of the twentieth century today there is a renewed interest. This is mainly because of the inevitable side effects resulting from technological medicines, but also because we are re-discovering the benefits of natural medicines which were all too hastily put aside in the face of modern science.

Herbs may also be used as a regular and valuable addition to the dog's diet and there is a growing use of herbal medicine to prevent and treat canine ailments.

Terms in herbal medicine

There are sixty or more terms used in traditional herbal medicine to describe the effect of the herb on the body. Some of these are listed below

Anodyne: Relieves Pain

Aromatic: A stimulant, spicy.

Astringent: Causes contraction and arrests discharges.

Antiemetic: Stops vomiting

Antileptic: Relieves fits.

Antihilic: Prevents the formation of stones in the urinary organs.

Antirheumatic: Relieves or cures rheumatism.

Antiseptic: A medicine for stopping putrefaction.

Antispasmodic: Relieves or prevents spasms.

Carminative: Expels wind from the bowels.

Cholagogue: Increases the flow of bile.

Demulcent: Soothing, relieves inflammations.

Depurative: Purifies the blood.

Discutient: Dissolves and heals tumors.

Diuretic: Increases the secretion and flow of urine.

Emetic: Produces vomiting.

Hepatic: A remedy for diseases of the liver.

Laxative: Promotes bowel action.

Lithontryptic: Dissolves calculi in the urinary organs.

Nervine: Acts specifically on the nervous system, stops nervous excitement.

Sedative: A nerve tonic, promotes sleep.
Stomachic: Strengthens the stomach . Relieves indigestion.
Styptic: Arrests bleeding.
Sudorific: Produces profuse perspiration.
Tonic: A remedy that is invigorating and strengthening.
Vermifuge: Expels worms from the system.

Remedies – a few examples of herbs in common use for ailments.

Abscesses – Burdock, red clover, garlic, dandelion
Anaemia – Alfalfa, dandelion, kelp
Appetite stimulant – Liquorice root, ginger root, peppermint.
Colitis – Papaya, chamomile, aloe vera.
Dermatitis – Comfrey, dandelion, red clover
Diarrhoea – Kelp, slippery elm, charcoal, cat nip.
Diuretic – Peach, dandelion, parsley.
Immune booster – Echinacea, goldenseal, red clover.
Motion sickness – Charcoal, ginger.
Milk production increase – Blessed thistle, fennel, raspberries.
Nervousness – Catnip, skullcap.
Pain – Willow, devil's claw.
Parasites – Black walnut, garlic, pumpkin seeds.
Ringworm – Tea tree oil.
Seizures – Skullcap, passion flower.
Wounds – Calendula

Homoeopathy

The discoverer of homoeopathy was a remarkable man by the name of Hahnemann (1755—1843). Like many great scientists he developed ideas which were way ahead of their time. He was born in Saxonia and studied medicine at Leipzig and Vienna. Whilst living and working in Leipzig he was struck by the fact that the symptoms produced by quinine on a healthy body (his own) were similar to the symptoms it was used to alleviate (malarial disease). From this he formulated the principle 'similia similibus curentur', or 'let like be cured by like'. He published this in a scientific paper in 1796.

Hahnemann took his research further, and established the astonishing theory of potentisation. This is based on the discovery that the medicinal power of a remedy is proportional to its dilution. To prepare a remedy according to this theory one part of a substance is taken and to it are added nine parts (decimal), or ninety-nine parts (centesimal), of a neutral

substance such as pure alcohol, water, or milk/sugar. This is then shaken in a calculated and precise method referred to as succussion. The resulting mixture is called the first potency when one part of this potency is diluted in nine (or ninety-nine) further parts of diluent and mixed again by succussion; the result is called the second potency and so on. Often homoeopathic remedies only contain the original material at a sub-molecular level, and it is at this point that conventionally educated people doubt the credibility of the theory. What in fact Hahnemann had discovered was that the 'pattern' left by the original substance has the potential to effect the physiology of the body notwithstanding the fact that the 'pattern' could not (and still cannot) be demonstrated by conventional methods.

The therapy is increasing in popularity amongst dog owners for treatment of simple ailments. Commonly used remedies are Aconitum napellus for sudden fevers or shock, Arnica montana for injury and trauma, Hepar sulphuris for the control of wound infection, Nux vomica for digestive problems, and many others. All are entirely safe and will not interfere with other medicines (although they may themselves be affected by some medicines and foods). Many of the commonly used simple remedies are available, together with instructions for use, from chemist's stores but the selection of the correct remedy in more chronic disease relies upon intimate knowledge and understanding of the whole patient.

