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Dogs in the News



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DOGS IN THE NEWS

TBook Collections

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The Look of Love Is in the Dog's Eyes

By JAN HOFFMAN

APRIL 16, 2015

Those big brown eyes gaze at you, deeply. Your heart leaps. You caress, murmuring sweet nothings. And as those big browns remain fixed on you, the tail wags.

Devoted dog. Besotted owner. That continuous loop of loving reinforcement may begin with the dog's gaze, according to a new report in *Science*.

Japanese researchers found that dogs who trained a long gaze on their owners had elevated levels of oxytocin, a hormone produced in the brain that is associated with nurturing and attachment, similar to the feel-good feedback that bolsters bonding between parent and child. After receiving those long gazes, the owners' levels of oxytocin increased, too.

The dog's gaze cues connection and response in the owner, who will reward the dog by gazing, talking and touching, all of which helps solder the two, the researchers said. They suggest that dogs became domesticated in part by adapting to a primary human means of contact: eye-to-eye communication.

And when researchers gave dogs extra oxytocin through a nasal spray, the female dogs (though not the males) gazed at their owners even longer, which in turn boosted the owners' oxytocin levels.

"What's unique about this study is that it demonstrates that oxytocin can boost social gaze interaction between two very different species," said Steve Chang, an assistant professor of psychology and neurobiology at Yale who was not involved in this latest research.

Dr. Chang, who studies oxytocin in animals, noted that through domestication, dogs came to regard humans as their "key social partners," while humans also came to view dogs as social partners.

"In a way, domesticated dogs could hijack our social circuits, and we can hijack their social circuits," he said in an email, as each species learned how to raise the other's oxytocin levels, facilitating connection.

The researchers also tested wolves raised by humans to see whether a wolf-to-owner gaze would raise oxytocin levels in either or both. But compared with dogs, the wolves scarcely gazed at their owners, and the owners' oxytocin levels barely budged.

Unlike dogs, wolves “tend to use eye contact as a threat” and are inclined to “avoid human eye contact,” wrote Miho Nagasawa, a study author and research fellow at Jichi Medical University.

In an email, Dr. Takefumi Kikusui, a professor in the School of Veterinary Medicine at Azabu University, wrote that he believes that the differences in gaze between dogs and wolves means “that dogs have acquired this superior ability during the evolutionary and domestication process of living with humans.”

He continued: “There is a possibility that dogs cleverly and unknowingly utilized a natural system meant for bonding a parent with his or her child.”

In the first experiment, researchers measured oxytocin levels in the urine of 30 owners and dogs before and after they interacted for 30 minutes. The dogs were males and females, spayed, neutered and intact. The breeds included Golden retrievers, standard poodles, miniature Dachshunds, miniature Schnauzers, a Jack Russell Terrier, and two mixed breed. They also measured oxytocin in five wolves and their owners.

The changes in oxytocin were most pronounced in dogs who fixed longer gazes on their owners, which researchers defined as 100 seconds in the first five minutes of the encounter. They saw no significant difference in oxytocin levels among the breeds or sex of the dogs.

In the second experiment, researchers administered nasal sprays of either saline or oxytocin to dogs. This time, each dog entered a room with three humans: its owner and two strangers. But now, only the female dogs who were given the oxytocin displayed an even longer gaze at their owners, who in turn had spikes in their oxytocin levels. Researchers could not say why the sex of the dog mattered. But they speculated that vigilance in male dogs, set off by the presence of the two strangers, may have moderated the effects of oxytocin.

Other experts on canine behavior expressed caution about overstating the implications of this study.

Dr. Alexandra Horowitz, director of the Dog Cognition Lab at Barnard College, called the study “a fascinating direction of research, because it looks at connections between behavioral measures and hormonal components.” She noted that it raised many intriguing questions: about long and short gazes; why only female dogs reacted to the oxytocin dose; whether other breeds would yield different results. But pointing to the small size of the sample, she added, “I don’t know how it proves the domestication thesis.”

And then there is the meaning of a dog’s “gaze.” The human gaze is layered with nuance. Dog owners may ascribe similar complexity to their dog’s gaze, certain that they,

like parents, can interpret it. (A view endorsed by this owner of a Havanese, whose eager, soulful gaze is both long and expressive, punctuated by cocking his head, and fluttering his ears forward. Speaks volumes.) “If your dog’s gaze helps you think your dog understands you,” said Dr. Horowitz, “that produces bonding.”

But Evan L. MacLean, co-director of the Duke Canine Cognition Center and a co-author of a commentary accompanying the study, said, “We don’t know what the dog’s gaze means. When you look at a human baby, it feels good. Maybe dogs gaze at you because it feels good. Maybe the dogs are hugging you with their eyes?”

But Dr. MacLean, an evolutionary anthropologist, said that fundamentally, for dogs, human behavior is “the telltale of everything that is about to happen.” Are we going to stand or sit? Leave the room? Bring food?

And so they stare at us, fixedly.

“If I was dropped on Mars,” Dr. MacLean said, “and everyone was speaking a language I didn’t understand, and I knew I could never acquire their language, I’d just give up. But dogs don’t. They’re not reluctant to tune in to us at every moment.”

Westminster Dog Show Offers No Joy for Fans of a Charming Galoot



Nathan, a bloodhound, lost the Best in Show competition last year to a terrier. The hound group has won the top prize five times. (Fred R. Conrad for The New York Times)

By RICHARD SANDOMIR

FEB. 16, 2015

Nathan, a 4-year-old bloodhound, was relaxing in his carrier on Monday morning at the Westminster Kennel Club Dog Show. He had already won his breed competition and was biding his time — it would be nearly 12 hours — before he had to face group competition at night against other hounds.

But when a Canadian artist, Alec Baldwin, stopped by with a portrait of Nathan against a desert background, the bloodhound was let out of his carrier in a far corner of Pier 92 in Manhattan. If a fan was willing to paint him in a regal pose, why not oblige by coming out of his room?

So Nathan posed between Heather Helmer, his handler and co-owner, and Baldwin, who is from Manitoba. He kissed each of them in the sloppy style that requires bloodhound handlers to carry extra cloths to soak up the abundant saliva.

“He loves you,” Helmer told Baldwin. “He’s slobbering.”

Nathan’s charm was evident at last year’s Westminster show when he was the overwhelming crowd-pleaser in the Best in Show competition, which he lost to Sky, a wire fox terrier. It was as if an ad hoc Nathan Nation had formed at Madison Square Garden, as if they were trying to catapult him into an unprecedented achievement: first bloodhound to win the top prize at Westminster.

Nathan won the National Dog Show late last year, so was victory plausible at Westminster? Why has a bloodhound never won at the show, which is held during the days at Piers 92 and 94 in Manhattan and at the Garden at night? The Wynn Las Vegas put Nathan’s odds at 10-1, fourth best in the field.

Most of the 192 breeds entered this year have never won Westminster. Indeed, only 47 have.

Is the bloodhound’s exclusion because it is not classically adorable, with its sad, sunken eyes, jowly face and wrinkly neck? Is it the slobber?

Does Nathan, and those before him, remind judges of the bloodhounds who pursued the beloved Paul Newman in “Cool Hand Luke”? Or is McGruff the Crime Dog too much of an authoritarian cartoon bloodhound to adore?

Those who love bloodhounds — with their long heads and floppy ears — do so for their easy disposition and loving demeanor. Sure, they are big, sloppy galoots. But does that make them less deserving of the top prize?

Those questions will continue to be asked about bloodhounds, because Nathan did not successfully defend his hound group title. Instead, a 15-inch beagle named Miss P finished first among hounds at Monday night’s judging, while Nathan finished second.

Miss P, who is also 4, is a grandniece of Uno, who in 2008 became the first beagle to win Best in Show, and followed that with a run of public celebrity. He retired to a farm in Austin, Tex.

“This is a surprise, this is wonderful,” said Eddie Dziuk, who was one of Uno’s owners. He said that Miss P has had a spirited, sportsmanlike competition against Nathan for hound-group supremacy the past year without any trash talk among the rival owners or dogs.

“She moved so fluidly and effortlessly tonight,” he added.

Win or lose at Best in Show on Tuesday, Miss P intends to retire to motherhood.

One of her competitors will be a Shih Tzu named Rocket, the winner of the toy

group, whose ownership group includes Patricia Hearst Shaw, who in 1974, when she was better known as Patty, was kidnapped by the Symbionese Liberation Army.

She is not a stranger to Westminster; in 2008, her French bulldog won best of opposite sex, essentially second place to the winner of that breed competition. At the time, she told People magazine that she understood the incongruity of her notoriety clashing with the showing dogs.

“I guess people somehow imagine that you don’t evolve in your life,” she said after Rocket’s group victory. “I have grown daughters and grandchildren and other things that normal people have.” In addition to Rocket, one of her French bulldogs won second place in the breed earlier.

The Shih Tzu wore a blue bow that supported his topknot. The last two group winners of the night were Flame, a black standard poodle who won the nonsporting group, and an Old English sheepdog named Swagger, the victor in the herding group.

They will face the winners of the terrier, working and sporting groups, who will be chosen Tuesday night before the Best in Show dog is chosen.

A Regal Beagle Seizes the Spotlight



Miss P, a beagle, working the ring at Madison Square Garden on the way to winning Best in Show at the Westminster Kennel Club Dog Show. (Andrew White for The New York Times)

By **RICHARD SANDOMIR**

FEB. 17, 2015

It took 20 minutes for David Merriam, the Best in Show judge at the Westminster Kennel Club Show on Tuesday, to give the dog-loving audience at Madison Square Garden a bit of a shock. After a devilishly long route to making up his mind — he seemed to enjoy building the suspense, smiling a bit impishly as he deliberated — he made the surprising choice of Miss P, a 15-inch beagle and the grandniece of Uno, the first beagle to ever win the big show, in 2008.

