

Napa Valley Dog Training Club Training Committee Meeting

February 22, 2012

Meeting called to order at 6:45pm by Sandy Bonifield, who also provided more yummy goodies – thank you again.

Attending: May Ash, Marilane Bergfelt, Deassa Binstock, Kelly Finn, Linda Luchsinger, Cheryl Meyer, Lynda Rhino, Lea Ronald, Teresa Russell, and Jim Spiva.

OLD BUSINESS

Approved Instructor & Assistant Lists:

Those in attendance checked the current lists and updated contact information as needed. Sandy noted that she will be contacting assistants to verify their information (including interests and availability). Having this added information could help instructors get the support they need.

Marilane will make changes to the lists as needed and give computer files to Sandy for posting and filing at the clubhouse. This file is considered the master and any changes to this information after printing / posting should be directed to Sandy.

Instructors - Time Off:

Sandy has been asking instructors when they would like a break from training classes. Most instructors have provided this information. For those who have not, Sandy requested they email her asap to let her know when they'd like a break. She will be communicating with instructors to ensure classes are covered and instructors / assistants stay fresh.

Dog Safety / Class for Kids (Reminder):

Teresa previously offered to look into contacting / locating children groups for presentations about dog training and safety. Below is a repeat of the information from the last Training Committee Meeting (10-2011).

Cheryl Meyer has suggested a training class designed for children (which she has seen elsewhere). After some discussion, Teresa offered to locate young children groups (boy scouts, girl scouts, etc) that might be interested in learning about dog training. NVDTC members would attend their meetings and talk about training, safety, and/or other. Some committee members were interested in this type of 'community outreach' and hoped it would help to PR the club.

Note: A similar junior handler class (as the one mentioned by Cheryl) was suggested to this committee a few years ago by a current instructor, Marilane. Outline was provided and included safety measures such as kids working with dogs already trained with children in schools and educational pieces. The concept was dropped due to the concerns of a few instructors over the age of client's dogs which would eventually arrive to class. Also, Napa Humane has an educational Dog Safety Program, under the direction of Wendi Piscia, already approved for the local schools and provided to elementary aged children's groups.

Class Phone Calls:

Sandy reminded instructors to take their boards and make confirmation calls this week.

NEW BUSINESS

Reducing Class Size:

After reviewing several sessions of class evaluations and information from other training locations, it is suggested the NVDTC reduce the number of clients / dogs per class from a maximum of 16 to a maximum of 12. In addition, Lynda R. provided a letter from a recent Adolescent Dog class client who dropped out of the class due to its large size (16 people/pets) – this person was given a voucher.

Discussion included:

- This change would affect Puppy, Adolescent Dog and Good Manners 1 the most.
- There are concerns that reducing the number of clients in the beginning classes will affect the club's income. Considered our "bread-n-butter" these classes have the most responsibility to bring in and maintain clients.
- There was a discussion on profit-loss and tracking returning clients. (See box below for highlights.)
- Large classes with reactive dogs do not seem to be as successful as smaller classes where reactive dogs have more space / opportunity for one-on-one.
- It was noted that large Puppy and Adolescent Dog classes are especially difficult to manage due to the amount of equipment and activities planned each week. This feeling was echoed by GM1 instructors.
- It is easier to retain current clients than find new ones to replace unhappy pet owners.

Recommendation: The committee recommends all classes be limited to 12 students per session.

Motion made by Mary and seconded by Linda L. Vote: All approved the motion. No abstentions.

Class Schedules to Reflect Client Need:

Sandy presented information which shows that classes taught on Tuesday nights were the same or very similar to other training locations in our area. In addition there continues to be a low turn out for some of the advanced classes offered. It was proposed that the committee consider offering classes on different nights (than currently scheduled), more beginning levels classes, &/or allowing scheduling flexibility so that a 3rd class at a specific level could be added if needed.

Discussion included:

- Offering a 3rd Puppy, Adolescent Dog &/or GM1 could mean moving / combining / eliminating classes like Rally which occupy 'high rent' slots on the class schedule.
- Tracking clients interests during each session. It was suggested that instructors review Handler Questionnaires at the beginning of each session and then verify with each dog owner at the end of the session to ensure their individual interests were addressed. Instructors would then make recommendations to each person on future classes they could take with their pet.

Recommendation: The committee recommends that the club schedule 2 Puppy, 2 Adolescent Dog and 2 Good Manners 1 classes in each session for the remainder of 2012. If additional classes at these levels are needed, overflow would be placed on Fridays for the remainder of the calendar year.

Motion made by Kelly and seconded by Lea. Vote: All approved the motion. No abstentions.