Homoeopathy is now firmly established as a highly sophisticated and effective system of medicine which carries none of the risks of side effects that are associated with synthetic pharmaceutical medicines. Professional post-graduate training is available for veterinary surgeons.

Common homoeopathic remedies used for dogs

Aconitum - This remedy treats shock, both mental and physical and will also assist in the treatment of acute febrile conditions, such as virus or bacterial diseases.

Apis - Urticarial swellings, oedema and fluid in joints will often respond to the remedy apart from its benefits for insect bites and stings.

Arnica - Arnica is homeopathy's great injury remedy. Its use will minimise

bruising and speed healing.

Belladonna - High fevers with head ear, throat or eye pain are especially helped by this remedy. Very painful abscesses may also respond.

Bryonia - Arthritis, rheumatism, pneumonia or mastitis, when the animal refuses to move, are the main areas of use of Bryonia.

Calendula - Used as a lotion, this remedy speeds healing of cuts, grazes or open wounds, in addition to helping the animal to fight septic infection of such injuries.

Cantharis - This medicine helps most cases of cystitis.

Carbo veg. - This is called the 'corpse reviver', on account of its ability to help patients in collapse.

Caulophyllum - The birth process, at all stages, is helped by Culophyllum.

Chamomilla - Teething in young dogs and trouble from teething in any species will benefit from use of this remedy.

Colocynthis - Colic in horses would be the most common first-aid use of Colocynthis.

Euphrasia - Named 'eyebright', this remedy helps many eye conditions, including conjunctivitis from old winds. It also helps in cases of sneezing and nasal allergy.

Hamamelis - Bleeding from wounds and orifices would indicate Hamamelis, in many cases.

Hepar sulph. - This is nick-named the 'homeopathic antibiotic', so effective it is in helping patients to fight septic, purulent infections.

Hypericum - Use this remedy whenever there is a painful graze or damage to tissues rich in nerve endings (e.g. toes and tail).

Ledum - Use this whenever puncture wounds occur, from whatever injury. There are reputed anti-tetanus properties in addition to its ability to help such wounds heal correctly, from the depths outwards.

Nosodes - These are remedies made from diseases or disease material (e.g. discharges, tissues, secretions, excretions). They are widely used to help treat infectious diseases, yet do have other therapeutic properties in their own right. They can be used in prevention of infectious diseases (nosodes for protection). There are nosodes for most infectious diseases of animals. There are the so-called 'bowel nosodes', which are classified with nosodes but arguably are not actual nosodes, according to the strict definition. These are

related to groups of homeopathic remedies and may be used in their own right or as a useful adjunct to one of the related remedies. Their use is not confined to bowel disorders, despite the name. The use of nosodes is a specialist area, so it is recommended that they should only be used on the advice of a properly qualified veterinary surgeon.

Nux vomica - If an animal has stolen too much rich food, or had access to poisons, Nux vomica should help recovery from the resultant intoxication.

Rus tox. - This suits most cases of rheumatism and arthritis that are worse for first movement but limber up.

Ruta - Ligaments, tendons and other fibrous tissues are the main areas of benefit of this remedy.

Silica - Helps the body to drive out foreign bodies, e.g. grass seeds. The power of this remedy, way beyond this simple capability, is evidence of the power of crystals.

Symphytum - Symphytum treats bone injuries of any type, speeding healing.

Urtica - This remedy treats nettle rash (urticaria) and helps the flow of milk from the mammary gland.

Vaccination - Homoeopathic preparations may be used successfully as part of a programme to provide protection against viruses, but they should not be viewed as a straight replacement for conventional vaccination as other measures must also be taken.

Osteopathy

Dr Andrew Still was the founder of osteopathy and like many doctors who search for alternative methods of medicine; he was prompted to do so because he was dissatisfied with many aspects of the medicine of his day. He researched the new method of healing, which he called osteopathy in 1876. In many ways it was an extension and development of his previous experience in bone setting, with which most doctors of the day were familiar. Still founded the first school of osteopathy in Missouri in 1897 and by the early years of the twentieth century osteopathy as a healing art was recognised all over the United States. Shortly afterwards it was introduced to the United Kingdom by one of Still's assistants called Martin Littlejohn.