Merriam, a retired, white-haired California trial judge, ignored the crowd's favorite, Swagger, an Old English sheepdog, and two other dogs who were believed to be likelier winners than the nearly 4-year-old Miss P: a Skye terrier named Charlie and a Portuguese

water dog with the artistic sobriquet of Matisse. Merry Miss P was not the name on everybody's snout.

Judges rarely, if ever, say why they vetoed other dogs in favor of the winner, and Merriam was no different. In the language of show dog judging, he said that Miss P "had wonderful type" and a "wonderful head" and that as he watched her move on the carpeted floor of the Garden, he said he could simultaneously see "the beagle in the ring and the beagle in the field." That is, he detected, more than in Miss P's rivals, the work that she was born to do, even if her main work is winning ribbons at dog shows.

Will Alexander, Miss P's handler, looked exhausted after the victory. Miss P reclined in his arms, quietly, looking as if she had not worked at all.

"She's hungry and I'm overwhelmed," he said at a news conference.

Looking down at his victorious Canadian dog, he said: "She does this quite a lot but not at quite this magnitude." Asked what she had done especially well, he said, "She just never let me down. She didn't make any mistakes."

Victory would appear to be sweeter for having survived Merriam's judging routine. First he walked alongside the seven dogs, stopping at each one; then he implored them to trot, one after another, around the ring. In the next phase, he examined them, one by one, leaning down to the bigger ones, and assessing the smaller ones on a table. After checking each of them out, he told some, "Well done" and others, "That's good," and then told them to trot up and down a straight path along the carpet. No dog or handler could possibly discern from his words or actions the direction he was headed in.

But one thing was certain: Every time he focused on Swagger, the crowd erupted, shouting his name. The same never happened for Miss P or, for that matter, any of the other dogs.

With the clock ticking toward 11 p.m., Merriam was still undecided. He walked past them again and again, looking, seeking help in his decision; the only help he got, over and over, were the cheers for Swagger. He backed away, took one last look at the seven dogs, and pivoted toward the judges' table, where he recorded his decision. He returned, but was still not ready to announce the winner. He made a little speech, a rather unusual interlude, extolling the Westminster club as a "bulwark and pillar in the sport of purebred dogs" and offering tribute to the owners, handler and breeders of the seven finalists.

Finally — finally — came a choice. But it wasn't for Best in Show. Not yet. First, came the second-place winner, Charlie.

And then, he finally chose Miss P, who quickly found herself at the center of a mid-floor celebration, navigating her way through a bunch of dangling ribbons.

Miss P, who is retiring to motherhood, did not exhibit the palpable charm of Uno,

who howled at strategic points when he was judged at Westminster. Miss P is adorable, of course, but lacks the almost overwhelming charisma of her more famous relative, who became the most famous of all Westminster Best in Show winners. She has not met Uno, who lives in retirement in Austin, Tex., and will soon turn 10.

Caroline Dowell, Uno's owner, said she was delighted by Miss P's victory.

"I didn't expect it," she said. "She's really a nice dog. I don't know her. I've only seen pictures until now."

She said that Uno was not watching the show and insisted that he was still in such good shape that "you can put him in the ring and he'd win tonight."

Alexander declined to describe Miss P's victory as an upset (she has a career 19 best in shows; Matisse has 238) but had only praise for his rival handlers. "They're all masters of their job," he said.

David Frei, the analyst for the USA Network broadcast of the show, said: "It was a great lineup. There were 500 best in shows out there, and she had 19 of them. It's not an upset."

Inside Man's Best Friend, Study Says, May Lurk a Green-Eyed Monster

By JAMES GORMAN

JULY 23, 2014

Any dog owner would testify that dogs are just as prone to jealousy as humans.

But can one really compare Othello's agony to Roscoe's pique?

The answer, according to Christine Harris, a psychologist at the University of California, San Diego, is that if you are petting another dog, Roscoe is going to show something that Dr. Harris thinks is a form of jealousy, even if not as complex and twisted as the adult human form.

Other scientists agree there is something going on, but not all are convinced it is jealousy. And Roscoe and the rest of his tribe were, without exception, unavailable for comment.

Dr. Harris had been studying human jealousy for years when she took this question on, inspired partly by the antics of her parents' Border collies. When she petted them, "one would take his head and knock the other's head away," she said. It certainly looked like jealousy.

But having studied humans, she was aware of different schools of thought about jealousy. Some scientists argue that jealousy requires complex thinking about self and others, which seems beyond dogs' abilities. Others think that although our descriptions of jealousy are complex, the emotion itself may not be that complex.

Dog emotions, as owners perceive them, have been studied before. In one case, Alexandra Horowitz, a cognitive scientist who is an adjunct associate professor at Barnard College and the author of "Inside of a Dog," found that the so-called guilty look that dogs exhibit seemed to be more related to fear of punishment.

Dr. Harris ventured into the tricky turf of dog emotion by devising a test based on work done with infants.

When dog owners petted and talked to a realistic stuffed dog that barked and whined, the people's own dogs came over, pushed the person or the stuffed dog, and sometimes barked. After the experiment, many of the dogs sniffed the rear end of the stuffed dog, suggesting, Dr. Harris said, that the dogs thought it might be real.

Dr. Harris also recorded what happened as the owners petted and talked to a jack-o'-lantern and read a children's book aloud, to see if any old distraction would provoke a reaction. The dogs paid little attention to the jack-o'-lantern and very little to the book.

Dr. Harris concluded, in a paper in PLoS One written with Caroline Prouvost, also at the University of California, San Diego, that the dogs showed a "primordial" form of jealousy, not as complex as the human emotion, but similar in that there is a social triangle and the dog is trying to make sure it, not the rival, receives the attention.

Other scientists had mixed reactions to the work. Dr. Horowitz said she admired the goal but thought the researchers had not shown that the behaviors observed actually indicated jealousy.

"What can be shown is that dogs seem to want an owner's attention when there is attention being given out," she said. "This study confirms that."

Sybil Hart, at Texas Tech, who has studied jealousy in infants, said she thought the research was "very well done and makes a very compelling argument."

If one sees jealousy in babies and dogs, she said, "to some degree, it's innate," which would be important to know for attempts to manage human jealousy.

"Over all, trying to make it go away has not been very successful," Dr. Hart said. "We are trying to eliminate jealousy, and scientists are saying maybe we should try to understand it better."

Jealousy, Dr. Harris wrote in the study, is "the third leading cause of nonaccidental homicide across cultures."

Whatever the dogs' behavior is called, said Brian Hare, a director of the Duke Canine Cognition Center at Duke University, there are practical implications for their owners.

"Attention seeking can lead to jealousylike behavior in dogs that includes aggression in some cases," he said. "So for dogs with suspected aggression problems, it may be important to avoid situations where they feel ignored."

Dog Missing for Months Is Rescued Amid Snowstorm



After five months, Burt, a gray whippet, has been reunited with his owner, Lauren Piccolo. Burt was found on Randalls Island. (Ángel Franco/The New York Times)

By J. DAVID GOODMAN

JAN. 27, 2015

As New York City shut down in anticipation of a fearful snowstorm, a resourceful if hungry gray whippet named Burt approached a pile of canned dog food that rose like a mirage in the snowy expanse of Randalls Island.

Burt would soon learn that it was a trap, albeit one prepared with good intentions by a Fire Department lieutenant who had been trying to catch the scrawny, shivering dog since he first spotted him near the Fire Academy more than three weeks before.

“My nickname for it was the Rock,” said the lieutenant, David Kelly, drawing on the name firefighters give to the academy.

Lieutenant Kelly, who works security there on 24-hour shifts, decided that with the storm bearing down, it was time to finally set a real trap to capture the dog and bring him inside. He brought a cage from home, where he has two rescue dogs of his own, and dog food as bait.

He also learned the dog might be a whippet, and searched the Internet for missing dogs of that type in New York City.

And so it was that shortly before laying the trap, Lieutenant Kelly learned about Burt, who had disappeared from his Harlem home five months earlier and whose owner, Lauren Piccolo, had been posting regular updates to Facebook on her search and reports of sightings.

Seen: by a baseball field in Morningside Park on a September night, one message read. Seen: possibly being walked by a man near Grant's Tomb. In November, a more mournful message appeared: "Happy 1st birthday Burt... wherever you are."

How and when Burt made his way from Ms. Piccolo's apartment on West 120th Street to the sprawling baseball fields and municipal facilities of Randalls Island was not immediately clear. There is a pedestrian bridge linking the island to the East Side of Manhattan around 103rd Street, and there are pedestrian paths off the Robert F. Kennedy Bridge, which towers over the island.

However the dog got there, he quickly found a friend in Lieutenant Kelly, 50, who urged other night-shift workers to leave out food. "I'd never seen the dog out during the day," he said. (Apart from Burt, he said, stray cats roamed the island and also found food at the academy.)

So early Tuesday around 2 a.m., as the snow collected around the Fire Academy on the east side of the island, he left food in the cage, lashed a lanyard to the gate, and waited.

Burt appeared, but managed to run off with the entire plate of food — it had frozen in the cold. Luckily, Lieutenant Kelly said, the dog returned for more; he pulled the line and snapped the cage shut.

Hours later, as the storm subsided, Burt was back at home for the first time since the summer, when he slipped his collar and bolted while on a walk.

"He's on the couch now," Ms. Piccolo, 35, said in a telephone interview. He was expected to make a full recovery.

You Named Me Brutus? Really?

By JAN HOFFMAN

APRIL 3, 2013

What to name the new puppy?

For our family, choosing a name was neither simple nor swift. After all, it had taken my daughters a decade of whining and deliberating over breeds that wouldn't aggravate the allergy-stricken (me), just to get to the point of agreeing to get a Havanese.

