



# Wagging Tails

The Newsletter of Vegas Valley Dog Obedience Club

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VOLUME 50, ISSUE 12

DECEMBER, 2025

- **DOG AIR SERVICE**
- **DOG CHRIST-MAS ACTIVITIES**

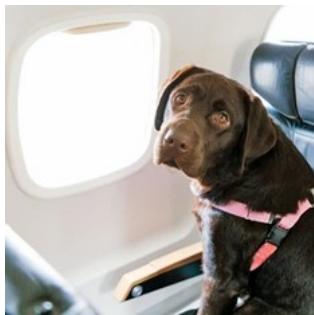
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## This New Dog-Friendly Air Service Lets You and Your Pup Fly Side by Side

by Sio Hornbuckle

Updated May 19, 2025



The worst thing about having a dog? Being away from them, of course. And unfortunately, in many cases, traveling often means parting with your pup — especially if the dog's on the

larger side. Plane travel is usually riddled with restrictions and discomfort, driving is time-consuming and sometimes impossible, and setting sail is a very limited solution, to say the least. That's why RetrievAir, an air service designed specifically for your dog's travel needs, is the answer many pet parents have been looking for. Now, after months of anticipation and some adorably cozy test flights, you can finally book a RetrievAir flight. And in honor of National Pet Month, RetrievAir is offering some serious sav-

ings — you can now book a flight now for 30 percent off.

The difficulty of traveling with pups is something Benton Miller, the founder of RetrievAir, knows well. He and his wife, Whitney, spent years searching for better options for their two Labradors, Maple and Willow. "For us, traveling with our pups meant adventures in the mountains and trips back home to Texas to see family and friends. But every time we looked into flying, we spent hours navigating complicated rules and restrictions — only to realize our options were limited," Miller told Kinship.

**(See FLY Page 3)**

## Fun Dog Facts

1. Dogs can recognize up to 250 words and gestures
2. The Afghan Hound was a favorite of royalty due to its elegance and speed.
3. Puppy breath is caused by a special combination of bacteria and enzymes.
4. A dog can sense the earth's magnetic field. It's a big reason they're so effective at finding their way home.
5. Seventy percent of people sign their dog's name on their holiday cards.





## OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS

President	Daniele Ledoux-Starzyk
Vice President	Susie Osburn
Treasurer	Nancy Swords
Corresponding Secretary	Kathy Mondragon
Recording Secretary	Kristina Klingler
Director	Marti Siska
Director	Geri Hunt

## UPCOMING MEETINGS

MONTH	DATE
DECEMBER	2
JANUARY	6
FEBRUARY	3
MARCH	3
APRIL	7
MAY	5

Board Meeting begins 6:30pm

General Meeting begins 7:00pm

Attendance via Zoom is also available.

Meetings are held on the first Tuesday of each month at 1600 E. Desert Inn Rd., Suite 240 , Las Vegas NV

Vegas Valley Dog Obedience Club  
P.O. Box 80695  
Las Vegas NV 89180-0695  
Phone: (702) 368-0656  
E-mail: [info@vvdoc.org](mailto:info@vvdoc.org)

