

Good Dog Pod 66 – Obesity in Dogs

Welcome to the Good Dog Pod. I am your host, Laura Reeves. Here at the Good Dog Pod, we are all about supporting dog breeders and responsible dog ownership. We provide dog lovers with the latest updates in canine health and veterinary care, animal legislation and legal advocacy, canine training and behavior science, and dog breeding practices. Subscribe and join our mission today to help give our dogs the world they deserve.

Laura Reeves:

Welcome to the Good Dog Pod. I am your host, Laura Reeves, and I'm excited to have joining me today, Dr. Marty Greer. And we have a topic, I think we both feel pretty strongly about, right Marty?

Dr. Marty Greer:

Indeed.

Laura Reeves:

And that is loving our dogs to death. And I had the idea because I have just seen such continuing rolling and I've experienced it in grooming situations, dogs who are morbidly obese. There was a dog that used to come into my group shop. It was a Bernese Mountain dog that weighed, I don't exaggerate, probably 250 pounds. It was sent with buckets of food that it had to eat during the day. During the time that it was being groomed at our shop, it had to be catheterized because its kidneys were shutting down and the vet said it's the obesity, and the woman wouldn't quit feeding the dog because he was hungry. So this to me is a relatively extreme example of what I think of when I think of loving our dogs to death.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Absolutely. And unfortunately, obesity is one of the things we see, but certainly not the only thing. And yes, we definitely see it everyday and it really breaks my heart. I have people that come in and say, "Well, she doesn't eat very well." And so you look at the dog and they're 40% over weight and you're like, "Well, I think she's eating more than she really needs, so what do you exactly mean by not eating very well?" "Well, I put food down and she doesn't finish it." "Well, that's probably because she shouldn't finish it."

Laura Reeves:

"She's not hungry anymore."

Dr. Marty Greer:

Exactly, exactly. So it's interesting to see the different people's perceptions. And then we have people that come in with their dogs at an ideal body condition that are maybe competition dogs, maybe pet dogs and they say, "Well, my friends, my neighbors, my family, they all think my dog is too thin." And you look at them and say, "This is an ideal body condition. This is what your dog should look like." And so, the American public's eye has become distorted by looking at dogs that are overweight or obese for so long that many Americans have absolutely just forgotten what a typical body type should look like and it's really heartbreaking to me.

Now Ian Dunbar has a fabulous thing that he was able to pull off and personally, I don't have the personality to do it, but he would squat down next to the dog when he would have these dogs that come in to his veterinary clinic that were overweight and he would whisper in their ear. He would say, "I'm so sorry, but this is going to be the last time I'm going to be able to see you." And the owner would look at him and they would say, "What? Are you quitting? Are you leaving practice? What's going on?" He'd say, "No, no, no, no, no. It's just that your dog is not going to live very much longer, and so I just wanted to say goodbye to them." And I'm like, "Oh my gosh, I could not pull the that off." But Ian Dunbar is Ian Dunbar and he could do it.

And so at that point he would get the client's attention to believe that they needed to start listening to his discussion. And it is a very difficult topic to bring up to clients because it's a hot button for the dog and sometimes it's a hot button for them as well especially if we see clients that themselves are overweight, they don't want to hear the discussion about their pet's weight problem as well. So it's not an easy topic for a veterinarian to bring up in the exam room,

particularly if they're there for a wellness visit. And so, it can be really hard to bring up and so a lot of people are like, "Well, my vet didn't say anything so it must be okay." And maybe your vet didn't say something because they don't know how to approach the conversation.

Laura Reeves:

Right. Okay. So let's stick with the obesity topic for a minute and talk to people out there who, "I just want to make sure she has the best of everything," right? I mean, these people love their dogs. They sincerely believe that they're doing good rather than harm.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Exactly.

Laura Reeves:

And so what are some of the ways that we can talk to people and help them understand that they are actively harming their dog?

Dr. Marty Greer:

Right. And so it's challenging because you have to talk about lifestyle, you have to talk about exercise and you have to talk about food intake. And so those two things go hand in hand and I try to explain to people that obesity or overweight is like a checking account. If you put in too much, you get to be too big, you're too heavy. If you take out too much, then you're too thin. And so there's only two ways to lose weight, either you put in less calories or you use more calories. Just like your checking account, you either spend less or you earn more.

And so those are the trade offs that you have to make, and so it can require typically both increasing their activity level and decreasing their caloric intake. And then you get to the topic of, "Well, how do I decrease caloric intake because my dog is hungry or my dog wants to eat, or I like to see my dog eat." People equate eating with affection, with love.