And because I am the family research queen, I found a way to make the process even more complicated. A little research elicited a lot of information.

I found lists of the most common dog names. A Web site with thousands of names, sorted into categories like "cool," "cute" and "unusual." And countless dos and don'ts from self-anointed dog-naming experts.

It was an art. A science. Serendipity. Intuition.

There were phonetics rules. And rules that ignored phonetics, instead placing a premium on achieving family harmony. And, of course, there was a simmering debate: Whose needs should the name serve, yours or the dog's?

One of the most consistent pieces of advice I found was to stick to names of one or two syllables, which quickly catch a puppy's attention.

People seem to drift in that direction anyway. At a recent puppy training class, I met Gracie, Nigel, Sasha and a schnauzer mix whose name was the perfect marriage of 21st-century preoccupations and ür-dogginess: Browser.

JoAnn Vela, the owner of Canine Cuties Dog Grooming, in Chicago Ridge, Ill., has four dogs: Moose, Bleu, Tyson and Coach. Moose, she explained, because their English mastiff was such a galumphing klutz. Bleu, because her daughter thought the dog looked so sad. Tyson, because her husband wanted the German shepherd to have a tough name. And Coach, because when her daughter gazed longingly at the Shetland sheepdog in a pet shop window, the dog gazed back longingly at her Coach purse.

The four-syllable Gentleman Jack, of Cedar Grove, N.J., defies this rule. When Lauren Meyer, a stay-at-home mother who owns a Labradoodle, first saw a picture of him, she wanted to call him Jack, because she thought he looked like a frisky rogue. But her son insisted on a name with a little more class. At the time, he was a student at the University of Virginia, whose guiding spirit is the gentleman-scholar Thomas Jefferson.

Also, the dog is whiskey-colored, and Gentleman Jack, it should be noted, is a brand of Jack Daniel's whiskey.

On occasion, the name expands to six syllables. "When he's bad," Mrs. Meyer said, "we call him Gentleman Jack Meyer."

Another piece of advice: To help the puppy distinguish its name from ambient noise, choose something with a sibilant consonant or blend (an "s," "sh" or "zh") or, better still, a crisp, commanding consonant (a "k" or hard "c").

Laura Waddell, a dog trainer and animal behaviorist in New Jersey, works with a bred-in-captivity wolf named Tacoma, and she named her own golden retriever-spitz mix Loki. "They can distinguish frequency ranges that we cannot, particularly dogs with pricked ears, which work almost like parabolic microphones," she said.

"The hard consonant is a relatively sharp sound that the dog can respond to quickly. I think sibilant sounds are more muddled for them."

Mrs. Vela recalled grooming a beagle named Tank. Some customers apparently don't look under the hood, so to speak. After the session, she informed the dog's owners that Tank was a Tinker (as in Tinkerbelle). Acceptance was hard.

"The husband and wife still each call the dog by a different name," Mrs. Vela said. But at least they abide by the rule.

Some experts also advise picking a name that ends in a long vowel or a short "a."

"Simba?" I asked my daughters. "Lobo? I know, let's call the puppy Orca!"

"Jovi," they snickered, after Jon Bon.

Martin Deeley, a Florida trainer and executive director of the International Association of Canine Professionals, said he prefers names that end in a long "e," like Benny or Dolly. "I think it gives a nickname a loving touch," he said. "Sweet becomes Sweetie."

He also recommended making sure the name could not be confused with a command. That eliminated names like Kit, which sounds too much like "sit," and Beau, which sounds like "no" (the Obamas obviously ignored this rule in naming their dog Bo).

Another caution: Try to avoid the most popular names. Consider the canine traffic jam that could ensue at the dog park when a pack of owners starts calling their Maxes and Busters.

But don't go in for anything trendy or overly witty. Pick something enduring, that you and the dog can live with, one hopes, for a decade or more. Mr. Deeley, who has been working with dogs and their owners for nearly 40 years, laments the fact that this generation of parents tends to allow the children to name the dog. Thus the perpetuation of names inspired by Saturday-morning cartoon characters. Or a certain yellow Labrador

of his acquaintance, whose family allowed their 6-year-old to saddle with the moniker Freckles.

As Alexandra Horowitz, who teaches animal behavior and psychology at Barnard College, said: “There’s a dog in my neighborhood named Harbinger. It’s clever, but they weren’t planning practically.”

Still, Dr. Horowitz, who wrote “On Looking: Eleven Walks with Expert Eyes,” a new book that examines city streets from the perspective of both dog and human, is a rule-breaker herself.

“I like names that I’m willing to say repeatedly,” she said, “because you find yourself often conversing with your dog.” Her dogs have had names like Pumpnickel, Finnegan and Upton.

And finally, the admonition that will set off the most howls: Avoid human names.

The Monks of New Skete, a monastic community in upstate New York, breed German shepherds and are renowned for their dog training books. In a 2012 newsletter, Brother Christopher Savage explained their objection to human names. “Sometimes, without realizing it, owners who give their dogs human names are more likely to fall into the trap of anthropomorphizing their pets,” he wrote. “In our experience, that is a formula that invites big problems.”

“What about Sheldon?” asked my 14-year-old, ignoring the monks’ advice. “He’s my favorite character on ‘The Big Bang Theory.’ ”

“No!” my husband and I barked.

This may be the most difficult rule to follow. As Mrs. Vela said: “Especially older people and people without kids. They are upfront: ‘These are my children.’ I groom a lot of Bobbies, Stellas and Joeys.”

Dr. Horowitz takes issue with the monks’ rule as well. “Human names are fine,” she said. “I don’t think a dog cares if it’s named for us. It’s more that we’re finding a way to give the dog an identity, to draw a place for it in our lives.”

Mr. Deeley agreed: “I think the name is overplayed in training. I want dogs to concentrate on the command instead.”

“What does a name mean to a dog?” he continued. “ ‘Hey, look at me?’ ‘Follow me?’ ‘I love you?’ ‘You’re in trouble?’ Or ‘I’m lonely and I missed you?’ Dogs read body language and how you smell to them. It’s about your voice and your energy, not whatever you call him. You can make contact with a deaf animal.”

Mary Cody can attest to that. Ms. Cody, the founder of Aunt Mary’s Doghouse, a volunteer rescue and adoption program in Hope, N.J., named her deaf Australian shepherd Dumia, the Hebrew word for silent, and the dog follows her everywhere.

She has named hundreds of dogs, and said she tries to make sure each name speaks to the particular dog. “I’ll try a name and sometimes it’s a dud,” Ms. Cody said. “When I call ‘Nick!’ he’s like, ‘Yeah, what?’ ” she said, referring to an Akita mix. “But when I call him Louie the Lip, he comes running.”

By now we were armed with almost too much information. So we decided to focus on the puppy himself.

The Havanese originally flourished in Havana, and it is often described as a big dog in the body of a little one. When we finally met ours, he was not quite four pounds, but friendly, playful, curious, indefatigable. He had a comically endearing personality.

Such a funny little guy, we thought. And that’s how his name came to us. O.K., so it’s a human name — that of a comedian, a Marx brother.

It’s also a Spanish word that, used affectionately, can mean “little guy.” It satisfied my compulsive research requirements, with a hard, crisp sound and a final long vowel.

And when we call him — “Chico!” — he cocks his head quizzically and then races over. Sometimes we don’t even have to use his name.

Love for a Dog That's No Bark and All Yodel



In the last year, the French bulldog population has reached an unofficial count of 32 in the Ditmars section of Astoria, Queens. (Michelle V. Agins/The New York Times)

By N. C. MAISAK

November 13, 2009

Donut the French bulldog was sitting outside Starbucks. Romeo was perusing the produce at the Korean market down the street, and Jack was going to see Oskar for a play date. Oh yes, Oskar was in his usual spot, sunning himself on his little red bed in the window of the Jumping Bulldog, the chic dog and cat boutique named after him.

Stroll the streets of the Ditmars area of Astoria, Queens, and you're bound to run into a French bulldog or 32, which was where the unofficial tally stood at last count.

"Last year, there were only eight," said Tanja R. Firrigno, Oskar's "mom" and the owner of the Jumping Bulldog. "There are several more that I haven't met, but I've seen them in the neighborhood. I see far more of them here than I do of any of the designer breeds."

With their rabbit ears, punched-in faces, squeaky-toy voices and wrestler's bodies, French bulldogs are a noticeable curiosity in Astoria, where the dog of choice still runs to pound, not pedigree.

"They attract more attention than any other dog," said Erin Mara, owner of Donut, who is white with a black mask face. "I can't walk two steps without people stopping us. I walk dogs in my spare time, and no other breed brings this type of response."

It's hard not to fall for Frenchies, which were popular lap dogs in wealthy households in 19th-century France, but it's not easy to understand why working-class Astoria has succumbed so suddenly. Often conceived via artificial insemination and delivered via Caesarean section, French bulldogs can sell for \$2,500 to \$5,000. According to the Web site of the French Bull Dog Club of America, the dogs are difficult to breed and the C-sections are made necessary by the mother's narrow hips and the puppies' large heads.

"For decades, Astoria has been waiting in the wings to become the next Manhattan," said George Halvatzis, a real estate agent whose Ditmars Boulevard office Donut passes during his daily constitutionals. "We have been getting trendy restaurants and trendy shops, but more than anything, the Frenchies, which are so Manhattanesque, may be the signal that this is finally starting to happen."

Mr. Halvatzis, who owns a shar-pei named Chopper, said the breed was perfect for apartments. "Because of the weak economy, landlords have gotten more lax about taking dogs," he said. "And French bulldogs are just the right size and temperament for smaller spaces."