## We are on the Web!



## Upcoming Events Calendar

**December 13-14, 2025** SSKC AKC Scentwork Trials

**January 1-4, 2026** Palm Springs Kennel Club Show & Trials, California

**January 8, 2026** VVDOC Winter Class Registration

**January 10, 2026** VVDOC Awards Dinner

**January 15, 2026** VVDOC Winter Class session begins

**January 17-18, 2026** SSKC AKC Scentwork Trials

**January 17-18, 2026** Phoenix Field & Obedience Club Trials, Arizona

**January 29-Feb. 2, 2026** Heart of the Desert Classic Show & Trials, Arizona

**February 6-8, 2026** VVDOC Trials

**February 27-March 1, 2026** Superstition Kennel Club Show & Trials, Arizona

**March 20, 2026** VVDOC Trials

**March 21-22, 2026** Silver State Kennel Club Show & Trials

**April 2, 2026** VVDOC Spring Class Registration

**April 9, 2026** VVDOC Spring Class session begins

**April 24-26, 2026** Apple Valley Kennel Club Show & Trials, California

**Apr 30-May 3, 2026** Beehive Cluster Shows & Trials, Utah

**May 1-3, 2026** Fiesta Dog Shows, Arizona

**May 8-10, 2026** Del Sur KC, California

**May 21-24, 2026** (4 Club Cluster) San Bernardino, California

**June 11-14, 2026** Nut Farm Classic Show & Trials, California

**July 2-6, 2026** AKC National Obedience & Rally Championships, Missouri

**July 10-13, 2026** Truckee Meadows Dog Training Club Trials, Nevada

**July 25-26, 2026** Flagstaff Kennel Club Show & Trials, Arizona

**September 3, 2026** VVDOC Fall Training Class Registration

**September 4-6, 2026** Red Canyons Kennel Club Show and Trials, Utah

**September 10, 2026** VVDOC Fall Training Classes Begin

**September 11-13, 2026** Great Salt Lake Kennel Club Show & Trials, Utah

**September 19-20, 2026** Prescott AZ Kennel Club Show and Trials

**October 3-4, 2026** Chino Valley Canine Training Club of AZ Trials

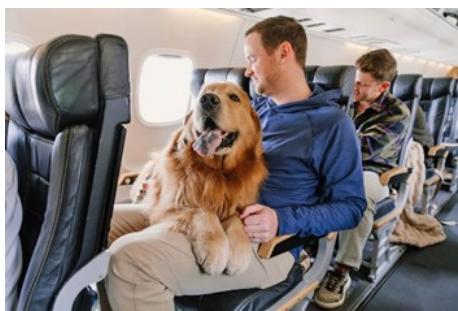
**October 10-11, 2026** Bakersfield Obedience Training Club Trials, California

**October 23-25, 2026** Pahrump Valley Obedience Club Trials

**November 13-15, 2026** Poodle Club of Las Vegas Show & Trials

## (FLY from Page 1)

"Cargo was never an option for us, flying private wasn't realistic, and driving was exhausting. So, we had to make tough choices — missing family events, skipping holidays, and only making the drive a few times a year."



Miller decided that dogs and the people who love them deserve more options. He founded RetrievAir with the aim of creating a travel experience that puts pets first, including big dogs who are often forgotten. "We are able to accommodate a lot of different-sized pups onboard," Miller says. "Also, we don't charge any extra for an extra-large pup compared to a medium-sized pup."

### How does RetrievAir work?

RetrievAir flies out of smaller airports, which means there is a much simpler check-in process without those dreaded TSA lines. Once checked in, pets and their pet parents will travel side-by-side in a 30-seat regional jet; pets sit by the window, and their humans sit beside them. Flights are operated by RVR Aviation, a licensed U.S. air carrier.

In air, flight attendants will make sure pups are cozy, safe, and provided with lots of water and treats. Each flight attendant is specially trained in canine behavior. And don't worry, humans: There are snacks and beverages — including coffee and alcohol — for you, too. The company's first

flight included three Golden Retrievers, two Great Danes, and one Labrador Retriever — all sizable pups who likely would have been relegated to cargo on a typical passenger plane. RetrievAir flights are designed with extra legroom, so there was plenty of space for them to spread out. "On our brand launch flight all the pups, ranging from 35 pounds to 150 pounds, slept most of the flight and loved their experience," Miller says.

Miller will also be launching The RetrievAir Foundation, a nonprofit dedicated to finding homes for pets by providing transportation to assist rescue efforts. The company hopes to partner with organizations and shelters across the country to fulfill aviation needs and raise awareness for adoption.

### How to book a flight on RetrievAir

The airline is offering flights to and from some of the largest and most dog-obsessed U.S. cities. RetrievAir planes fly to and from Carmel-by-the-Sea on California's Monterey Peninsula; Waukegan, Illinois, just north of Chicago; Arlington, Texas, to the west of Dallas; Centennial, Colorado, outside Denver; Los Angeles, California; Farmingdale, New York, on Long Island; Salt Lake City, Utah; Tampa, Florida; and West Palm Beach, Florida.

Whether you and your dog want to lounge on the beach, hike up a mountain, or take in some big city culture, there's likely a pup-friendly flight you can take advantage of. But note that not all flight routes are available every day — for example, flights are available between Colorado and New York only once a week through most of June — so keep in mind that you don't have 100 percent flexibility when it comes to your return flight date.

The average price for a flight is \$750. It's a

pretty penny, but Miller points out that the price is similar to a week of boarding a large dog at a high-end kennel, and private flight options cost thousands (or tens of thousands) of dollars. On a typical passenger plane, pet fees generally range from around \$100 to \$200 on top of your ticket price — and that's for a small dog to stay crated under your seat, or a large dog to travel in uncomfortable, stressful, and sometimes dangerous cargo, out of your sight.

