The CAGDU Barker

May 2020 Edition

Edited By Allison Depner

## From the Editor

Hello Readers,

Time marches on, and so do we. I hope this newsletter finds all of you healthy and otherwise well. You may be shocked to receive another newsletter so soon. This is a particularly stressful time for all of us. We all have so many questions about Cavid-19 and how it may affect not only us but our furry loyal guides. So, I thought it might be a good idea to put together some articles that I thought would help answer some of our questions. The guide dog schools have been very helpful by sending suggestions and information. I hope the information I’ve collected will be as useful to you as it has been for me and my guide, Cupcake. As always, I invite you to keep sending your stories and articles for future editions of the CAGDU Barker. I couldn’t provide this newsletter without your help. So, keep it up! And, thanks so much!

## A Message Regarding Cavid-19 and Guide Dogs

Provided by Seeing Eye

Dear Graduate of The Seeing Eye,

Hello, everyone. It’s Dr. Holle. I wanted to reach out to all of you because I heard that some of you are concerned about the possibility of your dog acting as a fomite (an object that can carry infection like a door handle or a railing) and putting you at risk for COVID19. I thought I might put that concern into perspective for you, and I reached out and asked an expert in the field of infectious disease to help me with that.

J. Scott Weese, DVM DVSc DipACVIM, is a veterinary internist and microbiologist, and a diplomate of the American College of Veterinary Internal Medicine. He is a Professor at the Ontario Veterinary College, University of Guelph, and a Zoonotic Disease/Public Health Microbiologist at the University of Guelph’s Centre for Public Health and Zoonoses. He is also Chief of Infection Control at the Ontario Veterinary College Teaching Hospital and holds a Canada Research Chair in zoonotic diseases. Dr. Weese has authored or co-authored over 200 papers in peer reviewed journals, edited two books, and speaks extensively on infectious disease topics. (From lakeridgehealth.on.ca <<http://support.seeingeye.org/site/R?i=SNItDJCT0-4vuyFTjSq0TA>> )

Dr. Weese said that “The key thing to remember is that if a dog is contaminated, it got it from a person that it was in close contact with, so most likely that would be you, or someone in your family. If people with guide dogs just do their best to keep people from touching their dogs, that’s all I’d do. The risk of random aerosol deposition on the dog during walking is basically zero.”

I mentioned that people were asking about washing their dog’s feet when they came in from a walk and Dr. Weese pointed out that we don’t wash our shoes, and yet we all touch them multiple times a day.

Dr. Weese went on to reinforce the basic concept of social distancing, and hand hygiene, “not incessantly but routinely”. The risk for dogs being allowed to roam neighborhoods with their owners having no idea where they have been, or who might have touched them, is a very different story than the guide dog who is with his or her partner 24/7.

Also, you might have heard of lions and tigers at the Bronx Zoo testing positive. This did not come as a surprise to Dr. Weese. He had anticipated that cats (large and small) might be able to be infected with this virus. These cats were infected by an asymptomatic human who, as their caretaker, was in close contact with them. So, here again, the cats weren’t the threat to the human, the human brought disease to the cats. It has been recommended that in any home where there is a known COVID19 positive human, the animals in the household should be kept separate from that person as should the rest of the household. This is because certain species of pets may be susceptible to the virus. There is much that we do not yet know on this front, but to date there is no evidence that pets can transmit the virus to humans.

Wash your hands after a massage or grooming session with your dog, and remember that that’s always a good practice anyway. But, by all means, feel free to hug and pet your dogs. We all need affection during this time of social isolation.

My thoughts and prayers are with you, your families, and of course your dogs as always.

Virtual hugs to you all,K

## COVID-19 and Companion Animals

By Kate Kuzminski, Medical Director of Guide Dogs for the Blind

The past few weeks have been exceptionally tumultuous for us all.  We have learned firsthand what the novel SARS-CoV-2 can do to people and have had our daily routines and social ​circles turned upside down as we shelter in place.  Thank goodness we have our dogs and other companions to keep us company during this time.