The dogs have another landlord-endearing quality: "They don't bark," said Luke Herman, who, with his wife, Natalia Lyons, owns Jack. "They have their own language of yodels, screams, chirps, warbles and what can best be described as snorfles."

JoAnn and Matt Franjola, owners of Romeo, say he is the perfect companion for their 3-month-old son, Chase. "They're fabulous together," Ms. Franjola said. "Romeo licks his toes, and if the baby cries, Romeo runs up to me and stares as if to say, 'Are you going to get that?'"

The only thing better than one Frenchie, say Givanni Ildefonso and Jose Sandin, is two. Coco and Samantha, sisters whose fall wardrobe includes matching brown and pink hoodies that complement their fawn bodies and black masks, have turned their owners into celebrities. "We meet new people every night," Ms. Ildefonso said. "And people always say: 'Wow! They're twins. How do you tell them apart?'"

Astoria Frenchie owners dismiss the idea that the dogs are status symbols and emphasize that they require as much tender loving care as children. They can develop

breathing and respiratory problems because of their short, pressed-in faces, and are prone to joint diseases, spinal disorders and heart defects.

“There’s an immense commitment, financially,” says Josh Flanagan, whose 2-year-old George Clooney is among the original Astoria Eight. “I’ve heard that over the life of the dog, it could cost \$40,000 in veterinarian bills, premium food and general upkeep. My wife, Lindsay, and I love ours to death, but I don’t know if we’d get another.”

Astoria’s fascination with the breed can be traced back four years to the first Oscar, a high-fashion fawn who wore a red bandana around his neck. His owner, a tall, ponytailed man who was said to have been an opera singer, taught Oscar to walk at his side, leashless, and to wait for him outside the shops on 31st Street.

Oscar moved to the West Coast, Donut has since taken up the golden leash, and the new Oskar, with his darling doggie-in-the-window routine, has turned the Jumping Bulldog into a French bulldog franchise.

Dogs and owners have become fast friends, so much so that Ms. Firrigno was considering holding Frenchie Fridays at the shop for some off-leash playtime.

“You can’t be a Frenchie owner and be antisocial,” Ms. Mara said. “There’s a special bond between Frenchie owners. It’s like a club.”

Mr. Herman agreed, adding that those in the Frenchie fraternity “recognize the dogs but sometimes not the people. But we have developed social relationships with some of the owners, and sometimes we even hang out without the dogs.”

There is also a special bond between the pets. Jack, Oskar and Donut, for instance, have become fast friends.

“I can’t imagine not ever having a Frenchie,” Ms. Lyons said. “Someday, I would like to get a little sister for Jack.”

Jack looked up at her and smiled like a clown. On command, he gave Mr. Herman a high-five with his petite paw, and they continued down the street.

“Oh, that’s so cute,” a woman cooed as she knelt to pet his head. “What kind of dog is that?”

The Tao of Temple



Temple Grandin, an expert in animal behavior, says it is vital for dogs to play off-leash, preferably in a wide-open area. (James Estrin/The New York Times)

By JILL ABRAMSON

February 4, 2010

On Sunday afternoon, in subfrigid temperatures, Henry, Scout and I headed to the farm near our house expecting that no other humans or dogs would be crazy enough to be outside. I knew Scout would be disappointed by an empty landscape, so I lit up at the sight of her bounding out of our car as she caught sight of two of her regular dog friends, Ikey and Kaboo. In nasty weather, when my children were toddlers, I often fretted the playground would be empty, just as I was doing now.

Our little shopping expeditions with Scout are also reminiscent of our early parenting years. Scout's favorite indoor activity is pulling on the leash, in a frenzy of anticipation, toward the treats section at Petco. She stops at the Snausages, a waxy version of pigs-in-the-blanket with ingredients, I fear, that are the nutritional equivalent of Twinkies, and looks at me with begging eyes. This is the puppy equivalent of how my children once dragged me down the aisles at Toys "R" Us and pleaded for plastic guns or

glitter makeup. If you have small companions with you, it is difficult to get through the checkout line at either store for under \$50.

These comparisons were on my mind last week when I met Temple Grandin, the best-selling author and revered expert in animal behavior. During a conversation before the premiere of the new HBO biopic in which Claire Danes plays her, Ms. Grandin reassured me that it's fine to treat your dog like a child. They just shouldn't be so pampered that they do not get plenty of exercise and have a chance to run around with other dogs.

"We've bred them to be hyper-socialized," said Ms. Grandin, who is autistic and thinks in pictures, which, in the case of highly visual animals like dogs gives her special insights into animals. Decked out in Western gear, including a royal blue, satiny shirt decorated with horses, Ms. Grandin offered funny stories about the dogs of her youth as well as a helpful overview of dog behavior. "We've kept their puppy characteristics, so it's natural that some people treat their dogs like children," she explained. "And they are very attuned to us."

Our conversation was timely because of a much discussed New York magazine article by John Homans which argued that we have gone way too far in spoiling our pooches, often treating them better than our human family members and friends. Mr. Homans is mainly writing about urban dogs, saying that the owner-dog relationship has become "twisted," with many urban owners making their dogs the sole emotional focal point of their lives.

In the piece, "A Dog is Not a Human Being. Right?" Mr. Homans says: "If learned helplessness sounds like an urban condition, it may be because the dog is more and more an urban species. Even in the suburbs, the dog's unleashed, unfenced, carefree outdoor life is largely at an end. The dogs are in the house, even in the bed (The doghouse is now mostly for husbands.)" He says these conditions have created a canine "identity crisis."

Ms. Grandin actually agrees with a lot of this. She says it is vital for dogs to play off-leash with other dogs, preferably in a wide-open area, not the urban dog park. Exercise is vital, and being cooped up in apartments can create disorders like acute separation anxiety. She also agrees that because we have prized puppy characteristics in breeding, dogs sometimes exist, as Mr. Homans describes it, in an odd state of "perpetual puppyhood."

In his sardonic description of New York City dogs accompanying their owners to expensive "pawtisseries," Mr. Homans obviously agrees with Ms. Grandin that pups would rather be with other dogs than sharing a latte moment alone with their owners.

As Ms. Grandin crisply made her points about dog life, she told me she could see all

the dogs of her youth, many of them goldens like Scout, in her mind's eye. She has owned a lot of dogs throughout her life but doesn't have one now, she says, because she is on the road a lot promoting her books and now, the HBO movie, which will be shown on Feb. 6.

The article, and my conversation with her, made me think more deeply about Scout's socialization and her relationship with us. When she was a new puppy, we knew it was important to expose her to other dogs, including puppies, and all kinds of humans, especially the elderly and young children. In the country, she had her farm playmates; in the city, she was happy to play off her leash at dog runs and sometimes went to dog day care.

She bonded quickly and closely to us and we fell madly in love with her.

Over the summer, she fell in love with a much older couple who were our close friends and spent a joyous week playing backyard baseball with a 7-year-old visitor. These encounters were serendipitous, but others were scheduled. In the country, we drove to the farm every morning at 7 to see our regular human and dog friends. In the afternoons, we were regularly invited to a backyard pool party for dogs, where two bigger goldens taught Scout her place and her limits.

In the winter, we've been stuck indoors more. During the week, it has sometimes been too cold and windy to make it to our usual dog run. At one closer to our apartment, Scout doesn't know the dogs as well, and she has been anxious and shy, sticking by my side. And when a Times colleague stopped by our house with an infant and a toddler, Scout barked and barked. She seemed afraid.

When it's so cold, it's tempting to hibernate with Scout. It's cozy to sit next to her on the couch, where we allow her to doze. But it's vitally important to continue socializing her during her first year (she's now almost 10 months). And it's important for us not to make Scout a surrogate child and infantilize her. Lately, I've caught myself cooing to her in a canine variant of baby talk. Henry and I could probably benefit from more socializing without dogs.

To make sure I don't go too far in the infantilizing direction, I ordered a new dog bed for Scout from Orvis. She is NEVER going to sleep with us.

Once Known for Hunting, Now for Humor



The Russell Terrier made its debut at the 137th Westminster Kennel Club Dog Show. (Fred R. Conrad/The New York Times)

By MARY PILON

FEB. 12, 2013

On Tuesday morning, a gaggle of 15 wiry-haired Russell terriers scampered into Ring 2 at Piers 92/94 in Manhattan to make their Westminster Kennel Club Dog Show debut.

Dozens of onlookers gathered to watch the judging, applauding heartily for a breed that has long been a household favorite.

“It’s a validation,” said Nodie Williams, a Russell terrier breeder from Winslow, Ark., as four of her dog’s competitors played on grooming tables. “They’ve been in the United States for decades, and to have them at Westminster is a huge milestone.”

In addition to the Russell terrier, Westminster admitted the treeing walker coonhound into this year's show as a new breed, bringing the total of breeds and varieties to 187. The classification of terriers can be perplexing to dog show followers. There were 31 kinds of terriers competing in the group Tuesday. While the Russell terrier gained acceptance at Westminster this year and the Parson Russell terrier is also a Westminster staple, the Jack Russell Terrier Club of America maintains its own registry and does not show at Westminster.

The Russell terrier is the "ultimate working earth terrier," according to Westminster. The breed originated in England in the 1800s as Russell terriers gained favor in fox hunting and were toted on horseback in terrier bags, the club said.

"The hallmark of the breed," Westminster says, "is its small, oval-shaped, spannable, compressible chest, which allows them to hunt efficiently below ground, pulling, pushing and bending through tight turns and narrow tunnels."

But on Tuesday at the benching area, it was their overall cuteness — wiry fur, a squarish body, and plucky attitude — that gained the elite Russell terriers popularity among dog show goers.

A Russell terrier named Legs posed for dozens of photographs with a steady stream of adoring fans.