Prices also vary depending on where you're traveling; sorry, cross-country adventurers, but getting from Los Angeles to New York will cost you a couple thousand bucks. Your bicoastal pup would probably tell you it's well worth it, though — that's a long time to be crouched under a seat when they could be gazing out over the clouds.

Ticket options also vary depending on your dog's space needs. For people with small dogs under 40 pounds, it's possible to book a single ticket and keep your pet on your lap, out of a carrier and with easy access to plenty of chin scratches. If you're traveling with another person, one to two pets under 75 pounds can relax on the floor between two seats for free. But if you are traveling alone with a medium-sized dog or have a dog over 75 pounds, flyers must purchase them a ticket. Be warned: Your dog has dibs on the window seat.



All Photos courtesy of RetrievAir



A pet dog fell off an oceanside bluff in San Francisco and spent more than 20 minutes clinging to a narrow ledge until firefighters came to its rescue, officials said.

The brown and white dog was playing with another pooch on Tuesday at Fort Funston, a coastal park with steep bluffs that can drop up to 200 feet (61 meters) to the beach below. The dog, which was not familiar with the area, slipped on some vegetation, lost its traction and fell

## A San Francisco dog wags its tail and kisses

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### rescuers after it's plucked from the side of a cliff

over the cliff, said Rescue Captain Samuel Menchaca of the San Francisco Fire Department.

Firefighters sent a team to retrieve the canine, which had found temporary refuge on a ledge about 40 feet (12 meters) below the top of the cliff. A San Francisco police drone operator who happened to be in the area heard the emergency call go out and captured an aerial view of the dog's location, which he relayed to firefighters.

Once they knew where to find the animal, one rescuer rappelled down the sandy cliff face, attached a harness to the 40-pound (18-kilogram) dog and held it as they were pulled up together.

"He was happy. He knew he got rescued. He was wagging his tail. He was giving everyone kisses," Menchaca said.

Rescuers reunited the dog with its owner.

Menchaca urged people to stay on marked paths, keep their dogs on leashes and their small children close.

"You may think that it's a little berm or a hill, but it is a significant drop," he said.

Firefighters unfortunately have to rescue people a lot in this area, Menchaca said. They train for it, and will always be there, but they don't want people to get hurt, he said.

"One of the best ways to not get hurt on these cliffs and our beautiful seaside parts of San Francisco is to stay on the marked paths," he said.



#### Height

19-24 1/2 inches

#### Weight

35-65 pounds

#### Life Expectancy

12-14 years

#### AKC Sporting Group

An archetypic water dog of France, the Barbet is a rustic breed of medium size and balanced proportions who appears in artwork as early as the 16th century. In profile, the Barbet is slightly rectangular with a substantial head and long, sweeping tail. He has a long, dense covering of curly hair and a distinctive beard. An agile athlete, the Barbet has been used primarily to locate, flush, and



## Breed of the Month

### About the Breed from the AKC

retrieve birds. He has a cheerful disposition and is very social and loyal.

The defining characteristic of this rustic, medium-sized bird dog is the dense curly coat that covers him from the top of his large, broad head to the tip of his curving tail. The coat comes in shades of black, gray, brown, or fawn, sometimes with white markings. The breed's delightfully shaggy coat and amiable nature creates the impression of a Muppet come to life, but the Barbet is a strong, solidly-built dog bred for centuries to be a keen hunter and tireless swimmer. Barbets are very intelligent and learn new things quickly. They have a calm



### Barbet

nature and are easy to live with as long as their exercise needs are being met.

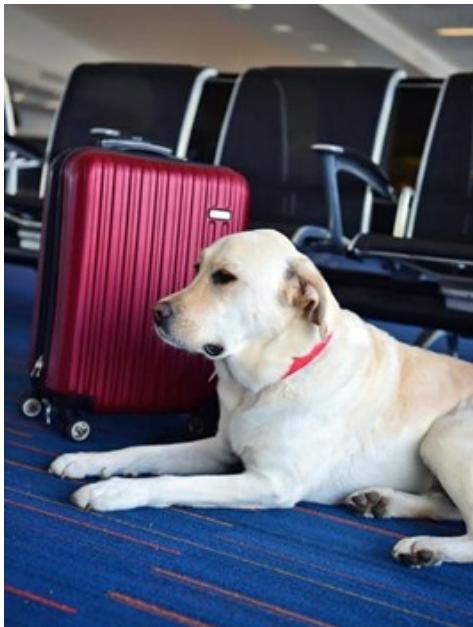
A French water retriever with a woolly, curly coat, the Barbet loves swimming and muddy adventures. Bred to fetch birds from wetlands, it's gentle and social. The coat needs regular grooming, but in return, you get a bright companion with both charm and working ability.

