



PET PROJECT QUARTERLY

YOUR NEWS FROM **MARY'S PET PROJECT**



✧ Highlights ✧



LIVING WITH DOGS

Preventing Obesity in Dogs

A trim figure is fundamental to good health for dogs. Statistically, lean dogs live longer than their chunkier buddies and have fewer health



problems. Overweight dogs are more likely to develop pancreatitis, diabetes, heart disease, and joint pain. If the pounds have snuck on (if you can't clearly see your dog's waist), consult your veterinarian about any underlying problems that can contribute to weight gain and the correct amount to feed your dog. Then get serious about increasing your dog's exercise level. Keeping up the activity level is advisable even if your dog is in great shape—one of the best things you can do for your dog's long-term health is to prevent future weight problems.

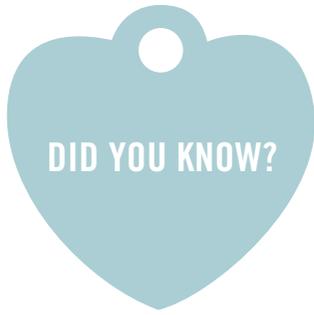
Get the amount right. Exercise needs vary with age, breed, size, and overall health, but a good rule of thumb is for your dog to spend between thirty minutes and two hours being active every day. Collies, retrievers, and shepherds need lots of running time; Bulldogs and Dachshunds can thrive with moderate daily outings.

Change it up. Don't limit your thinking on dog exercise to walks and throwing a ball at the park. Sign up for a fun dog class or activity like rally-o, flyball, nose work, or agility. Find a local dog group so your dog gets to play with other dogs regularly (if she enjoys canine company, of course). Or, if time is a problem, consider hiring a dog walker or joining a doggie daycare.

Ramp it up at home. Playing hide-and-seek, figuring out a puzzle toy, and practicing training cues and show-stopping tricks for the next party are just some of the at-home undertakings that increase your dog's overall activity level. Five minutes here, ten minutes there; it all adds up to a healthier, happier dog.

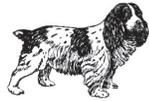
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**"All the virtues of man
without his vices."
- Lord Byron**



These Doggie Genetic Facts?

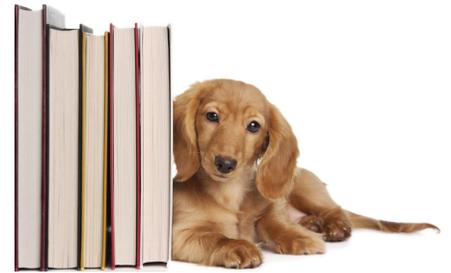
- Dogs have the largest variation in body size of any land animal—from a 5-inch Chihuahua to a 24-inch Great Dane.
- The total number of genes in dogs is under debate, but is currently thought to be around 100,000. Contrast this with humans' 20,000–25,000 genes.
- Dogs have more than 350 inherited diseases, including cancers, autoimmune diseases, heart disease, hip dysplasia, and blindness. Researchers at The Canine Genome Project in the U.S. National Institutes of Health are working to identify genetic markers for inherited diseases in dogs with the goal of preventing them in the future.



A WORLD OF DOGS

Bestselling Material

Aesop wrote his fables a very long time ago. In 1877 *Black Beauty* galloped onto the stage, and mid-twentieth century, John Steinbeck wrote about his poodle-accompanied road trip in *Travels with Charlie*. Stories about animals have always been around, but precious few transcend the fluffy-edged sphere of children's literature. Not so anymore. Ten or twelve years ago booksellers noticed a trend: Books about dogs began to show consistently solid sales, almost regardless of subject. Training bible or glossy coffee table photography, it mattered little.