The principle of osteopathy is that both the structure and the function of the body are interdependent. The osteopath seeks to return abnormal structure to normal, so that healthy body functions can prevail. Whilst a great deal of attention is paid to the spine, the osteopath is concerned with the movement of the whole structure of the body

Chiropractic

There are many parallels which may be drawn between chiropractic and osteopathy. Both originated in the United States, both are concerned with the manipulation of the musculo-skeletal system, and both have evolved along similar lines. Originally the two disciplines differed on some basic points. Whereas the osteopaths emphasised the importance of the circulation of the blood, the chiropractors thought that the correct functioning of the nerves was more important: these views have been modified to a large extent by the increased knowledge made available through modern science. Also manipulation techniques used by the two therapies were, and continue to be, different. Rhythmic movements of massage and low-velocity, high amplitude manipulations (i.e. leverage) are used by osteopaths, whereas chiropractors tend to use gentle high-velocity low-amplitude manipulative impulses. Chiropractic is commonly used for dogs and there is a recognised training in animal chiropractic. Different schools of thought and practice exist but the organisation named is the only one currently approved by the BAHNM.

Ultrasound

Ultrasound therapy involves the treatment of the body with high-frequency sound pressure waves which are inaudible to the human ear. These are created by subjecting a quartz crystal to an electrical field which causes the crystal to pulsate and produce the necessary vibrations, or ultrasonic waves. The frequency of the vibrations can be altered by changing the frequency of the electrical field, and the therapist delivers the treatment to the site of the injury via a metal plate which is applied to the desired area. Ultrasound waves are reflected by air and so it is important to maintain close contact between the metal plate and the skin surface of the area of treatment. The treatment works by producing

vibrations and heat in the tissues which stimulate healing. It is useful for tendon injuries, back trouble, and other injuries of the musculo-skeletal system. The misapplication of ultrasound equipment can have serious consequences and therefore it should only be used by suitably qualified and experienced practitioners. In particular its use near bones can cause severe and sometimes irreversible damage.

8. Common ailments and their prevention and treatment with natural medicines

This chapter deals with some common ailments and how to prevent and treat them using natural methods and medicines. It also covers, under 'Vaccination', alternative methods of protection against infectious diseases without the use of synthetic pharmaceutical products. All but the most minor problems must be referred to a veterinary surgeon without delay. If proper holistic veterinary care is not available, it is vital that other veterinary attention is sought, to ensure that suffering may be alleviated as soon as possible. It is illegal and dangerous for non-vets to prescribe for animals.

Abscess

An abscess is the result of a local closed wound infection which is the result of a healthy immune response. If it does not rapidly recover and heal because the normal healing process is being hindered, possibly due to a combination of factors such as poor circulation, faulty nutrition or poor general health, then help should be given to the body to speed the process.

An abscess should be poulticed daily if possible in order that the wound may be encouraged to burst. A warm poultice is preferable, made from a mixture of equal parts of garlic powder, seaweed meal and comfrey leaf. This should be made into a paste and applied directly on to the wound on a piece of lint, then bandaged. Healing has to take place from the inside out and the wound should not be allowed to close whilst infection is

present. Homoeopathic silica may be useful to encourage an abscess to come to fruition and heal from within.

Anal gland impaction

The anal glands are two small sacs on each side of the anus. They occasionally become blocked and painful; usually due to a build up of toxins see Natural Feeding. The condition may clear of its own accord or may persist for some time, which would indicate a visit to the veterinary surgeon. The problem can be treated by using witch hazel on the inflamed area, but care must be taken not to irritate the sensitive tissues further. The witch hazel should be warmed first and applied with cotton wool, using a gentle dabbing motion. If there is a stubborn impaction of the glands homoeopathic silica will help. Occasionally the glands can form a painful abscess, in which case see 'Abscess' and treat with homoeopathic Hepar sulphuris.

Diet is an important factor in the prevention and management of the problem. Natural Feeding will stimulate the anal glands to work properly and prevent the harmful accumulation of toxins. Plenty of exercise is essential.

Arthritis

There are many causes of arthritis, which is inflammation of the joints, accompanied by pain and swelling. The physical characteristics of the bone and cartilage of the joint eventually begin to deteriorate, making movement restricted and difficult and often painful. Arthritis can be a result of incorrect feeding, accidents, or poor conformation.

