

ROVER - COME, SIT, LIE DOWN!

Last month I wrote about the COVID 10 to 15 and reminded you all that your pets seem to be getting fatter too. It is important to eat right and get exercise to keep yourself and your pet in shape. There seems to be a light coming up at the "end of the tunnel". This will be good for all of us humans and our pets. For the past year we have been at least partially isolated, with much less social interaction, as we try to avoid getting the COVID virus.

Although pets do not get the COVID virus from their people, there are secondary effects of living in isolation. Veterinarians have reported that some of the animals they see are not as well socialized and therefore do not behave as well as they might have in the past. We go fewer places and therefore most likely expose our pets to fewer situations where they might develop their social skills. They are like children if they are not exposed to various new situations they may not know how to handle these situations. We also have fewer people coming into our homes where our pets might have the opportunity to interact with more people and become better socialized.

During this time of distance learning, children have greatly missed the other benefits of schooling when attending in person. School is more than just learning academic subjects, it is also learning to work together with others and developing good social and communication skills. Our dogs need to develop social skills too, so that they are good citizens in our community.

Dogs that are not around other dogs often have poor doggie interaction skills and may be more aggressive towards them. This may be brought on because they are fearful of what they don't know or you may have a dog that has an inclination towards more aggression and needs to have that trait modified through training and/or behavior modification. Dogs and even cats, may not be as social with people when they don't know anyone other than the people they live with.

Animals are very capable of learning throughout their lives but they need the opportunity to experience a variety of situations in order to enhance their skills. I have learned that the local dog trainers have continued to give classes during this time. Of course, they practice social distancing, wearing masks and having the classes outside, so the opportunity is still there for our pets to get the training they need. Understandably many pet guardian/parents are afraid of putting themselves in harm's way by taking their dog into the public for training and socializing. While training on Zoom is not as much fun or even as helpful, it is possible during this pandemic. Some even enjoy this remote way of training their dog.

A well-behaved dog will be a better member of the society in which he or she lives. The pet will enjoy him/herself more as well. When we know the rules of the road we do better. As well as Zoom lessons, much can be gained from websites, You-tube videos, books

and magazines. By using Google or any search engine you can find an abundance of knowledge about how to train your pet during these COVID times or any other time. Of course, these other methods don't compare with in class doggie training, but as they say, "desperate times call for desperate measures."

During this time we need to look out for our own, our families and our pets well-being both physically and emotionally. We have just about weathered the storm, DON'T GIVE UP NOW!

Cheryl Wicks is the Co-Founder and President of Sammie's Friends