"Almost all of them were champions and looked beautiful," said Legs's owner and breeder, Frank Zureick, of the other Russell terriers in the ring. "The competition has really taken off."

The Russell terrier's sense of humor has attracted many dog lovers to the breed rather than the mechanics of bone structure and coat quality, said Dr. Candace Lundin, Zureick's wife and the owner and breeder of another Russell terrier, Turbo.

"They're active and fun, but also so loving," she said.

An added challenge for first-time competitors is finding out a judge's interpretation of the standard because no precedent has been set, Lundin said.

"We're just starting to see what the standard here should be," she said. "If you looked at the judge's decisions today, they were a bit all over."

Billie Jean won the first-ever best of opposite sex for the breed and seemed unfazed by the throngs of fans who strolled by to take her photograph as she took a victory nap. Amid the polite claps of fans and a tense competition, Billie Jean's brother, Columbus, won the first-ever best of breed for Russell terriers.

"The two that won were good representations of the breed," Chris Manelopolous said of the prizewinning siblings. "The quality was great for a new breed."

He said he was pleased with Billie Jean's performance and was eager to see how the

Russell terrier fared in group judging Tuesday night.

“A best in group or a best in show for the new breed would be huge,” he said.

His wife, Rachel Corbin, who handled Billie Jean, had with an iPhone containing photographs of the dog and her pals wearing Santa hats and bunny ears.

“I know it sounds ridiculous,” Corbin said, flipping through the images. “But she’s famous. And we’re just getting started.”

Dog Park Opens With Help From Mayor's Best Friends



Diana L. Taylor and the mayoral Labradors, Bonnie and Clyde, at the new TriBeCa dog park. (Sara Krulwich/The New York Times)

By MICHAEL M. GRYNBAUM

AUG. 5, 2013

They reside a rubber ball's throw from Fifth Avenue, take chauffeured laps around town in a black sport utility vehicle, and occasionally scamper into a helicopter for a day trip.

Bonnie and Clyde, better known as the First Dogs of New York City, enjoy many of the lifestyle benefits associated with their somewhat reluctant owner, Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg, and his more canine-inclined companion, Diana L. Taylor, who acts as their primary caretaker.

So it seems only fair that the yellow Labradors — a Christmas gift for the mayor from Ms. Taylor a few years back — chip in every so often with the family business.

On Monday, Bonnie and Clyde found themselves sitting by a podium in Hudson River Park, the celebrity guests at a ribbon-cutting for a newly constructed dog park in the TriBeCa neighborhood of Manhattan.

“Bonnie and Clyde just wanted to say they are so happy that this dog run is opening now for their friends on the Lower West Side,” Ms. Taylor, the chairwoman of the Hudson River Park Trust, told a small gathering of reporters. “Bonnie and Clyde say thank you very much.”

Actually, Bonnie and Clyde looked bored. Gathered at the feet of the elegantly dressed Ms. Taylor, they acted like corgis in regal repose, coolly examining the shaggier breeds in their midst. A cockapoo yipped nearby; Clyde offered a yawn.

As with their uptown-minded owner, downtown is not these dogs’ usual spot.

“We live on the Upper East Side,” Ms. Taylor explained in an interview. “We have sniffed through every bush in Central Park.”

Ms. Taylor was asked if Bonnie and Clyde had been invited to make an endorsement in the mayoral race.

“Well, yes, they have, as a matter of fact,” she replied, as Bonnie panted beside her. “But they’ve been thinking about it, and they really can’t endorse anybody during the primary, but we’ll see what happens in the general election.”

Much the same could be said about Mr. Bloomberg, who has not said whether he will issue an endorsement before Primary Day on Sept. 10.

Does Ms. Taylor have a dog in the race? “We’ll see what happens,” she said, smiling behind oversized sunglasses. The circuslike nature of the campaign, she added, has been “a little bit upsetting.”

“I wish that people could talk about the issues, the issues like jobs and picking up the garbage and safety and security and education,” she said.

It was time to dedicate the park. A woman appeared, carrying a pile of enormous novelty-size scissors. Snip! Ms. Taylor smiled brightly. The Labs trotted into the park and promptly peed on a tree.

Did Ms. Taylor ask Mr. Bloomberg to come along on Monday?

“He’s busy running the city,” she said, adding that he might stop by another time.

“Next year,” she said, “when he has nothing to do.”

She let out a loud laugh. “We’ll get him down here.”

Opinion: Dogs Are People, Too

By **GREGORY BERNS**

OCT. 5, 2013

For the past two years, my colleagues and I have been training dogs to go in an M.R.I. scanner — completely awake and unrestrained. Our goal has been to determine how dogs' brains work and, even more important, what they think of us humans.

Now, after training and scanning a dozen dogs, my one inescapable conclusion is this: dogs are people, too.

Because dogs can't speak, scientists have relied on behavioral observations to infer what dogs are thinking. It is a tricky business. You can't ask a dog why he does something. And you certainly can't ask him how he feels. The prospect of ferreting out animal emotions scares many scientists. After all, animal research is big business. It has been easy to sidestep the difficult questions about animal sentience and emotions because they have been unanswerable.

Until now.

By looking directly at their brains and bypassing the constraints of behaviorism, M.R.I.'s can tell us about dogs' internal states. M.R.I.'s are conducted in loud, confined spaces. People don't like them, and you have to hold absolutely still during the procedure. Conventional veterinary practice says you have to anesthetize animals so they don't move during a scan. But you can't study brain function in an anesthetized animal. At least not anything interesting like perception or emotion.

From the beginning, we treated the dogs as persons. We had a consent form, which was modeled after a child's consent form but signed by the dog's owner. We emphasized that participation was voluntary, and that the dog had the right to quit the study. We used only positive training methods. No sedation. No restraints. If the dogs didn't want to be in the M.R.I. scanner, they could leave. Same as any human volunteer.

My dog Callie was the first. Rescued from a shelter, Callie was a skinny black terrier mix, what is called a feist in the southern Appalachians, from where she came. True to her roots, she preferred hunting squirrels and rabbits in the backyard to curling up in my lap. She had a natural inquisitiveness, which probably landed her in the shelter in the first place, but also made training a breeze.

With the help of my friend Mark Spivak, a dog trainer, we started teaching Callie to go into an M.R.I. simulator that I built in my living room. She learned to walk up steps

into a tube, place her head in a custom-fitted chin rest, and hold rock-still for periods of up to 30 seconds. Oh, and she had to learn to wear earmuffs to protect her sensitive hearing from the 95 decibels of noise the scanner makes.

After months of training and some trial-and-error at the real M.R.I. scanner, we were rewarded with the first maps of brain activity. For our first tests, we measured Callie's brain response to two hand signals in the scanner. In later experiments, not yet published, we determined which parts of her brain distinguished the scents of familiar and unfamiliar dogs and humans.

Soon, the local dog community learned of our quest to determine what dogs are thinking. Within a year, we had assembled a team of a dozen dogs who were all "M.R.I.-certified."

Although we are just beginning to answer basic questions about the canine brain, we cannot ignore the striking similarity between dogs and humans in both the structure and function of a key brain region: the caudate nucleus.

Rich in dopamine receptors, the caudate sits between the brainstem and the cortex. In humans, the caudate plays a key role in the anticipation of things we enjoy, like food, love and money. But can we flip this association around and infer what a person is thinking just by measuring caudate activity? Because of the overwhelming complexity of how different parts of the brain are connected to one another, it is not usually possible to pin a single cognitive function or emotion to a single brain region.

But the caudate may be an exception. Specific parts of the caudate stand out for their consistent activation to many things that humans enjoy. Caudate activation is so consistent that under the right circumstances, it can predict our preferences for food, music and even beauty.

In dogs, we found that activity in the caudate increased in response to hand signals indicating food. The caudate also activated to the smells of familiar humans. And in preliminary tests, it activated to the return of an owner who had momentarily stepped out of view. Do these findings prove that dogs love us? Not quite. But many of the same things that activate the human caudate, which are associated with positive emotions, also activate the dog caudate. Neuroscientists call this a functional homology, and it may be an indication of canine emotions.

The ability to experience positive emotions, like love and attachment, would mean that dogs have a level of sentience comparable to that of a human child. And this ability suggests a rethinking of how we treat dogs.

Dogs have long been considered property. Though the Animal Welfare Act of 1966 and state laws raised the bar for the treatment of animals, they solidified the view that

animals are things — objects that can be disposed of as long as reasonable care is taken to minimize their suffering.

But now, by using the M.R.I. to push away the limitations of behaviorism, we can no longer hide from the evidence. Dogs, and probably many other animals (especially our closest primate relatives), seem to have emotions just like us. And this means we must reconsider their treatment as property.

One alternative is a sort of limited personhood for animals that show neurobiological evidence of positive emotions. Many rescue groups already use the label of “guardian” to describe human caregivers, binding the human to his ward with an implicit responsibility to care for her. Failure to act as a good guardian runs the risk of having the dog placed elsewhere. But there are no laws that cover animals as wards, so the patchwork of rescue groups that operate under a guardianship model have little legal foundation to protect the animals’ interest.

If we went a step further and granted dogs rights of personhood, they would be afforded additional protection against exploitation. Puppy mills, laboratory dogs and dog racing would be banned for violating the basic right of self-determination of a person.

I suspect that society is many years away from considering dogs as persons. However, recent rulings by the Supreme Court have included neuroscientific findings that open the door to such a possibility. In two cases, the court ruled that juvenile offenders could not be sentenced to life imprisonment without the possibility of parole. As part of the rulings, the court cited brain-imaging evidence that the human brain was not mature in adolescence. Although this case has nothing to do with dog sentience, the justices opened the door for neuroscience in the courtroom.

Perhaps someday we may see a case arguing for a dog’s rights based on brain-imaging findings.