## EU Court Rules That Pets Are Legally Classified As Luggage on Planes

**A woman sued Iberia Air after her dog was lost and never found.**

by Sio Hornbuckle  
October 21, 2025

In recent years, huge strides have



been made to recognize pets as living, loved creatures rather than mere objects. Last summer, a New York judge ruled that pets are considered "immediate family," and guardians who witness their pet's wrongful death are entitled to compensation for emotional distress. Even more recently, the Pennsylvania House of Representatives passed a bill stating that a pet's

welfare must legally be considered when determining custody after a divorce. But there's still a way to go — and not all courts come to the same conclusion. This month, the European Court of Justice announced that pets flying on planes are officially considered baggage.

The decision arose after a passenger, Gisel Ortiz — referred to as Felicísima in documents — filed a claim against Iberia airline. In 2019, her dog, Mona, was checked into a flight at Buenos Aires airport and put into a special crate. According to court documents, the dog's size required her to be placed in the plane's cargo hold rather than the cabin. While being transported to the plane by airline staff, Mona escaped. She was never found, and Ortiz filed a claim for €5,000 in non-material damages.

"Many people laugh because they don't understand what Mona means to me," Ortiz told *Clarín* in 2020. "Since she went missing, all I do is cry and stay glued to my phone waiting for a miracle."

A Spanish court that took on the case stated that animals are sentient beings, so "their loss causes psychological harm that is not comparable, generally speaking, to that caused by the

loss of a simple set of things corresponding to the concept of 'luggage.'" They referred the case to the European Court of Justice, asking whether or not pets should be excluded from the concept of baggage.

The court found that, under their interpretation of the Montreal Convention, which states that airlines are responsible for the damage sustained to baggage during the flight period, pets are considered luggage. "The Montréal convention clearly refers to persons and baggage," the court said. "It therefore follows from the clear wording of this provision that the term 'persons' covers 'passengers', such that a pet cannot be considered a 'passenger.'"

To have any luggage be considered uniquely precious and expensive, a passenger must make a special declaration of interest at the time of checking the bag. Ortiz was rewarded only €1,578.82.

"I believe that a great opportunity has been missed to continue raising awareness of the rights of animals and the people who care for them," Carlos Villa Corta, Ortiz's lawyer, told *The Guardian*. "Ultimately, the ECJ considers that pets do not deserve special or enhanced legal protection compared to a simple suitcase."

### DID YOU KNOW?

**December 9th is International Day of Veterinary Medicine**



# AKC News



AMERICAN  
KENNEL CLUB

## THE AMERICAN KENNEL CLUB TO ACCEPT PEDIGREES FROM THE CANINE OWNERS AND BREEDERS ASSOCIATION OF NIGERIA

News provided by **The American Kennel Club, Inc.**

Sep 17, 2025

NEW YORK, Sept. 17, 2025 /PRNewswire/ -- The American Kennel Club (AKC®), a not-for-profit organization that serves as the world's largest registry of purebred dogs and a leading advocate for canine welfare and responsible ownership, is pleased to announce that it will now accept pedigrees from The Canine Owners and Breeders Association (COBA), through its Foreign Registration Program.

"The American Kennel Club is proud to accept pedigrees from the Canine Owners & Breeders Association (COBA)," said Gina M. DiNardo, President and CEO of AKC. "Collaborating with respected registries around the world strengthens our shared mission and ensures a bright future for all dogs. By working together, we can advance education and opportunities for breeders and owners, and continue to promote the health, well-being, and excellence of all dogs."

Founded in 2019, COBA is a non-profit organization that serves as the official registry of all purebred and non-purebred dogs and is the internationally recognized national kennel club of Nigeria. The organization boasts over 5,000 members and licenses dog sports across the country. It hosts 10 shows annually, which includes six breed specialty shows, three regional shows and a national show.

