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**MEDIA
PLANET**

May 2013

LOVING YOUR PET



**BE THE BEST PET
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Cesar Millan, star of **Leader of the Pack**,
debunks the **'one-size-fits-all'** approach to pet care.

CHALLENGES

Being in tune with your dog is not all about training: it's about **understanding the dog's needs** and providing direction and protection.

Leading the pack

One of the most important things dog lovers need to do is make sure they and their dogs are in tune with each other, with the humans being the pack leaders and the dogs following that lead.

Notice I don't say a dog should be well-trained. It's very easy to train any dog to "sit" or "shake," but this does not mean the dog is taking on the proper role in the pack. If a dog is not balanced, then it will go right back to misbehaving once it's done whatever trick you've taught it. If you only focus on training without discipline, then you may wind up with your dog training you, using your reaction to its "cute" behavior to get what it wants.

Setting the boundaries

I talk a lot about rules, boundaries, and limitations, which we need to create for our dogs to give them a sense of what they're supposed to do. A pack leader's job is to provide protection and direction. If you don't give your dog direction, he or she can become anxious, frustrated, or fearful — and these are three of the biggest causes of common misbehaviors.

You can help your dog achieve balance through my fulfillment formula of exercise, discipline, and then affection, in that order. All dogs need all of these things. It's only the degree to which they need each one that varies with the dog.

Different dogs, different needs

Dogs come in many different sizes and energy levels, so there



Cesar Millan, Dog Behaviourist, and star of *Leader of the Pack*.
PHOTO: GIO ALMA

is no "one-size-fits-all" rule on how much exercise a dog needs. Your dog needs as much as your dog needs. If you have a high-energy Dalmatian, you may find it necessary for both of you to run several miles three times a

day, but if you have an older, low-energy mutt, then once around the block twice a day may do the trick.

The same goes for the affection part, in terms of feeding. Canine obesity is a serious health issue, so you don't want to feed that inactive, overweight dog the same amount or type of food as you would a hyperactive greyhound. Consult your veterinarian to determine your dog's ideal weight, then find the right exercise and nutrition program that will help him maintain that weight.

How do you know when you've hit the right combination? Your dog will tell you with its balanced, calm-submissive energy — its way of saying "thanks!" for being a strong pack leader.

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NEWS

HOW MUCH IS YOUR PET'S HEALTH WORTH?

These are the moments when pet insurance can make a difference. The young dog had swallowed a tennis ball, and it needed to be removed. The family wasn't in a position to cover what might become another \$3,000 vet bill.

Vancouver veterinarian Ryan Redgrave and his clinic, Vancouver Animal Wellness Hospital, were placed in a difficult situation.

"The elephant in the room is putting the animal to sleep," said Redgrave, adding that because the margins in veterinary medicine are pretty poor, usually only 10 or 20 percent of a bill is profit above overhead. Which means most clinics are simply not in a position to do surgery for free and

still run a business. That's where insurance comes in.

Improved care

"As costs of veterinary medicine rise along with the quality of the care, to just assume you can cover it out of pocket is becoming less realistic," said Redgrave. "Insurance is really good at mitigating costs if you're unable to cover several thousand dollars out of the blue."

Pet specialists

Nowadays, more vets are referring sick pets to specialists, which Redgrave said wasn't the case 10 or 20 years ago. "There are veterinary oncologists now, veterinary dentists, internal medicine specialists. All of the things you have in regular medicine and that's more expensive than the way it was before, but the care is better," he said.



Ryan Redgrave
Veterinarian,
Vancouver Animal
Wellness Hospital

"To just assume you can cover vet bills out of pocket is becoming less realistic. Insurance is really good at mitigating costs if you're unable to cover several thousand dollars out of the blue."

Options abound

Pet insurance is not one-size fits all, said Kristin McEvoy, the Communications Manager for the Canadian Veterinary Medical Association. Just like regular

insurance, there are a number of different options, and talking with your vet to determine what has worked well for the vet's other clients is a good way to start.

"Pet insurance might provide you with a little bit of extra comfort knowing you can provide for all your pets needs when the times comes," said McEvoy.

As for the young dog, Redgrave's clinic was able to work out a plan where the pet owners surrendered the dog to clinic so the surgery could save the dog's life, and the dog could once again return to chasing balls in the park.

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VET FACTS

Top 7 most common, costly procedures

- Intervertebral Disc Disease:** \$3,163
- Stomach Torsion/Bloat:** \$2,418
- Ruptured Bile Duct:** \$2,164
- Laryngeal Paralysis:** \$1,968
- Intestinal — Foreign Object:** \$1,896
- Tumour of the Throat:** \$1,616
- Broken Leg (Plate):** \$1,529
- Torn Knee Ligament/Cartilage:** \$1,521

SOURCE: VETERINARY PET INSURANCE CO. PRICES QUOTED ARE AVERAGE.

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INSIGHT

FINDING YOUR PERFECT COMPANION: lifestyle, schedule, and living arrangements are all important factors to consider when choosing a pet.

PHOTO: ISTOCKPHOTO

May is Adoption Awareness Month!

May is Adoption Awareness Month, a time when anyone thinking about bringing a new pet into their family is encouraged to visit their local shelter to get to know the wonderful animals currently looking for their “forever home.”

Working with these animals every day rescue organizations see their unique personalities, their love of life, their funny antics and the immense amount of love they have for the humans in their lives. These delightful animals - whether they be dogs and puppies, cats or kittens, rabbits or small animals - have so much to offer their poten-

tial new guardian. Here are some things to consider when adopting a pet:

Impulse or commitment: why do I want a pet?

Many people like the idea of a pet or can't resist a cute puppy or kitten, but don't think about the changes it will make in their life. Pets are companions who depend on us for all of their needs. This is a great responsibility and one that should not be taken lightly.

For the kids: pets teach kids responsibility, right?

You will have problems in your household if you adopt a pet under the assumption that he or she is for the kids to take care of to learn responsibility. Getting any pet

must be a family decision and a family responsibility. For children to understand the routine of pet care and actively participate in the pet's care, wait until your kids are at least seven years old. Kids are also enthusiastic in the beginning but can tire quickly of the routine of pet care. Remember, ultimately the parent is responsible for the pet.

Lifestyle: what type of relationship am I seeking?

All pets change your lifestyle. If you are planning on having an outdoor dog, think again. Dogs are social animals and crave the company of humans, their “pack.” Leaving a dog exclusively outdoors will lead to behaviour issues and undermine the psychological well being of your dog. Many people end up banish-

ing a dog to the outside when they underestimate the time commitment to make sure their pet is well adjusted or the dog creates too much work for the guardians.

Cats, too, are social and are safer and healthier if kept indoors providing they have a stimulating indoor environment. If left outside they are victim to cars, other cats and disease.

As for small pets they are all to be kept indoors. Remember that store-bought cages are often too small for animals such as rabbits and guinea pigs to live in without plenty of out-of-cage exercise.

Stability: are my living arrangements suitable?

All members of the household should be in agreement of the pet

you choose. Also if you are renting, sure it is ok with your landlord. Do you have enough space for the pet you are considering? Most animals don't need a lot of room but some will require more than others. If you are in a house you need to have a fenced yard if you get a dog.

Timing: is this the right time for getting a pet?

If you are planning to move, going to school or are not home frequently, this may not be a good time. Pets need stability and routine to feel secure. Consider your future plans and evaluate if a pet will fit in with those plans.