Gregory Berns is a professor of neuroeconomics at Emory University and the author of “How Dogs Love Us: A Neuroscientist and His Adopted Dog Decode the Canine Brain.”

Wolf to Dog: Scientists Agree on How, but Not Where

By **CARL ZIMMER**

NOV. 14, 2013

Where did dogs come from? That simple question is the subject of a scientific debate right now. In May, a team of scientists published a study pointing to East Asia as the place where dogs evolved from wolves. Now, another group of researchers has announced that dogs evolved several thousand miles to the west, in Europe.

This controversy is intriguing even if you're not a dog lover. It illuminates the challenges scientists face as they excavate the history of any species from its DNA.

Scientists have long agreed that the closest living relatives of dogs are wolves, their link confirmed by both anatomy and DNA. Somewhere, at some point, some wolves became domesticated. They evolved not only a different body shape, but also a different behavior.

Instead of traveling in a pack to hunt down prey, dogs began lingering around humans. Eventually, those humans bred them into their many forms, from shar-peis to Newfoundlands.

A few fossils supply some tantalizing clues to that transformation. Dating back as far as 36,000 years, they look like wolfish dogs or doggish wolves. The oldest of these fossils have mostly turned up in Europe.

In the 1990s, scientists started using new techniques to explore the origin of dogs. They sequenced bits of DNA from living dog breeds and wolves from various parts of the world to see how they were related. And the DNA told a different story than the bones. In fact, it told different stories.

In a 2002 study, for example, Peter Savolainen, now at the Royal Institute of Technology in Sweden, and his colleagues concluded that dogs evolved in East Asia. Eight years later, however, Robert Wayne, a geneticist at the University of California, Los Angeles, and his colleagues analyzed some new dog breeds and concluded that the Middle East was where dogs got their start. (All such studies suggest that a few breeds may have been independently domesticated, although they differ on which ones and where.)

Dr. Savolainen and his colleagues continued to sequence DNA from more dogs, and they published more evidence for an East Asian origin of dogs — narrowing it down to South China.

While early studies of canine origins were limited to fragments of DNA, scientists are now starting to sequence entire genomes of dogs and wolves. In May, for example, Dr. Salovainen and Chinese colleagues reported that Chinese native dogs had the most wolflike genomes. By tallying up the mutations in the different dog and wolf genomes, they estimated that the ancestors of Chinese village dogs and wolves split about 32,000 years ago.

If this were true, then the first dogs would have become domesticated not by farmers, but by Chinese hunter-gatherers more than 20,000 years before the dawn of agriculture.

Dr. Wayne and his colleagues think that is wrong.

A dog may have wolflike DNA because it is a dog-wolf hybrid. In a paper that is not yet published, they analyze wolf and dog genomes to look for signs of ancient interbreeding. They cite evidence that, indeed, some of the DNA in dogs in East Asia comes from wolf interbreeding.

“That’s going to pump up the resemblance,” Dr. Wayne said.

Now Dr. Wayne and his colleagues are introducing a new line of evidence to the dog debate: ancient DNA. Over the past two decades, scientists have developed increasingly powerful tools to rescue fragments of DNA from fossils, producing “an explosion in the samples,” said Beth Shapiro of the University of California, Santa Cruz, a collaborator with Dr. Wayne.

On Thursday in the journal *Science*, Dr. Wayne, Dr. Shapiro and their colleagues report on the first large-scale comparison of DNA from both living and fossil dogs and wolves. They managed to extract DNA from 18 fossils found in Europe, Russia and the New World. They compared their genes to those from 49 wolves, 77 dogs and 4 coyotes.

The scientists examined a special kind of DNA found in a structure in the cell called the mitochondrion. Mitochondrial DNA comes only from mothers. Because each cell may have thousands of mitochondria, it is easier to gather enough genetic fragments to reconstruct its DNA.

The scientists did not find that living dogs were closely related to wolves from the Middle East or China. Instead, their closest relatives were ancient dogs and wolves from Europe.

“It’s a simple story, and the story is they were domesticated in Europe,” Dr. Shapiro said.

Dr. Shapiro and Dr. Wayne and their colleagues estimate that dogs split off from European wolves sometime between 18,000 and 30,000 years ago. At the time, Northern Europe was covered in glaciers and the southern portion was a grassland steppe where humans hunted for mammoths, horses and other big game.

“Humans couldn’t take everything, and that was a great treasure trove,” Dr. Wayne said. Some wolves began to follow the European hunters to scavenge on the carcasses they left behind. As they migrated along with people, they became isolated from other wolves.

Dog evolution experts praised the scientists for gathering so much new data. “I think it’s terrific,” said Adam Boyko, a Cornell biologist. Dr. Savolainen agreed. “I think it’s a fantastic sample,” he said.

But Dr. Savolainen said the analysis was flawed. “It’s not a correct scientific study, because it’s geographically biased,” he said.

The study lacks ancient DNA from fossils from East Asia or the Middle East, and so it’s not possible to tell whether the roots of dog evolution are anchored in those regions. “You just need to have samples from everywhere,” Dr. Savolainen said.

He also rejects Dr. Wayne’s argument that interbreeding in East Asia creates an illusion that dogs originated there. Dr. Savolainen points out that the study suggesting interbreeding was based on a wolf from northern China. “What they need to have is samples from south China,” he said.

There’s just one catch. South China is now so densely settled by people that no wolves live there. A similar problem applies to the fossil record.

“It may be impossible to go this way,” Dr. Savolainen said.

Dr. Wayne is not quite so pessimistic. He and his colleagues are hoping to widen their scope and find more DNA from fossils of dogs outside of Europe, while also looking at the genes of living dogs that might hold important clues. Yet he thinks it unlikely that the new evidence will change the basic conclusion of his latest study.

“But there have been so many surprises in the history of this research on dog domestication that I’m holding my breath till we get more information,” Dr. Wayne said.

You'll Go Far, My Pet



Meryle Davis, a 4-month-old pup up for adoption, from the nonprofit Badass Brooklyn Animal Rescue. (Fred R. Conrad/The New York Times)

By **DAVID HOCHMAN**

APRIL 11, 2014

Not to brag, but we may have a little genius on our hands. Our 6-month-old is up before dawn playing brain games. She knows her way around an iPad and practically devours puzzles, and I'm teaching her to read. Just recently, she mastered an advanced chess toy.

I am talking, of course, about our dog.

Let me rewind a moment. The last time I had a puppy, I was 9 years old. This might as well have been in the Mesozoic era, since life with a dog was so primitive then. If Buck was good, he got Gaines-Burgers and maybe a Milk-Bone. Bad, we'd deliver stern admonitions over the half-eaten sneaker. But within hours of adopting our fuzzy, adorable Pi, I sensed that being a pet parent today — nobody uses the word “owner” anymore,

apparently — means cultivating intelligence, manners and communication skills the way the parent of, say, a small human might.

Our canine compadres no longer eat from mere bowls. Now there are interactive feeding products like Dog Twister (imported from Sweden, no less, for around \$50), with rotating hidden compartments that make dogs reason their way to kibble. Another, called Slo-Bowl, pays homage to the artisanal food movement, with “nature-inspired” rubber curves and ridges that keep dogs “foraging for every bite,” the company’s website says (\$20). A doggy tick-tack-toe puzzle from Petco encourages “problem solving” and increases “eye-paw-mouth coordination,” for \$17. Smartphone apps like App for Dog, iSqueek and Answers: YesNo let puppies doodle, nuzzle virtual chewies and even recognize a few simple words. Others help them take selfies. Then there is the spreading quantified dog movement: A San Francisco company called Whistle Labs makes a wearable activity monitor — a Fido Fitbit, basically, for \$129 — that tracks a dog’s every sit, stay and roll over.

Needless to say, I bought it all. My wife and I were already micromanaging our son’s schoolwork, food intake, extracurricular activities and playdates; why not helicopter Pi to the far limits of her breed? Which, come to think of it, meant figuring out what breed she was in the first place: Mutt doesn’t quite cut it these days. For \$70, the scientists behind Wisdom Panel 2.0 will “uncover DNA-based insights that may help you understand your dog’s unique appearance, behaviors and wellness needs,” according to the package. Two awkward cheek swabs later (“I’ll hold her head, you twirl the Q-tip thingee,” my wife said), we were a lab test away from knowing Pi’s pedigree down to eight great-grandparents.

A new dog is nothing if not a mystery shrouded in fur. What exactly was lurking behind Pi’s smoky eyes? Would she be a charmer, a rocket scientist or a bumbling, tail-chasing dolt? For answers, I turned to Brian Hare, an evolutionary anthropologist who studies behavior at the Canine Cognition Center at Duke. Last year, he started Dognition, a web-based testing service that charges \$29 and up for a series of rigorous at-home video experiments to evaluate your dog’s cognitive skills. The results are fed into a database with tens of thousands of dogs to determine one of nine personality types: “socialite,” “maverick,” “renaissance dog” and so on.

“People want to get inside the heads of their dogs, and after 40,000 years living alongside them, science is finally helping us do it,” Mr. Hare said over the phone. He was on his way to Congo to do fieldwork with bonobos, his other species of focus.

In the last decade, Mr. Hare informed me, we have learned more about how dogs think than in the last century. As he explained, his own research shows that dogs read our

gestures, like pointing, more flexibly than any other animal. Other investigators from Hungary, using functional magnetic resonance imaging, recently announced that the canine brain is sensitive to cues of emotion in human voices. When you pet a dog, another study concluded, both human and canine oxytocin levels increase.

Other findings are hairier. A research article in *Frontiers in Zoology* last December asserted that dogs align their bodies along a magnetic north-south axis when urinating or defecating, though nobody knows why. My favorite was the classic study conducted in France on why a stranger's crotch is more interesting to a dog than its master's.