"We are deeply honored to receive this recognition from The American Kennel Club. This milestone is a proud moment for our entire canine community and reflects our shared commitment to preserving, protecting, and promoting the excellence of purebred dogs worldwide. We look forward to building on this partnership through meaningful collaborations that will benefit breeders, dog owners, and canine enthusiasts between our two nations," said COBA President, Dr. Olakunle Sowumni.

Dogs born in Nigeria will be eligible to participate in AKC events given all other requirements are met, including AKC Foreign Registration.



## New Dog, Old Tricks? Stray Dogs Understand Human Cues

January 17, 2020

*Frontiers in Psychology*

Pet dogs are highly receptive to commands from their owners. But is this due to their training or do dogs have an innate ability to understand human signals? A new study finds that 80% of untrained stray dogs successfully followed pointing directions from people to a specific location. The results suggest that dogs can understand and respond to complex gestures without any training, meaning that dogs may have an innate connection to human behaviors.

If you have a dog, hopefully you're lucky enough to know that they are highly attuned to their owners and can readily un-

derstand a wide range of commands and reducing conflict between stray dogs and gestures. But are these abilities innate or humans.

are they exclusively learned through training?

To find out, a new study in *Frontiers in Psychology* investigated whether untrained stray dogs could understand human pointing gestures.

The study revealed that about 80% of participating dogs successfully followed pointing gestures to a specific location despite having never received prior training. The results suggest that dogs can understand complex gestures by simply watching humans and this could have implications in

Dogs were domesticated 10,000-15,000 years ago, likely making them the oldest domesticated animals on the planet. Humans then bred dogs with the most desirable and useful traits so that they could function as companions and workers, leading to domesticated dogs that are highly receptive to human commands and gestures.

However, it was not clear whether dogs understand us through training alone, or whether this was innate. Can dogs inter (See **STRAY DOG CUES** Page 7)

**(STRAY DOG CUES From Page 6)**

pret a signal, such as a gesture, without specific training, or even without having met the signaling person previously? One way to find out is to see whether untrained, stray dogs can interpret and react to human gestures.

Stray dogs are a common feature in cities around the world and particularly in many developing countries. While they may observe and occasionally interact with people, such dogs have never been trained, and are behaviorally "wild." Conflicts between stray dogs and humans are a problem and understanding how humans shape stray dog behavior may help alleviate this.

To investigate, Dr. Anindita Bhadra of the Indian Institute of Science Education and Research Kolkata, India, and colleagues studied stray dogs across several Indian cities. The researchers approached solitary stray dogs and placed two covered bowls on the ground near them. A researcher then pointed to one of the two bowls, either

momentarily or repeatedly, and recorded whether the dog approached the indicated bowl. They also recorded the perceived emotional state of the dogs during the experiment.

Approximately half of the dogs did not approach either bowl. However, the researchers noticed that these dogs were anxious and may have had bad experiences with humans before. The dogs who approached the bowls were noted as friendlier and less anxious, and approximately 80% correctly followed the pointing signals to one of the bowls, regardless of whether the pointing was momentary or repeated. This suggests that the dogs could indeed decipher complex gestures.

"We thought it was quite amazing that the dogs could follow a gesture as abstract as momentary pointing," explained Bhadra. "This means that they closely observe the human, whom they are meeting for the first time, and they use their understanding of humans to make a decision. This shows

their intelligence and adaptability."

The results suggest that dogs may have an innate ability to understand certain human gestures which transcends training. However, it should be noted that the shyer, more anxious animals tended not to participate, so future studies are needed to determine more precisely how an individual dog's personality affects their ability to understand human cues.

Overall, dogs may be more perceptive than we realize. "We need to understand that dogs are intelligent animals that can co-exist with us," said Bhadra. "They are quite capable of understanding our body language and we need to give them their space. A little empathy and respect for another species can reduce a lot of conflict."

*Frontiers. "New dog, old tricks? Stray dogs can understand human cues." ScienceDaily. ScienceDaily, 17 January 2020. <[www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2020/01/200117080836.htm](http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2020/01/200117080836.htm)>.*



## Braggs and Member Photos

Marti Siska reported that Daffy earned her UD at the Poodle Club Trials in November. Congratulations to you both!