Discussion regarding Class Finances and Tracking Clients:

- Jim asked about Profit-Loss issues.
- Linda shared that our current way of tracking vouchers and discounts in class fees makes a traditional profit-loss comparison difficult. It is something which has been considered before and there is a concern that some classes are not breaking even. To be able to assess this, the club would need to keep classes at a standard size & schedule each regularly – probably one year.
- Kelly suggested tracking data, especially returning customers, and offered to work with anyone else who is interested.

Canine Good Citizen (GCG) Update:

Jim provided a report on recent CGC evaluations at the clubhouse where only he and Mary Ash attended as evaluators. 4 teams participated. Each team was provided one evaluator who followed them through each station of the CGC.

Jim felt the Pro was: Fewer people were needed for the event. Con was: If evaluator assigned to your team is not 'having a good day' it could affect that single person / dog strongly. There was no discussion, comments or questions.

Instructor Approval:

Jim requested that he be approved for as an instructor of Good Manners 2. He noted that allowing this approval, he could provide the daytime clients introduction to new skills not address in GM1. He added that he is very comfortable with this level of class.

Discussion:

- Kelly asked if Mar was or can be contacted for her insights. In response, Mary voiced her support of Jim. It is unclear if anyone will contact Mar directly before presenting this to the NVDTTC Board.
- Linda asked if Jim had attended any educational seminars; he has not. Kelly suggested Positively Trained as a location for good resources.

Recommendation: The committee recommends that Jim be approved as an instructor for Good Manners 2.

Vote: 9 approved the motion. 1 abstention.

Scheduling Session 3 & 4, 2012:

This was a confusing discussion that ranged in subjects and side conversations. The items noted below are highlights:

- Linda discussed the Pro's and Con's of 'Attention Class'.
- It has been repeatedly suggested that beginning classes provide time for 'demos' of agility, formal obedience and rally. None of the instructors for those classes feel they have time (with the 6-week format) to include such activities and do not plan to have demos at their classes anytime in the future.
- Rally classes have declined. Contributing factors may be the recession and declining interest in the sport. These classes take prime slots of the week. It was agreed to provide an "Introduction to Rally" in Session 3 with the hope of feeding into the current classes. It was also suggested that Rally classes be combined to make room for additional / different classes.
- Concerns that clients for advanced classes are not confirmed directly before sessions begin (like with beginning classes) could be contributing to low attendance. While lists might be kept by instructors it is unclear if follow-up calls or emails are sent to remind clients when classes begin.
- Advanced, regularly scheduled classes (agility, formal obedience and rally) plus specialty classes should be penciled into the schedule as early as possible (several months in advance) and activity promoted both inside and outside the club.
 - ❖ Promotion could include video clips linked out the club's website that show agility, formal obedience and rally. Cheryl offered her hubby to take the performance video of classes. She will check with him first, and then see what Sue Osborn thinks might be possible &/or what is needed. Posting to YouTube, Facebook or other internet locations should be considered.
- If a scheduled class are not filled, the club should be prepared to fill that slot with a 4-week 'fun' class. This will mean quick, active promotion both inside and outside the club. Interest Lists should be kept updated and members asked for their interests to help determine what might be successful.
- Deassa noted she can teach Reactive Dog in Session 2, 2012 but will not be able to provide this class again for a few sessions. She is over-booked and wants to see if the class is successful before putting onto the schedule again.
- Laura, Mar and Joy are not scheduled to instruct in the next several sessions.

Class Schedules for Session 3 & 4, 2012 will be sent via separate file.

Other Promotional Ideas:

6 instructors / assistants attend the recent bay area Ian Dunbar seminars. From that activity the following was suggested:

- a) Ian Dunbar has two online, FREE books, "*Before You Get Your Puppy*" and "*After You Get Your Puppy*". For a very limited time anyone can download, keep and share these books. Individuals, training groups and companies can promote their organization via these books by inserting company information on one of the first pages. These books can be posted on our website in pdf format.
- b) NVDTTC website could include a page with links to other websites our instructors / assistants think valuable. "Places We Like" could include locations such as: Marin Humane Society's Behavioral Department and Dog Star Daily. Both sites provides educational pieces directed at the general public.
- c) NVDTTC website could have a list of recommended reading / videos. "Books and Videos We Like" would include suggestions from instructors and assistants.
- d) Sandy offered to be the contact person for ideas on websites, books and videos - anyone with ideas should email her.

Suggestion: The committee recommends that the club look into ways to promote classes and information via our website and Facebook. The committee also suggests we utilize the books offered by Dr. Dunbar. It is understood that Sue Osborn will need to be part of all discussions and designs for the website / Facebook / other.

Meeting adjourned at 9:10pm

Submitted by,

Marilane Bergfelt (Meeting Recorder to the Stars)