More curious still was the crowd-funded effort this past winter by a group of Scandinavian designers and "optimistic dreamers" calling themselves the Nordic Society for Invention and Discovery. The team claims to be developing a small gadget called No More Woof, a prototype that uses "the latest technology in microcomputing and EEG to analyze animal thought patterns and spell them out in human language using a loudspeaker." A dog barks, and the electronic translator will say things like, "Em, why are you guys leaving?" The initial unit will be pretty basic, but then so was the first computer, they say. It all reads like an Onion parody, but the project raised over \$22,000.

Julie Hecht finds her bliss in canine urine. She is a researcher with the Horowitz Dog Cognition Lab at Barnard College (Yale just opened a dog research center, too) and writes the amusing Dog Spies blog on Scientific American's website. Ms. Hecht did her graduate work on the "guilty look" dogs display after redecorating the living room with toilet paper. (It turns out they make the same face when someone else strews garbage on the floor.)

When I revealed my inclination to dote on Pi to the point of overparenting, Ms. Hecht said the impulse made sense. A decade of influential research conducted in conjunction with the Family Dog Project at Eotvos Lorand University in Budapest, where Ms. Hecht put together her master's thesis, suggests that "dogs show very similar responses to what you see with infants up until toddlers around the age of 2," she said. As Gregory Berns, a professor of neuroeconomics at Emory University and the author of "How Dogs Love Us: A Neuroscientist and His Adopted Dog Decode the Canine Brain," wrote in a much-emailed Op-Ed in *The New York Times* last October, "Dogs are people, too."

We spent weeks looking for such evidence in Pi. Night after night, my 10-year-old son, Sebastian, and I turned our living room into a makeshift doggy science lab as we took Pi through dozens of assessment drills on Dognition's website that measured empathy, communication, cunning, memory and reason. I would cue up the video instructions as Sebastian readied the treats. The yawn game gauged whether a human

yawn elicits one from the dog, a sign of interspecies empathy only certain canines are known to display. Pi wasn't among them. She just tried to eat the sticky note that was her placekeeper. She fared better at the memory game that asked her to find a treat hidden under a cup after a minute looking away. But then she wouldn't stop gnawing on the cup. Her Mensa move came in a physical reasoning game in which she inferred time and again that a piece of paper on an angle meant a treat was hidden behind it. Pi grabbed the square of organic white Cheddar and left the paper.

From there it was on to tests of endurance and dexterity. Zoom Room is a national franchise where "urban dogs" run obstacle courses, practice indoor herding and attain Canine Good Citizen status — an actual thing — from the American Kennel Club. We signed up Pi for Agility Training 1, which had her hopping over hurdles, zipping through canvas tunnels and barking her head off at her classmates.

Feeling she might do even better with one-on-one attention, I consulted with Anna Jane Grossman, who runs School for the Dogs in Manhattan. Ms. Grossman believes traditional dog training is a chore. "I'm a big fan of drinking wine while training," she told me. Among other techniques, she employs something called a flirt pole, instructs dogs to put away their own toys and, lately, teaches them to use iPads. You read that correctly.

At a demonstration for high school students at St. Ann's School in Brooklyn in January, Ms. Grossman's Yorkiepoo, Amos, nosed away on Doodle Draw, answered questions using the YesNo app and took a few (terrible) selfies with an app called Big Camera Button. Amos was obviously in it for the treats Ms. Grossman was dispensing like rounds of munitions, but the dog's feats drew cheers and "awwws" from the crowd. The point is simply to keep puppy stimulated. "Active dogs are much less likely to eat the couch and pee on the coffee table," Ms. Grossman said. I couldn't get home fast enough to try the iPad tricks with Pi. A dab or two of peanut butter on the screen is all it took to get her sketching digital pictures and licking with abandon at Flappy Bird. The real showstopper was teaching her to recognize "sit," "down" and other commands using an app called Big Words. I'd show Pi the word while saying it aloud. If she sat when prompted I'd bombard her with freeze-dried liver nibs. After a while, she'd sit without me even speaking the word. Let me say there are few parlor tricks more stunning to friends than the sight of one's dog extending her paw at the sight of the words "fist bump."

But then I heard about Chaser, a 9-year-old Border collie in South Carolina who supposedly knows 1,022 words. With Chaser, it's not just "fetch." It's "fetch the tangerine orangutan" — and she gets it.

Honestly, I hated this dog until I called John Pilley, the soft-spoken retired psychology professor at Wofford College who spent five hours a day over three years raising Puppy Einstein. Chaser learned her vocabulary not through treats or corrections but rather because Mr. Pilley, 85, made each word an object fun for the dog to discover. To teach Chaser to find a new Miss Piggy toy, for instance, Mr. Pilley would show it to her and say “Miss Piggy” dozens of times. Then he would hide it and ask her to find it, rewarding her with “Good girl!” Chaser played her way to brilliance. Mr. Pilley told me, “The big lesson is to recognize that dogs are smarter than we think, and given time, patience and enough enjoyable reinforcement, we can teach them just about anything.”

It’s true that dogs everywhere are doing things that would have been unimaginable in the Alpo era. Last year, researchers at the University of Pennsylvania’s Working Dog Center trained a team of shepherds and retrievers to sniff out lab samples containing ovarian cancer. Scent hounds are also being used to forecast epileptic seizures and potentially life-threatening infections. A black Labrador from the St. Sugar Cancer-Sniffing Dog Training Center in Chiba, Japan, was accurate 98 percent of the time in picking up early-stage signs of colon cancer. As Mr. Hare, from Duke, said, “I will take a dog smelling my breath over a colonoscopy any day of the week, even if it’s just an experiment.”

As for our own puppy experiment, results were adding up. The DNA test reported that Pi is a Great Pyrenees-Border collie mix, which means her forebears may have mingled with French aristocracy, and, yes, there may be some Chaser in her, too. Dognition, meanwhile, classified her as a “protodog,” reminiscent of the communicative, connected wolves that first broke from the pack to bond with early humankind. That felt like a stretch, but Pi’s mottled gray fur and talent for counter-surfing for salami certainly had a wolfy quality to it. I continued serving her meals in Swedish puzzles, drilling her on the iPad and digitally quantifying her shaggy moves. But just to be safe, we shipped her off to obedience school.

No Ordinary Affenpinscher, Banana Joe Is Named Best in Show



Banana Joe, a five-year-old affenpinscher. “This isn’t a breed you train,” said Ernesto Lara, his handler. “He’s like a human. You befriend him.” (Fred R. Conrad/The New York Times)

By RICHARD SANDOMIR

FEB. 13, 2013

Banana Joe, a black dog with a monkeylike face, became the first affenpinscher to win Best in Show at the Westminster Kennel Club Dog Show on Tuesday night. He defeated six dogs, one a Portuguese water dog on the same night that Bo, who is the same breed, watched his master, President Obama, deliver the State of the Union address.

“He’s won a lot of big, big shows, but none like this one,” said his handler, Ernesto Lara, who held onto Joey, as he calls him, during a postshow news conference.

Joey sat calmly, as if he could have gone back onto the floor of Madison Square Garden and taken on his challengers again. He stuck his tongue out as Lara answered questions. He didn't appear to need any celebratory drinks or snacks.

"I don't think he has anything to prove," Lara said. "I'm not bragging, this is just the way he is. The best thing is that I was in cue with him." He added: "This isn't a breed you train. He's like a human. You befriend him."

Joey, who will turn 6 next month, will retire, as many Westminster winners do. He will no longer be Lara's bedmate in Bowmansville, Pa. Instead, he will head back to the Netherlands, where he was bred and born. The judge, Michael Dougherty, had no doubt that he made the right choice.

"This little fella seemed to want it a touch more," Dougherty said. "He's a fantastic affenpinscher, with a fantastic face, a great body. I've never had my hands on a better affenpinscher. Ever."

He added, "He has the muscle tone of a big dog."

Dougherty selected Joey, the toy group winner, over six other group winners: Matisse, the Portuguese water dog; Honor, a bichon frisé; Jewel, an American foxhound; Swagger, an Old English sheepdog who got most of the crowd's cheers; Oakley, a German wirehaired pointer; and Adam, a smooth fox terrier whose face, one side black, one side white, was like Frank Gorshin's as the alien Bele in a "Star Trek" episode.

"Seven fantastic dogs presented in the most immaculate manner," he said. Although Joey, serene in victory, did not appear to be canine stand-up comic, Lara insisted that he was a comical dog, if perhaps deadpan — perhaps the dog world's version of Steven Wright.

"Like any comedian, when he's in a situation, he doesn't think it's funny," Lara said. "He doesn't know his size or that he has a pushed-in face. Once you live with one, you know that's the standard. They need a comic seriousness."

Like most handlers asked to describe their champion dogs, Lara said that Joey was aware of what he was doing and enjoyed pleasing the crowd.

"He's smarter than you think," Lara said. "He knows when it's showtime."

The little black monkey-dog did not say a word. Even if you got very close to him, you could not get him to crack a joke.

The Best in Show was the last of four parts of the second night of the Westminster show, coming after the last three group winners were chosen.

Looking stone-faced, Dougherty watched as the seven handlers showed their dogs one last time.

One man kept shouting, "Come on, Jewel!" for the American foxhound. But the

underdog sheepdog, Swagger, was the overwhelming fan favorite because of his status — a class dog who has not built a resume of championships — with cheers that sounded like those given to Uno, the beagle, on his way to winning Best in Show in 2008.

When he made his decision, Dougherty walked to a table on the sideline, signed some papers and emerged to announce Banana Joe's victory.

Lara ecstatically lifted his little competitor in the air, wiggled him back and forth and secured him in a hug. "I had, absolutely, the time of my life," Dougherty said. So did Banana Joe, the monkey-faced dog with the deadpan wit.