Treatment consists of sympathetic management which takes into account the physical problems being suffered by the dog, together with management of pain. Holistic nutrition and the healing stimulus afforded by acupuncture, homoeopathy and herbs, or a combination of these, administered by a veterinary surgeon, can provide effective treatment.

Bites and cuts

Animal bites and cuts should be cleaned with saline solution (see Wounds) or liquid garlic, and then painted with an antiseptic such as Calendula lotion or, alternatively Tea Tree oil which also promotes tissue repair. Animal bites are prone to infection introduced via bacteria on the teeth. The shape of a bite wound provides an ideal place for these to multiply. Honey is a readily available and effective dressing, but should not be used during the summer months when insects can be attracted. Large open wounds should be stitched by a veterinary surgeon if their position or size means that healing would otherwise be impeded, but, in general, bites are best left open so that they heal from within rather than closing infection into the wound. Homoeopathic Hepar sulphuris is a very effective internal preventative of wound infection.

Bleeding

As a first aid measure to stop bleeding, a thick gauze dressing should be applied and bandaged on. If blood comes through, the dressing should be left in place undisturbed, and another applied on top. This will stem all but the most serious bleeding. A tourniquet should only be applied by someone medically trained because, if misused, it could cause very serious problems. Homoeopathic Arnica or Aconite may help to lesson serious haemorrhage.

Canker

Canker is a foul-smelling infection of the ear, which can usually be cleared by regular and thorough cleaning, followed by the application of a natural canker remedy which can be obtained from a veterinary surgeon. Ear hygiene is important in preventing the condition. Powders and ointments may be used for wet and dry cankers respectively. Cotton wool soaked in witch hazel can be used to clean both the outer and inner surfaces of the ear. The damp cotton wool can be formed into a spiral in order to reach the awkward places near the ear canal. It is important not to leave any cotton wool behind and not to 'dig' too deeply or too robustly the ear is a sensitive structure and easily damaged.

Aromatherapy oils, properly diluted, can be of great value in disinfecting ears and healing ear problems.

Dermatitis

Dermatitis literally means 'inflammation of the skin' (see Skin problems, Mange).

Digestive Problems

Digestive problems manifest themselves in a variety of ways. A range of symptoms may be observed which are often grouped under the term IBS (Irritable Bowel Syndrome). These include colitis, diarrhoea, nausea, vomiting and constipation. They are often associated with allergy and intolerance together with chronic problems such as arthritis and rheumatism (see section on natural holistic feeding).

External parasites

External parasites, such as fleas, ticks and lice can be very debilitating. If infestation is present, the dog should be thoroughly groomed using a fine-toothed comb.

Special mention should be made of ticks, which can be found engorged with blood, sometimes as large as a medium-sized pea. They attach themselves very firmly into the skin and, if not removed carefully can cause infection by leaving their mouthparts still embedded. Individual ticks should be daubed with methylated spirit which causes them to let go; smaller ones may have to be killed en masse. Veterinary attention should be sought after thorough grooming the dog should be bathed in antiparasitic shampoo, dried, groomed again, and then well dusted in herbal antiparasitic powder. The use of dog collars, dusting powders, tablets, lotions or food containing potentially dangerous synthetic antiparasitic chemicals is not recommended.

It is important that the dog's kennel is regularly cleaned, vacuumed and disinfected, together with any other object that the dog comes into regular contact with, such as its bed. Regular high temperature washing or total replacement of bedding is recommended. An holistic diet is also important as parasites are less likely to infest healthy animals. A

teaspoon of garlic powder in the dog's food and brewer's yeast, both given on a regular basis, will also help.

Fits

Fits are probably more distressing for the owner than for the animal. The dog will suddenly begin to lose control of itself chomp its teeth and salivate. It may then collapse and lie on its side, or it may go rigid. A fit will usually last a few minutes and then the dog will probably return to normal, although another fit may follow shortly afterwards. The most important first aid measure is to prevent the animal from hurting itself during the convulsions by gently restraining it. Be aware of the dog's mouth, since it has no control over its convulsive activity during a fit and it may inadvertently bite.

There are several causes of fits, including epilepsy and poisoning, so the dog should be seen by a veterinary surgeon to try and establish the exact cause of the problem. The majority of fits are successfully treated by homoeopathy especially if fits result from emotion or from an outside cause such as toxins, drugs, or even vaccines in some cases. Some dogs may be predisposed to fits through such things as genetic make-up, and nutrition may also be a factor. Herbal remedies including Skullcap can be used to treat the problem.