So….what about COVID-19 and companion animals?  I think the truth is that we are all learning about the virus SARS-CoV-2, and the disease it creates, COVID-19, on a daily basis.  There are over 1.4 million cases of COVID-19 in people worldwide, yet we have heard very little about any illness in companion animals.

This week’s news is that a tiger at the Bronx Zoo in New York tested positive for SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes the disease COVID-19.  This is the first animal in the United States who has tested positive for the virus and is one of 7 big cats in the zoo thought to be experiencing signs of COVID-19.  It is presumed that the virus was transmitted to the tiger from an infected, but asymptomatic, caretaker.  This isn’t a domesticated companion animal exactly, but it is a similar situation to the cat in Belgium who tested positive for SARS-CoV-2 while living in a COVID-19+ home.  Both cats had clinical signs of COVID-19, became infected from a human and are expected to recover fully.   Preliminary research in China has shown that a small group of cats became infected with the coronavirus that causes COVID-19 when they were inoculated with very high doses directly into their nasal passages.  While not exactly replicating real life given the extent of the dose of virus used, the study (still waiting for peer review), does support the idea that cats may be susceptible to SARS-CoV-2.  In fact, scientists believe that cats may have a protein receptor on the surface of their respiratory cells that is similar to that of humans.  In humans, this particular receptor protein, ACE2, is the point of attachment for the SARS-CoV-2 virus.  Once the virus attaches to the receptor, it can enter the cells and multiply.  So in a sense, cats and humans are thought to have a similar ‘doorknob’ that allows the virus to enter the respiratory system.  And while cats can get SARS-CoV-2 from people, there is no evidence to show that humans can get it from cats.

And what about COVID-19 and dogs? The same preliminary research project in China demonstrated that dogs are not very susceptible to the SARS-CoV-2 virus. We know of the two dogs in Hong Kong that tested positive after their owners became ill with COVID-19, neither of which had clinical signs.  Studies on the susceptibility of animals to SARS-CoV-2 support a low risk of infection of, and from, dogs.  It seems that while dogs may have a low risk of becoming infected, there is no evidence that dogs can become infectious to other dogs or to people, or that they even become sick from the virus.

The truth is that what we are learning about COVID-19 in people and animals is dynamic – it changes day to day.  What hasn’t changed is that experts continue to believe that pets are not a major factor in the spread of COVID-19.  Humans remain the greatest risk to other humans.    We know that our companion animals have a beneficial impact on our emotional and mental health.  They are integral members of our family and can help reduce anxiety during this time of isolation and quarantine.  It is important that we keep all of our family members healthy and safe during this public health emergency.

Considerations for GDB program dogs (guide dogs, breeder dogs, GDB puppies) as well as pet dogs during COVID-19:

·  Social distancing is for people and our dogs!  Keep your dog away from other people and animals when you are out in public.  If someone else is not respecting the 6 foot social distancing rule and touching your dog, please remind them that both you and your dog are social distancing.  If your dog does get coronavirus on the feet or fur, it is unlikely that the virus will live long enough to be an issue.  If you are truly concerned, bathe the dog with animal-safe soap/shampoo when you return home.  Please don’t apply hand sanitizer or other disinfectants to any companion animal.  Baby wipes will not kill the coronavirus...but soap and water will.

·  If you are having COVID-19 symptoms, protect your dog like you do your other family members.  Limit your contact with all of your housemates.  If possible, have another family member in the house provide daily care for the dog until you are feeling better. If this isn’t an option, wear a cloth facemask when interacting with your dog and don’t share food, kiss or cuddle while you are sick. Finally, always remember to wash your hands before (and after) handling any animals.

·  Make a plan that identifies someone who can care for your program dog in case you are too sick to do so.  Ensure you have enough food, medications and supplies ready for at least 14 days.  Include the contact information for your pet’s veterinarian and vaccine records in your pet’s ‘Go Bag’.