It's Me or the Dog

By **DAN CRANE**

MAY 1, 2015

The night my girlfriend discovered she wouldn't be my only bedfellow, she was baffled. "Where I come from, you only sleep with a dog in your bed if you're single, or your central heating is broken," she said upon finding Whisky, my 15-pound terrier-spaniel mix, settled in comfortably for the night, her head resting daintily on my pillow.

But this was a nascent long-distance relationship, and she had just flown more than 5,000 miles from London to Los Angeles to see me, so she let it slide.

Since then, and even though she now adores Whisky (or claims to), she insists that "normal people" don't share their beds with dogs. After she pointed out — while prying her expensive-looking jacket from beneath a snoring Whisky — that my canine companion seemed perfectly content to sleep almost anywhere, I began to question it myself.

Am I the unreasonable party? Who's really deciding where Whisky sleeps, me or the dog? My girlfriend is British; I wondered if allowing one's dog to share one's duvet is a distinctly American custom, like Thanksgiving or the Super Bowl.

"Don't get me wrong," she said one afternoon. "It's very attractive to me that you're able to care for another living being. I love that. But it's a step too far. It's like having another person in the bed."

The practice of sharing one's bed with a dog, I discovered, is hardly modern. In "Cynegeticus," a treatise on hunting, the ancient Greek historian Arrian of Nicomedia wrote, "There is nothing like a soft warm bed for greyhounds; but it is best for them to sleep with men — as they become thereby affectionately attached — pleased with the contact of the human body."

Nor is it peculiarly American to share the boudoir with a dog. According to "Pets by Royal Appointment: The Royal Family and their Animals," by Brian Hoey, King Edward VIII allowed his terrier, Cora, to sleep on the royal bed, "following in the custom of his parents, grandparents and his great-grandmother Victoria, who had each not only allowed but welcomed the presence of their pets in their bedroom." Edward did, however, reign for only 326 days.

In the United States, according to a survey by the American Kennel Club, approximately 42 to 45 percent of dog owners say their dogs join them on the bed.

Likewise, Caroline Kisko, secretary of the Kennel Club of the United Kingdom, believes it is relatively common for dogs there to sleep with their owners. “There is a school of thought that says you shouldn’t do it,” she said, “but it isn’t one we particularly subscribe to.”

Inviting the dog onto the bed can help confirm your role as pack leader, said Cesar Millan, the star of “The Dog Whisperer” on TV, who noted that it’s really a matter of personal preference. “The thing to avoid is inadvertently teaching the dog to think, ‘This is my bed,’ ” he wrote in an email. “Which will happen if you don’t create that invisible boundary around it by claiming it as yours and then inviting the dog in.”

But what did my dog think about all of this, if anything?

“If one partner resents the dog being on the bed,” Mr. Millan said, “the dog is going to sense that, so the bed won’t feel like a safe place to the dog. It has got to be a mutual and unanimous decision.”

Clive Wynne, an Arizona State University psychology professor who studies canine comportment, said that dogs’ lives are “very intimately bound up with human beings.” His research suggests that dog behavior among humans is analogous to their highly social forebears, wolves.

“If you take the wolves’ social skills and place them into a human context, then you have an animal that is unbelievably sensitive to everything that people do,” he said. Many dogs, he reasoned, are indeed happy to be allowed to sleep with their owners. “On the other hand,” he said, “it doesn’t do a dog any harm to ban it from the bed.”

Dr. Stanley Coren, the author of “The Intelligence of Dogs,” sees co-sleeping as a mutually beneficial, inherent need. For dogs, Dr. Coren said, “Part of it is warmth, and part is the comfort of affiliation. And it’s a safety thing. You know a dog feels totally safe around you when he can sleep with his back to you.” Similarly, Dr. Coren believes that human beings have a “predisposition toward being with dogs, and sleeping comfortably next to them.”

But he admits this feeling is not shared by his wife, who uses her “patented puppy ejection kick” to protect her side of the bed.

Humans who choose to sleep with dogs may be at risk. “I don’t think I would ever have a dog sleep on or in the bed, that’s for sure,” said Dr. Bruno Chomel, a professor in the department of veterinary medicine at the University of California, Davis, and a specialist in emerging zoonotic diseases.

Dr. Chomel has studied the relationship between having pets in the bedroom and increased rates of *Pasteurella* infection, ringworm and even bubonic plague, which can be transmitted by fleas. “Our conclusion was, we strongly do not recommend this practice

for people who have young children, or people who are immunocompromised: elderly people, and so on.”

What I was hearing was a mixed bag, and it wasn't until I spoke to Donna R. Pall, a Los Angeles psychotherapist who specializes in couples counseling (full disclosure, I've seen Ms. Pall as a patient), that I fully came around. “When someone comes into your life, you probably have to be prepared to take the dog out of the bed,” she said. “If you got the dog together, then it's a couple's decision. But when you're a single guy and you have your dog in the bed, the message is: ‘This is my primary relationship.’ ”

According to Ms. Pall, dogs can become an impediment to, and a substitution for, intimacy, and frequently incite jealousy among couples, since it's often easier to express unambivalent love for a dog than another human.

“All the affection that the person is not giving to you, the dog is getting,” Ms. Pall said. That becomes, in a way, the more intense emotional relationship. That's bad, and it's very easy for that to happen.”

And so, I eventually gave in, fashioning a bed for Whisky on the floor using an old pillow and my favorite hoodie. I must confess, she appears quite blissful curled up on her new bed on the floor in the bedroom.

For her part, my girlfriend has started to warm up to the idea of inviting the dog up on the bed for the occasional cuddle. “After all,” she said, “Whisky is rather cute.”

Pekingese Steals Show Along With Westminster's Top Honor



Malachy with David Fitzpatrick, co-owner and handler, after winning Best in Show. (Barton Silverman/The New York Times)

By **RICHARD SANDOMIR**

FEB. 14, 2012

There would be no major upset Tuesday night at the Westminster Kennel Club Dog Show. That happened earlier in the day when a black cocker spaniel named Beckham, the top-ranked dog in 2011 according to Dog News, lost to others in his breed.

But statistics matter, or at least tell you something about a great dog's strength.

A Pekingese called Malachy, last year's No. 2 dog, won Best in Show — the fourth time for the breed and the 10th time for the toy group.

Malachy is not a speedy dog. While his six competitors sped around the ring at Madison Square Garden, Malachy moved so deliberately that he only had to make a half circuit on the green carpet. It did not matter. Beneath his long coat and lion's mane — and behind that distinctive pushed-in face — was the club's ultimate champion.

The judge, Cindy Vogels, put Malachy ahead of a German shepherd, a Dalmatian, a Kerry blue terrier, a Doberman pinscher, a wire-haired dachshund and an Irish setter who gave birth to 15 puppies last May (using the frozen semen of a long-dead sire) and had just returned from a year's maternity leave.

"He's a super dog who had a stupendous night," Vogels said of Malachy.

In triumph, Malachy relaxed, splaying himself on a table for his news conference. If you looked hard, or close enough, you could see his little eyes. His face was framed by a coat that gave him the look of a 1960's guru — or perhaps Cousin Itt's pet.

The great man sneezed. He looked at the microphones as if they were toys.

He was spritzed with water by David Fitzpatrick, his handler and co-owner.

"He's a very happy dog," Fitzpatrick said. "He's an extrovert in the ring."

Malachy defeated the other toy dogs Monday and had 24 hours to relax. "I kept him quiet all day to save his energy for tonight."

Last year, Malachy also made it to Best in Show, but lost to a Scottish deerhound.

"Malachy's a little more mature this year," said Fitzpatrick, who had a broken arm last year.

Iris Love, also a co-owner, said that she was wearing a yellow blouse in Malachy's honor, one that is sprinkled with images of a dragon, which is her dog's insignia.

"This is the year of the dragon," she said, then proclaimed: "We are in the presence of an imperial Pekingese. That doesn't happen very often."

Fitzpatrick knows that his Pekingese was a bit different from the other dogs. He is small, about 12 pounds. Maybe a half-pound of it was hair. But when he was asked about Malachy's clear lack of speed, he responded with a bit of testiness about his dog's rivals.

"Their gait should be slower," he said.

Of course, it is hard to tell a Doberman to slam on his brakes to keep up with Malachy. Who was going to tell the Irish setter, with her shimmering coat and elegant form, to slow down for the Pekingese? Nature's canine order would have to be altered.

But then, it was the little Pekingese, with his unhurried, short-legged style, who won. "His demeanor was spotless," Vogels said. "He was flawless."

For Malachy, his 115th best in show performance was his last.

At 4 years old, he is retiring, to live with Fitzpatrick as his pet.

"He will chase squirrels," he said. "He will be pampered." Even as Malachy hunts for rodents with fluffy tails, he will not lose his signature coat. "I don't have the heart to trim him," said Fitzpatrick, who has had Pekingese since he was 14.

The night began with the judging of the sporting, working and terrier groups following Monday's selection of winners in the toy, non-sporting, herding and hound

groups. Emily, an Irish setter, won the sporting group; Chelsey, a Kerry blue terrier, defeated all other terriers; and Fifi, a Doberman, was chosen over other working dogs.

Jocelyn Mullins, who owns, breeds and handles Fifi, extolled her Doberman's intelligence. "She has a beautiful mind," she said. "She's brilliant."

Why name her Fifi?

"The breed has kind of a harsh reputation," she said. "It's like naming a Chihuahua Spike."

The decision to show Emily at Westminster was made at the last minute. A mother of 10 boys and 5 girls, Emily needed her muscle tone and gorgeous red coat to return after her pregnancy. Adam Bernardin, her owner and handler, said: "It took a lot of road work to get her back in shape. We gave her good food and lots of work."

He added, "She's just the best dog ever."

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