Heatstroke

This is often seen in hot weather when a dog has been left in a car which is in direct sunshine. Even with ventilation, the inside of vehicles can reach uncomfortably high temperatures in this situation, even in diffuse sunlight. A heatstroke victim will be extremely distressed, panting frantically, and may even be in a state of collapse. The dog's temperature may be dangerously elevated, and the dog must be placed in a situation where its body temperature can return to normal 38.3° C (101 °F). It is important not to reduce the temperature too quickly as this may cause the body to go into shock. Give tepid water. If the dog does not recover quickly, it should be taken immediately to a veterinary surgeon for examination. Shock is a common after-effect of heatstroke.

Homoeopathy provides useful remedies for this emergency situation, for example Aconite or Glonoinum.

Internal parasites

The most common internal parasites are roundworms or tapeworms. The former are usually found in puppies and the latter in mature animals. Puppies usually need to be wormed in order to eliminate roundworms which are generally passed on by the mother. The modern approach to the destruction of worms is to use chemical biocides, but these can upset sensitive animals. Regular routine 'worming' is not recommended, as it is better to have stool samples analysed on a regular basis and to treat the animal accordingly. A laboratory analysis will not be costly and this should be done about every six months. If the result is positive for intestinal parasites, the dog should be wormed. If it is negative there is really no need to worm the dog.

A more holistic approach to the control of worms is, first, to ensure that through good nutrition the intestinal tract is in the best condition to repel them and, second, to use herbal preparations in order to render the intestinal system unattractive to the worms. The addition of garlic and other vermifuges to the diet will positively discourage worms from establishing themselves. If they do, stronger herbs, such as the male fern root (*Felix mas*) may be used to expel them. Many of the stronger herbal anthelmintics (wormers) are restricted for use by prescription, available through a veterinary surgeon.

Mange

There are two types of mange: sarcoptic and follicular. Sarcoptic mange is more common and is often confused with eczema and louse infestation. Both types of mange are caused by parasites, invisible to the human eye, which burrow under the skin.

Follicular mange can appear all over the body, although often only small areas are affected. The hair falls out to reveal a grey coloured skin, which smells unpleasant. Sarcoptic mange tends to affect larger areas, particularly on the back and around the base of the neck, producing a pronounced obsessive itch with obvious inflammation.

The skin of the healthy dog is less likely to be attacked by mange mites than that of an unhealthy animal, so diet and general condition are important factors in the prevention and management of the problem. All collars, leads, beds, kennels, and other things with which the dog comes into regular contact must be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected. Foxes can carry mange, so dogs that are exercised in fields may be infected in this way.

Nervous conditions

Anxiety, irrational fright, insomnia and undue excitability may all be associated with psychological problems. This may be due to a number of different causes, including hereditary factors, environmental conditions, nutrition and previous mental trauma. Dogs suffering from congenital psychological problems are usually the most difficult to cure because their undesirable behavioural pattern has been pre-disposed from birth. However, provided professional help is taken, with love and understanding most dogs which come into this category can be managed perfectly well. They often develop quirky characteristics which make them particularly endearing.

Environmental conditions and faulty nutrition are probably the most common causes of psychological problems, and these commonly occur together. The worst scenario is the overfed, under exercised dog being given a poor quality, processed diet containing high levels of artificial ingredients, particularly colourants. Problems associated with this type of life-style include frustration, insomnia, hyperactivity and fretting. Most psychological problems may be greatly improved, if not completely cured, by paying careful attention to the dog's diet and giving plenty of exercise. Valerian and Skullcap are two popular herbal remedies for nervous conditions. Hops are also used as a mild relaxant. Dogs which have endured previous mental trauma need, above all, to be given the opportunity to readjust through gentle care and understanding. It often takes a great deal of time and patience to gain the confidence of a dog which has been mistreated, but once this has been achieved the bond which develops is unusually strong.

Rheumatism

Rheumatism is a general term for a painful condition which affects not only joints, but also muscles and tendons. Stiffness is the main problem, often accompanied by frequent stretching and restlessness. It is associated with predisposing circumstances such as injury and nutritional imbalances. Certain conditions, such as damp and cold, will often bring on or aggravate the problem. Treatment may consist of reducing the potential for the condition through sympathetic management practices and proper nutrition, together with natural therapy which will help resolve the problem. Herbal medicines, acupuncture and homoeopathy are natural therapies that are commonly used in the treatment of rheumatism. Common herbal remedies which may help rheumatism are devil's claw and meadowsweet, as well as dandelion and celery seeds.