Today, what was a trend has become a wave. Once the sole province of ardent fanciers, dog-themed books now poke their noses onto bestseller lists every few months, even penetrating the fiction list, as in the case of Garth Stein's *The Art of Racing in the Rain* or W. Bruce Cameron's *A Dog's Purpose*. But the biggest winners are non-fiction that ranges from memoir to true stories to cognitive science and cynology. Who hasn't read, or heard of, John Grogan's mega-hit *Marley & Me*, about his family's adorable, dysfunctional Labrador? Temple Grandin's *Animals in Translation* earned bestseller status, as did Jon Katz' memoir (*Dog Days*) and Alexandra Horowitz' *Inside of a Dog*.

Why this groundswell of enthusiasm for doggie literature? The obvious answer is that dogs and other companion animals are more popular than ever before in history (a 2016 study by the American Pet Products Association estimates there are 78 million dogs in America), so the pool of interested readers has grown.

But surely the demand for dog-related books—along with demand for designer collars, raw food, dog walkers, poop scooping services, and more—also indicates the unique position dogs have come to occupy in the American family. Long our hard-working ally, dogs have moved into our homes and hearts in a way previously reserved for human children. According to another study, more than half of dog owners consider their pet 'an integral part of the family.'

Then again, the truth may boil down to this: Dogs, with all their lovable foibles, make for vastly more interesting reading than, say, goldfish or hamsters.

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DOGS IN ACTION

Weight Pulling

Dogs have pulled things for humans throughout history: sleds, carts, and many types of cargo. In today's sport version, dogs wear a padded harness that attaches to a so-called trace (two side straps), which connects to either a sled, wheeled cart, or rail carts. Competitions mostly attracts bully breeds—Bulldogs, Mastiffs, Boxers—but the sport is open to all breeds and all sizes. (Dogs are separated into classes based on their body weight.) Most people practice with sleds or carts at home, because few have their own wheel or rail systems. Basic training and good manners are a great start for any dog whose guardian is interested in this sport. Being both people and dog-friendly is a must, but other than that, any dog can learn to love pulling weight.



The key thing to success—a happy dog that's having fun—is to carefully and gradually condition the pooch for the job. That includes desensitizing your dog to the harness and other equipment with treats, fun, and praise, and it means slowly building from no weight to light weight and so on. And always remember that the dog didn't pick the sport. If she's having a bad day, let her off the hook. Weight should be tons of fun, pun intended.



HEALTHY DOG

Dogs & Flatulence

Awkward as the subject is, excessive flatulence in dogs is no joke. Of course, some gas production is perfectly normal, in dogs as well as humans. But too much of it is not just a nuisance for those living with the afflicted pooch, it's a sign that something isn't working as it should in the dog's digestive system. An overproduction of gas can have many different causes, like eating food too quickly, food allergies, overgrowths of bacteria, a chronic bowel disorder, or a serious illness.

So, what do you do if your best friend is too gassy? First step is a visit to the vet, where stool checks, bloodwork, X-rays, and ultrasounds are standard initial diagnostic tools. If those don't yield results, an endoscopy may be necessary. Most often, though, the answer will be something lifestyle related, like a change of diet or chewies, feeding smaller meals more frequently, or trying probiotics.

DOG IN THE SPOTLIGHT

The Italian Greyhound

This slender, smooth-coated twiglet combines the doe eyes and sensitivity of a miniature Bambi with the harefooted quickness befitting a tiny cousin of the Greyhound. Affectionately known as 'Iggies,' Italian Greyhounds are an ancient breed, found in pictorials as far back as old Egypt and first-century Rome. Possibly bred originally for hunting small prey (and still quite willing to follow those instincts), an Iggy's main job in modern times is to be a companion, a role she fulfills with grace, playfulness, and utter devotion. The Iggy can thrive in the country or in the city, if she's kept nice and toasty. Dainty as she is, without much body fat, she needs sweaters and paw protection in wintry conditions. Her refinement, style, and portability has earned her a place at many a royal court, including that of Mary, Queen of Scots; Queen Victoria; Catherine the Great; and Maud, Queen of Norway.

To re-home an Iggie, contact your local rescue group.