# These dogs are trained to sniff out an invasive insect—and they're shockingly good at it

July 17, 2025  
Virginia Tech

*Imagine if your dog's favorite game -- sniffing out treats or toys -- could help protect America's vineyards, orchards, and forests from a devastating invader.*



Fozzie, a labrador/golden retriever mix, and his owner, Scott Hurst of Salem, Virginia, search a park bench for evidence of the invasive spotted lanternfly. Credit: Clark DeHart for Virginia Tech.

It turns out, it just might.

A new study led by Virginia Tech found that volunteer dog-handler teams -- made up of everyday people and their pets -- can effectively detect the elusive egg masses of the spotted lanternfly, an invasive insect that's damaging farms and forests across the eastern and central United States.

It's the first study to show that citizen dog-handler teams can achieve detection success rates comparable to professional conservation detection dogs.

"These teams demonstrated that citizen scientists and their dogs can play a meaningful role in protecting agriculture and the environment from invasive species," said Sally Dickinson, the study's lead author, who recently earned her Ph.D. from Virginia Tech's College of Agriculture and Life Sciences. "With proper training, dog owners can turn their pets into powerful partners for conservation."

## An invasive pest, a hidden target

The spotted lanternfly, native to Asia, was

first detected in Pennsylvania in 2014. Since then, it's spread rapidly to 18 states, laying its eggs on trees, stone, lumber, and even cars and trailers, where it can hitch a ride to a new home. Catching the bug early is key -- but finding its egg masses is no easy task.

"They often resemble mud smears or lichens and are tucked into bark crevices, cracks, or hidden undersides," said Mizuho Nita, a plant pathologist at Virginia Tech's Alson H. Smith Jr. Agricultural Research and Extension Center, who co-authored the study. "Finding them is like searching for a needle in a haystack."

That's where the dogs come in.

With a sense of smell that's tens of thousands of times more acute than humans', dogs can be trained to sniff out spotted lanternfly egg masses without disturbing the environment. Previous research has shown that professional conservation detection dogs can do this with high accuracy. But professional dogs are expensive, and there aren't nearly enough of them to cover the growing threat.

So the researchers asked: "What if we tapped into the tens of thousands of dog owners already doing scent detection as a hobby around the country?" Known as recreational scent work, this sport allows dogs to find hidden scents for fun in homes, parks, and training classes.

## Dogs of all shapes, sizes, and snouts

Over 1,000 dog owners expressed interest in the study. More than 40 percent had prior experience in sport scent detection or related activities. Ultimately, 182 teams from across the U.S. were selected and given devitalized - or non-hatching - egg masses as training aids.

Participants trained their dogs at home or in small groups, with oversight from a designated local trainer.

After several months of training, the dogs were put to the test in two environments - one indoor and one outdoor. In the controlled indoor environment, dogs had to complete an odor recognition test, identifying the box with the spotted lanternfly egg mass from among multiple boxes with other items and scents. Those that passed the odor recognition test advanced to a field test, where they had to find the scent in an outdoor environment with competing smells.

The results? Dogs correctly identified the egg masses 82 percent of the time in the controlled tests. In real-world field trials, accuracy dropped to 61 percent -- still better than many human searches. Of the dogs that passed both tests, 92 percent were successful in finding live egg masses with minimal extra training.

Study participant Bill Wellborn of Roanoke said his 7-year-old Tibetan terrier, Pepe, enjoyed the challenge. Over the course of six months, they trained with devitalized spotted lanternfly egg masses two or three times a week for 15 to 30 minutes.

"Anytime you can stimulate your dog, it's good for them," Wellborn said. "Pepe obviously enjoys it. And it's a way we can take dog skills and training to help our community."

Katie Thomas of Radford and her pit bull mix, Finch, also volunteered for the study, hoping to put their seven years of recreational scent work to real-world use.

"Being able to do the same thing for the greater good -- for citizen science -- adds another layer we didn't have before," she said.

**(See SNIFF OUT Page 9)**

**(SNIFF OUT From Page 8)****Agriculture's new best friend?**

Erica Feuerbacher, an animal behaviorist and Dickinson's graduate advisor and co-author, said the findings show the untapped power of community science.

"There are thousands of people out there doing scent work with their dogs just for fun," said Feuerbacher, associate professor in the School of Animal Sciences. "What Sally's study shows is that this can be more than a hobby -- these citizen-scientists and their dogs can be a valuable resource for fighting the spread of an invasive pest."