·  Until we learn more about the virus, it is a good idea to keep your animals away from other animals and people if someone in your house is infected with COVID-19.

COVID-19 and Companion Animals

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·  Until we learn more about the virus, it is a good idea to keep your animals away from other animals and people if someone in your house is infected with COVID-19.

·  Because all animals can carry germs that can make people sick, we should always practice healthy habits when handling animals. This includes washing hands before and after all interactions and when handling their food, waste, or supplies

## Boredom Busters!

## Enrichment activities to share with your guide

Provided by Guide Dogs for the Blind, Lauren Kenney, Director of Client Services

As we all continue to follow social distancing recommendations, both people and dogs may begin to feel bored at home. We would like to offer some ideas on fun activities you can engage in with your guide to keep you both entertained while staying safe and healthy. Below, please find a message from your Field Service Manager that provides some creative ideas. Please also be aware that these suggestions have been posted to our Website and can be found at: <https://www.guidedogs.com/explore-resources/alumni-resources>. The document, entitled “Boredom Busters! Enrichment activities to share with your guide, is the first item in the “Featured Content” section of this page. Now let’s have some fun!

“Boredom Busters! Enrichment activities to share with your guide”

While we all find ourselves homebound, you may be wondering to yourself, is there something more I can be doing for my guide right now?  The answer is yes!  Dogs sense changes too… and they may be wondering why you’re not heading to the bus stop this morning, or, like the kids out of school, are hanging from the chandeliers and driving their parents a little crazy.

We thought we’d put together a list of ideas for you to keep your dogs entertained, safe, healthy, and maybe even a little smarter (is that possible??).  Here we go!

1. Get out the clicker! -  Dogs love to learn new tricks and behaviors, and clicker training can be fun for both dog and person.  Try teaching them to shake paws, or better yet, to stay out of the kitchen!  You can also improve their down positioning while settled under a chair.  Practice this at home and you’ll thank yourself when those restaurants open again!
2. Turn mealtime into game! -  How long does it take for your dog to eat?  5 seconds?  5 nanoseconds?  Try prolonging it with a new meal toy!  Food toys like Buster Cubes make your dog work for their meal in a really fun way.  They’ll love rolling it around to release the food! (Hint… don’t water down the kibble before adding it to the toy).  Here’s a link to check out:

<https://www.amazon.com/Kruuse-Buster-Mini-Feeder-Cherry/dp/B004YK5UG6/ref=sxbs_sxwds-stvp?cv_ct_cx=buster%2Bcube&keywords=buster%2Bcube&pd_rd_i=B004YK5UG6&pd_rd_r=fd71d46c-0d61-437f-81e6-632438cf6b44&pd_rd_w=S2Vzk&pd_rd_wg=cJRZp&pf_rd_p=967d8720->

