

# MISSION EMPAWTHY NEWSLETTER

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MISSION EMPAWTHY, LLC

## Upcoming events!

Join us every Thursday Home Game to see Mokoro the “Bat Dog” retrieve baseball bats for the Lake County Captains minor league baseball team! Located at Classic Auto Group Park Stadium 35300 Vine St. Eastlake, OH 44095

Mayfield Library Presentation:

***Meet the Bat Dog! Training a Canine Star of the Lake County Captains Baseball Team***

- Thursday June 4, 2026 at 6:30PM EST
- Free! Registration Required; Space is limited !

Willoughby Library Presentation

***How to Train a Service Dog***

- Tuesday June 16, 2026 at 6:30PM EST
- Free! Registration Required; Space is limited !

Gates Mills Library Presentation:

***Service Dogs 101***

- Thursday July 2, 2026 at 2PM EST
- Free! Registration Required; Space is limited !



## Welcome!

Happy Spring! Thank you for signing up for our newsletter. We hope you find some useful tips and tricks and learn a little something along the way!

In this issue, we talk about the importance of understanding your dog’s DNA, spend some time debunking the “dominance theory” and what the science really tells us. We also invite you to attend, any, and all free educational presentations at a few of our local libraries, and we hope you learn a little something along the way!



Visit us at  
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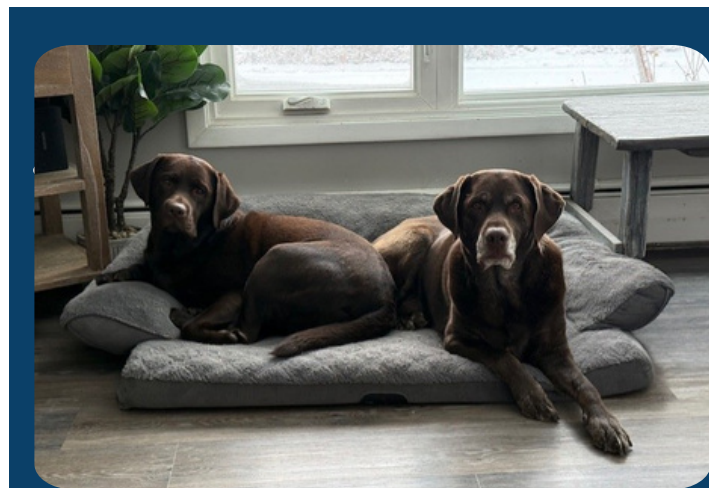
## Working with that DNA: Why Understanding your dog's genetics can be incredibly helpful to a peaceful coexistence!

Would you be upset with a fish for not being able to climb a tree? Probably not. So why get upset with your Great Dane for not being a rockstar agility champion? Most people are very familiar with nature versus nurture and how we raise our dogs is critically important. However, we often look past our dog's genetic makeup, or their DNA when considering our lifestyles and theirs. DNA are the building blocks of life that your dog is born with. This is what makes labradors phenomenal retrievers or bloodhounds excellent scent hounds. It's also what gives your border collie all of that energy and your rescue dog a number of different traits! So, when considering your next dog, be it from a rescue, shelter, or breeder, be sure to be cognizant of their innate traits that their breed or mixes of breeds are known for. For example, if you have a relatively sedentary lifestyle, then a working herding dog breed such as a Border collie or a Kelpie may not be the right fit for you. Conversely, perhaps you lead an incredibly (continued on the next column)

active lifestyle and are a big-time runner, then perhaps a sporting dog with lots of energy, such as a Vizsla, may be right for you!

Rescues and shelters do their best to identify what they believe may be the breed(s) of an adoptable dog, but they are often resource constrained and can't run genetic testing on every dog they get in the door so sometimes this information can be difficult to ascertain. However, many of them will happily allow you to DNA test a dog that you're interested in. This is done with a simple cheek swab of their saliva and then you can send it into laboratories that specialize in sequencing doggie DNA. Companies like Embark, Wisdom Panel, Koko Genetics, etc can be really helpful to determine this information. Many of these companies will also screen for heritable risk factors of potential health issues as well!