Skin problems

Skin problems such as wet or dry sores, scaly patches, dandruff etc. are commonly the result of poor nutrition and/or associated with immune disturbances. The first signs are abnormal scratching, together with nibbling of the skin with the front teeth. Sores are often a result of the body's attempts to rid itself of accumulated toxins and of self-inflicted trauma.

Simple herbal remedies, such as nettle, can be effective in removing toxins, which improves many cases. However, some need specific herbal prescriptions. Homoeopathy is also a valuable method of care, the most commonly used first aid remedy being sulphur. Again specific remedies may be needed according to the particular case. The dog should be put on an holistic diet which will speed recovery and help prevent recurrence of the problem.

Stings

Dogs are often stung by insects, such as bees and wasps, which is not serious unless the dog is allergic to their venom, or is unlucky enough to be attacked by a swarm, when it will need emergency veterinary treatment. Nettle stings can also be painful, particularly on the nose or

other areas of exposed flesh; the juice of young dock leaves is very effective in relieving the discomfort caused by these.

Stress

(See Nervous conditions.)

Tumours

A tumour is an abnormal swelling in any part of the body. They are usually described as either benign or malignant. Benign tumours are usually harmless, and best left alone unless their size or position warrants veterinary attention. Malignant swellings, otherwise known as cancer, carcinoma or sarcoma, invade and destroy the tissues in which they originate. By subdivision of their cells they also invade other tissues within the body and, if left unchecked, this can be life threatening. Any abnormal swelling should be regarded as suspicious and watched closely; it should be seen immediately by a veterinary surgeon and rechecked if it changes size, shape or colour.

Internal tumours are more difficult to diagnose but the early signs can be detected if the dog is taken to a veterinary surgeon for a regular health check. Holistic medicine has a good chance of helping the body overcome potentially dangerous tumours if they are treated promptly. There are many causes of tumours and the holistic approach concentrates on prevention, more than cure. This would include a natural diet and health care, together with plenty of exercise and a stress-free life-style. Common herbal remedies for support of tumours, include fenugreek, rosehips, echinacea and burdock.

Tumours are often removed surgically, although this is not always successful or wise, as others may grow, either in the same place or in a different part of the body. In some circumstances, surgery can prolong the problem rather than curing it.

Vaccinations

Injecting a dog with vaccines in order to prevent diseases such as distemper (and hard pad), leptospirosis, parvovirus, hepatitis and kennel

cough has been common for many years. The theory of vaccination is that the immune system is sensitised by the introduction of a modified dose of the causative organism of the disease itself. However, this can cause problems in sensitive individuals, especially since many other substances may be combined with the vaccines.

The development of any disease depends on two factors: first on the level of challenge that is encountered and, second, on the ability of the animal to resist such a challenge. An alternative to conventional vaccination is homoeopathic treatment involving the use of nosodes to strengthen the body's resistance to specific pathogens. In keeping with all homoeopathic medicines, these are entirely safe and free from any side effects if used properly this method has been very successful for a great many users over a number of years. However, it is, as yet, unproven in clinical trials. This is because current methods of 'proving' the validity of methods would involve laboratory experiments on dogs, a step that the BAHNM, the BAHVS and others are not prepared to take. Nosodes for this method should only be obtained from a homeopathically trained veterinary surgeon and given according to his or her instructions.

Other concerns about conventional vaccination are that the material is injected directly into the system, bypassing the proper defence systems of the body and that strong vaccines are given to young dogs. Furthermore vaccination is repeated regularly a practice of questionable scientific validity and safety

Wounds

All fresh wounds should be gently manually cleaned of any debris that is easily removed and should then be disinfected with a saline solution (one teaspoon of salt dissolved in half a litre of boiled then cooled to warm water), and dressed if required. Honey has been used successfully as a natural wound antiseptic in humans but can attract the attention of an animal unduly as well as flies during the summer. Anything other than minor wounds should be seen immediately by a veterinary surgeon, as should those which show no sign of healing within a few days. Wounds should heal well in a healthy body Homoeopathic Hypericum and

Calendula lotion is a very valuable stimulant to wound cleanliness and healing.

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