Sniffing out the spotted lanternfly may be just the beginning. A separate study co-authored by Nita, Dickinson, and Feuer-

bacher with researchers from Texas Tech University found that trained pet dogs could also detect powdery mildew, a major fungal disease of grapes and vineyards, with over 90 percent accuracy.

Together, these studies point to a growing role for dogs -- and their owners -- in safeguarding agriculture.

For Dickinson, a longtime firefighter and career search-and-rescue canine handler, the project reflects a personal mission: giving more dogs and their humans a chance to do meaningful work.

"This research is about more than detection," she said. "It's about empowering people to work alongside their dogs to protect the places and communities they care about."

**About the research**

The project was supported by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Institute of Food and Agriculture through the Agriculture and Food Research Initiative's Tactical Sciences for Agricultural Biosecurity program.

The research team included Dickinson, Feuerbacher, and Nita from Virginia Tech and Edgar Aviles-Rosa and Nathan Hall from Texas Tech University.

*Virginia Tech. "These dogs are trained to sniff out an invasive insect—and they're shockingly good at it." ScienceDaily. ScienceDaily, 17 July 2025.*

[www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2025/07/250717013901.htm](http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2025/07/250717013901.htm)



## From the Editor



***Wishing each of you a festive and safe holiday season,  
and a prosperous New Year.***



# Hallie's Tips

A special thanks to AKC Obedience and Rally Judge Hallie Ray, who has generously allowed us to reprint sections from her online blog. These are Hallie's opinions as a judge, not official AKC information. Hallie shared that she was her Club's newsletter editor (Richmond DOC) and they exchanged newsletters with VVDOC in the 1990s. Her blog may be found at <https://dracoshelties.wordpress.com/category/general/>

## Handler Errors I Have Known

I judged this weekend—lovely trials, big (for these days) entries, like 28 in Open B/Preferred Open!

### Double-check your entry confirmation!

First class was Novice A, which was nice; I'm sure those folks get tired of hanging around until the bitter end of most trials. But carefully check your entry confirmation. I was busy giving my walkthrough speech to the handlers and one looked very puzzled. She thought she'd entered Rally Novice A, and was willing to give Obedience NA a try when I suggested checking with the secretary. They found her entry form, and the secretary had made an error. Everything got straightened out, and I hope they did well over in the Rally ring! Remember, secretaries are only human!

### Read the Regulations!

Next, read the regulations. I know, it's considered rude to ever say that to **anyone** on Facebook! But I had a small cluster of NA folks who had "been told" you may use the dog's name with a signal but not a command. That's BACKWARD: the dog's name may **ONLY** be used with an allowed verbal command. Even if you absolutely trust and respect your instructor, read the regs yourself.

### Know and train at your dog's proper jump height!

Following on from reading the regulations, know your dog's correct jump height. It's nerve wracking for the exhibitor, and not pleasant for the judge, to have to measure a dog and change the requested jump height. I don't want to mess up the handler's concentration, nor spook the dog, nor make the dog jump a height it's not trained for! But I measured a dog at 3" over the requested jump height. It may have been even more but I chose to only increase the jump by 2". Sadly, they NQd the ROHJ.

### Did I say, "Read the Regulations?"

If the judge observes something contrary to the regs, it must be scored. From the regs:

- for pace changes, "the dog must speed up or slow down noticeably"
- during off-leash heeling the right hand must "swing naturally"
- before giving the stay command/signal for the Stand for Exam the handler must "stand with the dog in heel position"
- the handler must "return to heel position" after walking around the dog
- the dog is penalized for "sitting between the handler's feet"
- signaling arms/hands must "immediately be returned to a natural position"
- And on and on.

So I scored the teams when

- there was no noticeable change of speed
- the handler's right hand "swung naturally" except during heeling
- the handler didn't stand in heel position at the start of the Stand for Exam
- the handler didn't return to heel position when required
- the dog put its front feet between the handler's feet
- signals were held.

Did you notice that all of those were handler errors? Even the dog sitting between the feet—they were big dog feet and the handler's feet were just far enough apart to accommodate them for a good front

In fact everything in this post is a handler error or handler-caused error! (Okay, the Secretary made an error, but handlers should be alert for those.) We spend a lot of time training, proofing, and preparing our dogs but we shouldn't forget to prepare ourselves too.

Yes, "Read the regulations!"