As a trainer, I always remind folks, we can't take the DNA out of our dogs, so be cognizant of the expectations you're putting on certain breeds! Don't expect your working dog to be a couch potato, or your couch potato to be a marathon runner!



# Debunking the Dominance Myth: What Modern, Ethical, Science-based Dog Training Really Tells Us



Perhaps you've heard someone say, "you need to be dominant over your dog, and they won't do that..." or "alpha roll your dog, teach them who is boss!" Comments like these come from an outdated, and disproven theory that humans should be "dominant" over their dogs.

The original study that this theory was based on, was conducted in 1947, titled, "*Expressions Studies on Wolves*," by Rudolf Schenkel. The study focused on captive, unrelated wolves at the Basel Zoo in Switzerland who shared a confined space. These were not wolves studied in wild packs living in nature, which we know behave very differently. Since these wolves were forced to live in confined, artificial conditions, they showed frequent conflict. Schenkel attributed these conflicts as evidence of a rigid dominance hierarchy, with "alpha" wolves maintaining their status through aggression. This theory was then popularized and then later retracted by L. David Mech in 1968 in his Book, *The Wolf: Ecology and Behavior of an Endangered Species*. Mech explained that after studying wolf packs in the wild, these packs are typically family units consisting of a mom, dad, and their young (Contd.)

and that aggression-based hierarchies are not normal wolf behavior. After all, imagine if you were an alien and decided to study human behavior by studying a fraternity house, would this be representative of how a normal household would run? I think not! It's important to understand that this original study wasn't bad science per se, but it was certainly incomplete science- and that's the beauty of it, if science never changed, it wouldn't be science at all! Most unfavorable behaviors from dogs that people often mislabel as "dominant" (growling, jumping, guarding, etc.), are very often caused from fear, learned behavior, anxiety, stress, or attempts to create distance or access to a resource- dogs don't seek household rank over humans. When dogs growl or pull on the leash, they're communicating, they're not trying to dominate you.

An effective trainer will utilize positive reinforcement to teach a skill to your dog, rather than try to "reinforce rank." Training your dog should help build trust and a healthy relationship, not fear and intimidation. Conversely, if you use aversive training methods based on intimidation or punishment, while these tactics can suppress behaviors (Contd.)



temporarily, they do not fix the underlying cause of the behavior, and very often have knock on psychological effects that present themselves as further unfavorable behaviors. For example, research has shown over and over, that dog who have been punished for growling, often skips growling the next time, and escalate directly to a bite!

If your dog is struggling with unfavorable or unwanted behaviors, reach out to us today and we can teach you to read your dog's body language and help to fix the underlying, core problems to get you back to a peaceful coexistence together!

## Did you know?

- Great Danes have extra-large flews (upper cheek flaps) because they were intentionally bred to hunt wild boar and this extra-large surface area helped them to hold onto those wild pigs! They were later used to guard castles in Germany
- Basenjis don't really bark... they yodel! This sound is called a "baroo" and this is due to their larynx being shaped differently from most dogs
- Newfoundlands have webbed feet and were bred for water rescue; this is why many will instinctively try to "save" swimmers just minding their own business!
- Chow Chows are one of the only breeds with blue-black tongues



- Irish Wolfhounds were historically used to hunt wolves and were so valuable they were once restricted to nobility
- Bull Terriers have a distinctive "egg-shaped" which is called a downface
- Beagles were intentionally bred with a white-tipped tail so that hunters could spot them in tall grass
- Akitas are a symbol of good luck in Japan and often gift Akita statues for health and protection
- Siberian Huskies can have heterochromia, also known as having two different eye colors, it's totally normal and not a health concern!
- Xoloitzcuintli (Mexican Hairless Dogs) were believed to guide souls in the afterlife in Aztec culture
- Cane Corsos descended from Roman war dogs, "corso" may come from the Latin word meaning "guardian or protector"
- Labrador Retrievers were bred to be water dogs to pull fishing nets in for fisherman in Canadian waters