1. Work on recall! -  What’s one of the most important safety commands you can work on with your dog?  An off-leash recall of course!  Got a fenced backyard?  Take advantage of it by practicing sit stays and the come command.  Remember to bring your kibble for rewards… we want your dog quivering in their paws waiting to come running to you!  This will also provide some great exercise.
2. Get those booties out! – Summer is just around the corner, along with its hot pavement.  Remember last year when you first got those booties out and your dog was doing gymnastics trying to shake them off their paws?  Start bootie introductions now!  Put them on, and play with your dog so they learn that booties mean fun.  A five minute bootie exposure 3-4 times a week will make your dog a bootie master (And you too!  The more you put them on, the easier it becomes).
3. Stuff a Kong! -  Need some quiet time to yourself?  No problem, freeze one of your dog’s meals in their Kong.  To do this, simply put their meal in a bowl with just enough water to cover the kibble and let it sit until the water is absorbed.  Then stuff their Kong with it and seal the entrance with a spoonful of peanut butter.  Place it in the freezer and a few hours later… voila!  You’ve just created the best “pupsicle” ever.  It will take your dog a while to get all of that delicious frozen goodness out.  (Hint: if you have a thunderstorm shy dog, this is also a great treat to have on hand for those occasions!)
4. Work on greeting behavior! -  One of the most common complaints we hear on follow up is, “my dog is too energetic when people come to the door!”  Ever wanted to practice a better strategy but life got too busy?  Well, here’s your chance!  Whether it be finding a strategic spot for a tie-down, practicing a sit-stay while answering the door, or teaching your dog to go to their bed when the doorbell rings, this is an ideal time to find the best technique for you.  Have a family member leave for a few minutes, then ring the doorbell for practice!
5. Listen to the lectures! -  Many of the questions our support center gets, have answers right in our lectures online!  But who of us remembers ALL of that information?  Take a break from your Netflix binge and settle into the lecture of your choice on guidedogs.com, you may be surprised by the hints and tips you’ll pick up!
6. Keep your dog beautiful! -  It’s spring, which means your dog is about to explode into a million little hairs all over your house as they shed out that winter coat.  Grooming keeps them looking their best and is also a wonderful interactive activity that dogs enjoy.  Spend a little extra time each day on these sessions… your dog will look and feel amazing!
7. Watch those waistlines! -  If your activity level has declined, your dog’s has too, and they can pack on pounds pretty quickly.  If your dog is eating more than 2 cups of food a day, consider a food reduction of a half cup.  Or, if they are already eating 2 cups a day, perhaps order a low-calorie food the next time you purchase.  Almost all dog food brands have a weight control option… check it out!
8. Catch them red pawed! -  Do you have a savvy dog that loves to sneak snacks off the floor, coffee table, or counters?  Time for some set ups to show your dog that you’re watching them!  While prevention is the best strategy for keeping food temptations away, catching your dog in the act while they are using their ninja skills to sneak that snack can be very effective!
9. Purchase a new toy!  -  Nothing beats a new Nylabone, or a novel tug toy.  Have plenty at home already?  Try rotating them!  Put half of the toys away for a week, then bring them back out and put the other half away.  Every time they switch your dog will think they just scored with new toys!
10. Indoor games!  -  Dogs love hide and seek; it keeps them active and mentally stimulated.  Simply put your dog on a sit stay, and then go hide in another room with treat in hand.  Call your dog and let them find you!  Obedience sessions can also be enjoyable and a way to keep your dog sharp and paying attention!
11. Zen out together! -  Is there a better way to de-stress than getting a massage?  Try giving one to your dog!  Simply sit on the floor with them and start massaging.  Gently rubbing their bodies, legs, and head can not only make them super relaxed, but also give you a chance to check them over for any bumps or injuries.

We hope this gives you some ideas to try, and helps to keep both you and your dog content and happy at home!

Cheers,

Your GDB Field Service Manager Team

## Back To Basics: Keeping Guide work Basics Fresh And Fun

Lauren Kenney, Director of Client Services

As we continue to shelter in place within our communities, we are aware that many of you may have questions about keeping your dog’s guide work skills sharp. First, we would like to reassure you that your guide will not lose his or her training during this period of restricted travel! With that said, the Field Service Manager team would like offer some suggestions to help you prepare for resuming more extended travel in the future. Please note that this information is also available on GDB’s website at the following link:

<https://www.guidedogs.com/explore-resources/alumni-resources>

Back To Basics: Keeping Guide work Basics Fresh And Fun

Last month we shared ideas to enrich the time spent at home with your guide, keeping boredom at bay while building on good behavior and nurturing your bond. As we continue sheltering at home through the month of April and into spring weather, we’re moving things out of the house for our second installment: advice for keeping your dog’s guide work responses crisp and enthusiasm high. Practicing the basics and creating opportunities for reinforcement will help you both return to a normal routine when the time comes, hitting the road without missing a beat.\*\*\*

\*\*\*As always, the most important consideration is your health and safety, and that of your loved ones. Please be sure to follow social distancing guidelines for your area while attempting to apply any of these suggestions. If that’s not possible, continue to work with your dog only on the activities you can practice while at home.

#1 – Take advantage of any safe opportunity to practice guide work basics!