[Draco Shelties](#)Posted on April 28, 2025

# Dog-Friendly Christmas Activities

## Dog-Friendly Advent Calendar

Seriously, making your own advent calendar for your dog is a fun way to spoil your pup during the Christmas season.

Starting towards the middle to end of November, start collecting empty toilet paper and paper towel rolls. Turn these upcycled items into small boxes and fill them with

dog treats.

My dogs have the excitement of a kid on Christmas morning each day as they open up a new surprise. Without a doubt, this has become one of our favorite dog-friendly activities during the holidays.



Check out the video tutorial below directly from Froda herself (and/or [get the written instructions here](#))!

## Bake Together

Baking with your dog is a great way to bond while making festive treats they'll love. My dogs love to "help" and have become quite the experts in quality control.

They have so much fun during the baking process, and it is guaranteed that they will get me laughing out loud at least once!

## Christmas Cookies

Make Christmas cookies using safe, natural ingredients like pureed fresh fruits and veggies for color. I think Christmas cookies are a must to get into the holiday spirit, and my dogs agree! [Get the recipe](#)



## Candy Canes

Skip the food coloring and create all-natural candy canes for your dog. Use cranberry puree for the red dough and leave the other part plain.

The result? Adorable and safe treats your dog will devour. [Get the recipe](#)



## Cranberry Yogurt Treats

Combine plain yogurt with bits of fresh cranberries and peas to make cute red and green Christmas treats. These are perfect for a healthy snack and are so easy to make!

[Get the recipe](#)



## Shop for Some Dog-friendly Gifts

### Presents for Pets

Pick out new toys, cozy dog beds, or festive sustainable accessories as Christmas presents for your pup. And don't forget healthy treats to keep them engaged (and out of trouble) during family gatherings.

[Read more](#)

### Presents for Pet Parents

Help a fellow pet parent celebrate with handmade holiday gifts or practical items like sustainable poop bag dispensers, grooming products, or natural cleaning supplies. These thoughtful gifts are a great way to spread holiday cheer.

[Read more](#)

### Presents for Dog Walkers

Don't forget to thank the person who helps care for your pup! Gift them reusable water bottles, a versatile dog walking bag, or other handy supplies for their business from a local pet store.

[Read more](#)

## Get Crafty

### DIY Dog ID Tags

Create lightweight, customizable ID tags using air-dry clay—a better way to keep your pup safe while avoiding the clinking noise of metal tags.



These handmade [\(See ACTIVITIES Page 12\)](#)

## (ACTIVITIES From Page 11)

**Sock Octopus Dog Toy**

Upcycle old socks into a playful octopus-shaped toy that will keep your pup entertained for hours. This fun activity requires no sewing, making it an easy way to turn unused socks into a great gift.

[Get the instructions >>](#)

**Sock Bunny Dog Toy**

Turn mismatched or unused socks into a cute bunny-shaped toy. This no-sew craft is a perfect option for pet parents who love to get creative while keeping things simple.

[Get the instructions >>](#)

**Stay Active**

Even during the cold weather, keeping your dog active is crucial for their well-being.

**Dog Paw Disinfectant**

After those snowy walks, clean your pup's paws with a gentle, homemade disinfectant using natural ingredients.

[Get the instructions >>](#)

**Nose & Paw Balm**

Protect your dog's nose and paws from the harsh cold weather with a nourishing balm made with coconut oil and beeswax.

[Get the instructions >>](#)

**About The Author****Jen Agerton**

Hi, I'm Jen, a US-born, Barcelona-based dog mom on a mission to live big, love my pets well, and care for the planet without giving up what makes life joyful. With help from my pack (Phoebe, Franklin, and Froda), I'm exploring low-waste products, DIY toys, homemade treats, enrichment ideas, and sustainable habits that lighten our pawprint without asking us to live smaller. We're figuring it out as we go...and sharing what works along the way.

**Editor's note:**

*This article contains more interesting information but limited space dictated editing this article. You may find the entire article at the link below. Jen encourages you to share her ideas with links found on pages below:*

**<https://thegreenpetproject.com/dog-friendly-christmas-activities/>**

**ABOUT US**

P.O. Box 80695  
Las Vegas NV 89180-0695  
Phone: (702) 368-0656  
E-mail: [info@vvdoc.org](mailto:info@vvdoc.org)

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Please contact [info@vvdoc.org](mailto:info@vvdoc.org) for more information about our organization.