Dogs have excellent memories and will remember the usual path as soon as you’re back to your normal routine. For now, try to find opportunities for your dog to hear and respond to guide work commands, because they’re also great at generalizing and – because of their training and experience – know to apply those responses to any environment.  As they hear commands and look for hazards and target points, move around obstacles, etc., their habits and skills are being maintained.

-          Patterning counts! Worried about orientation or otherwise unsure of working your dog on a different route? Using your cane while heeling your dog is a great way for your guide to stay engaged and focused on guide work basics while following you through the steps and receiving rewards at key points. Human guide is another great option for this technique, if you’ve been isolating at home with someone who’d like to help. Have your dog in harness while patterning, and use regular guide work commands, but do not pick up the handle. Your dog will get exercise as well as the mental stimulation of a guide work route.

-          Location can vary or stay the same. Perhaps you’re able to access another neighborhood or part of the city for some practice while things are quiet during this period of social distancing. Or maybe there are places around your house for neighborhood exploration. Indoor work can be useful, such as if you have to make a Costco run. Even if you only have access to the same half mile loop around the neighborhood day after day, there are ways to make it more interesting…read on!

-          We all need goals…you’ve probably heard us mention the importance of destinations and a sense of purpose to guide work routes. This is the time to be creative! Since access to most stores is not currently an option, come up with new ideas for target points - a bench, mailbox, light pole, bus stop, or maybe just an area where you can rest and play with a toy for a few minutes. With the right kind of reinforcement, you can convince your dog that pretty much any random landmark is super important to you. Which brings us to the next point….

-          Make it fun and rewarding! Don’t forget to reinforce appropriate responses to commands with kibble or higher value treats, sincere praise, a favorite tug toy, and/or  lovin’ ‘em up when you get to a target point.

o   A clicker is always a great tool to keep things interesting and increase enthusiasm – even prior to a route. Reviewing the clicker lectures will be a great way to revisit this technique if you’re out of practice:

<https://www.guidedogs.com/explore-resources/alumni-resources/class-lecture-materials2/clicker-part1-lecture>

<https://www.guidedogs.com/explore-resources/alumni-resources/class-lecture-materials2/clicker-part2-lecture>

o   You can even stop and do some fun obedience exercises on the route, with or without clicker, to reinforce good behavior and add variety. Your dog will love it and the positive reinforcement will nurture enthusiasm and eagerness for guide work and for pleasing you.

o   Remember how much food you were using in class? And when you first got home? This has probably diminished, but now is a great time for a high frequency of food reward. When you start getting out and about again, bring extra food for more motivation.

o   It’s also helpful to keep in mind that whatever you’re doing at home to reward good behaviors and set clear expectations for your guide, will carry over into guide work Director of Client Services behavior. Being proactive with good house behavior is an excellent way to keep your dog well behaved in all areas! One example would be a knock at the door – if you have someone sheltering in place with you, you can enlist their help for this activity - and your dog is calm. You can reward with a “good dog!” and food reinforcement. You may find you now have more time to work on certain behaviors such as recall work in the house and yard, barking at the door or out the window, or excited greeting behavior. You might also work on keeping the dog out of the kitchen where the food is prepared, dropping food and working on any scavenging behaviors. These are just a few examples.

o   For deeper insight into what motivates your guide dog, review Michelle Pouliot’s lecture on the topic by following this link:

<https://www.guidedogs.com/explore-resources/alumni-resources/class-lecture-materials2/why-does-your-guide-dog-work-lecture>.

-          Practice clear and consistent communication. Squirrels can be hard to resist when they’re playing near the sidewalk on a sunny day! Being proactive in managing unwanted behaviors when they occur is key to a well-balanced partnership. Reviewing the class lectures, “Communicating with your Guide Dog” and “Managing your Guide Dog” will provide a great refresher! Here are links to both:

o   <https://www.guidedogs.com/explore-resources/alumni-resources/class-lecture-materials2/communicating-with-your-guide-dog-lecture>

o   <https://www.guidedogs.com/explore-resources/alumni-resources/class-lecture-materials2/managing-your-guide-dog>

-          And if you’re not having fun with the process on a given day, wait until tomorrow! We all know that these wonderful partners have an uncanny sense for how we’re feeling and these are tough times.  So if you’re down or frustrated, it’s always ok to take a minute to relax, breathe, love up your dog, and try again in a minute or an hour or a day later.

#2 Dogs thrive on routine!

Maintaining the same daily habits will help to prepare your dog for the return to a previous routine, while also providing a sense of stability. For example: your 9-5 office job includes a morning and afternoon commute route, and a lunchtime outing; during office hours your dog lies on a bed next to or under your desk. Simulating this schedule might mean getting out for a route at the usual times. If your dog normally wears a harness for a few hours during the workday, while in meetings and such, maybe try doing the same in your home office during video conferencing. Whatever your normal routine, find ways to create a new one that mimics it.

#3 Keep calm and carry on.

Most importantly, try not to worry. Guide dogs can take time off without any of their work regressing. Your dog will remember the old routes, even if you’ve only done them a few times. In fact, if there were some challenges that you were addressing, you may find the time off was helpful and that a particular difficulty has been resolved once you’re back to the old routine. Also helpful to know is that dogs trained using clicker and food reward/positive methods remember their training very well.  Although you may only be able to get out on short, quiet routes, the positive training on those routes will keep your dog motivated and guide work proficient.

## You’ve Just Gotta Laugh

## My Dog Left me at the BART Station

By Shannon Dillon

Shannon Dillon is a long time guide dog user, and she is a California Association of Guide Dog Users board member. She has volunteered to share an amusing story about her beloved guide, Yalie. Thank you Shannon for your story .

Yalie and I used to travel to and from work every day using the Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) train. We took the escalator almost every day at BART. Yalie always loved escalators and she would pull me toward any escalator she saw.

There was a rule on BART escalators during busy commute times. The rule was that people who wanted to walk down the escalator would walk on the lefthand side of the escalator, and people who just wanted to ride the escalator to the bottom would stand on the right. During crowded, rush hour times, the problem would be that Yalie and I would take up the whole width of escalator, so Yalie would jump on the escalator and walk down in front of me. But she would often go too fast, and she was ahead of me. So I would let go of her leash and she would get to the bottom and wait for me there. Big disclaimor here: This was not suggested or approved by the school, and I’m not saying I would do the same thing today.

Yalie also loved my mom. She would get so excited to see my mom and she lived with my parents for significant periods of time. My parents live a couple hours away so we did not see her all the time. But when we did see her Yalie could not get enough attention from my mom. And she did not like to leave the house unless my mom was with us.

One weekend, my mom was visiting us in the Bay Area. Yalie and I usually walked to BART every morning and home from BART every evening. But since my mom was visiting, she offered to drive us. She dropped us off at BART and Yalie and I went to work like every other day.

At the end of the day, we came home from work, and my mom planned to meet us in the parking lot at BART. Yalie and I got off the BART train. We took the escalator like we normally did. Yalie got ahead of me on the escalator, and I let go of her so she could wait for me at the bottom.

I got to the bottom of the escalator and put my hand out the BART station. and called “Yalie.” There was no Yalie. I called her a couple more times. She had always been right there waiting.

Finally, a BART agent came to me and said “I know you. You come through every day with a dog. Where is your dog?” I said she was just here. We came down the escalator and she is not here. The agent said he remembered her waiting for me at the bottom of the escalator. He told me to wait and he would go look outside the BART station for her. He left to look. I called my mom and told her what had happened. She was in the parking lot and said she’d wait for us there. The agent came back and said he did not see Yalie.

Meantime, my mom had started driving around looking for Yalie. A few minutes later, she came to me in the BART station. She said she had Yalie in the car. She found Yalie walking home. The only thing we can figure out is that she wanted to see my mom, so she left me at BART to go find her.