Laura Reeves:

Right.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Absolutely. You can understand why, is they feel a certain way when they get to eat the things that they want to eat. So that's where it becomes difficult. In fact, my dad when he entered hospice, I said to the hospice nurse, I said, "He's not eating very well." And she looked at me and I realized that she didn't understand where I was coming from, is that to me a dog that's sick doesn't eat well, and a dog that's healthy does. So that's one of the very first questions that we ask clients when they come in or when they call on the phone is, "Is he eating? Is he drinking? How's it going?" And if the dog is eating, we equate that with, they're probably feeling reasonably healthy. And she looked at me like, "Do you understand this?" And I said, "Oh no, no, no, no, no. You don't understand that to me, eating is an equivalent to their feeling okay. And if he's not eating well, means he's sick." And so she thought it was an emotional thing and I was more of a very practical-

Laura Reeves:

Physical.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Physical illness. And as soon as I told her I was a veterinary and she was like, "Oh okay, now I get it." She was okay with it. But those are the things that we often equate is that illness and appetite go hand in hand. So yes, I understand why people want to see their dogs eat and I understand that they may have had emotional things that happened as children, as adults, that eating equates with feeling good, good health, all those things are too much. And so then you have to figure out a way that you can continue to give treats, and the reward system, and the interaction because people love to feel good about their dog's appetite, they love to feed them things.

But then we have to start trading off, what can you feed your dog that's appropriate so that it's no longer an obesity issue? So, can you substitute fruits and vegetables like carrots and apple slices for another cup of dog food and make the owner feel good about the relationship and that their dog loves them? I mean, I can always tell who overfeeds the dog because when I'm in the exam and I say, "So, under the kitchen table when you're eating dinner, where does the dog sit?" And frequently, I will get a response, if I have a couple in the exam room, people that live together, they'll be, "Oh, it sits under her chair. It sits over his chair." So very quickly I can figure out who's cheating.

Laura Reeves:

Exactly. So ideas, you had carrots, you had apple slices, fresh green beans. I will tell you the most popular treat in my house is ice cubes out of the ice maker.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Yeah.

Laura Reeves:

My dogs have learned how to operate the ice maker on their own in the refrigerator and push the lever such that they can release a spray of ice cubes all across the tile floor that they can entertain themselves with. They love that.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Which is all good. We call those water bones in our practice so people can associate that with, it's not just an ice cube, it's a treat. And I actually did have a client that had a house full of Great Danes and they could all run the ice maker and yes, she would come home to a flooded kitchen. So you got to be careful, be careful what you wish for and be careful what you train because even if you don't think you're training your dog, you're training your dog, they are watching everything you do. So yes, ice cubes are absolutely the lowest calorie treat that you can possibly feed, but most fruits and vegetables are safe and a great way to feed pets. So you have to be aware, of course grapes and raisins of course can cause kidney failure and we don't know why, because we've never figured out what the relationship is with homegrown, versus commercially grown, versus insecticides and sprays.

Laura Reeves:

We just avoid them.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Yeah, exactly. So don't even go there, even if your dog is always eating grapes, don't continue, you need to stop that. And onions and garlic and too high in amount can cause some problems, but overall, fruits and vegetables are great. Now, of course you want to avoid the starchy ones like corn and potatoes, but otherwise fresh fruits and vegetables are great. And a lot of people have their dogs this time of year out in the garden with them and the dogs start to raid the garden they'll eat the asparagus they would sell at the grocery store for 6.99 a pound and they're out there snacking on it, but it's still great.

And I actually had one client that came in, it was a guy who was single and he said, "Oh, my dogs wouldn't eat vegetables." And so I went to the freezer and I pulled out some frozen green beans and tossed him on the exam room floor and his dogs ate them, and he looked at them like they had betrayed him. He was horrified. He says, "I don't like vegetables. My dogs won't eat vegetables either." I'm like, "Dude, your dog will eat vegetables. Look, they're eating them right now."

Laura Reeves:

Yeah.

Dr. Marty Greer:

So part of it is that when your dog isn't hungry for the first two or three days, if you start introducing fruits of vegetables, the dog may not go for it. They may just look at them like, "Yeah, no. Because I don't really need that, I'll just wait for the

next bowl of dog food." But if you start cutting back a dog food by 10% or 20%, whatever your veterinarian has recommended, and you start adding the fruits and vegetables, within two or three days, they're going to be hungry enough that they'll start to eat them. So typically a cup of dog food has around 300 calories in a cup. Now maybe 280 if it's diet food and maybe 320 if it's performance food, but overall, you can bank on it being about 300 calories a cup, but a cup of fresh fruits and vegetables is around 30 calories a cup, so it's 10% of the caloric intake. So you can easily cut 10% or 20% of your dogs amount volume-wise and substitute it back.

And frequently, I would suggest if people are working outside their home that they throw frozen foods or vegetables in to the dish in the morning, because they're in a hurry, they need to get out the door, get the kids ready to get all that other stuff done. But in the evening when they're in the kitchen making dinner, then they can heat up the green beans, the frozen green beans. And we recommend the frozen versus the canned because they're fresher, they're less salty, they're just easier to use. And so very quickly, the dog will start to go, "Oh, I got frozen green beans in the morning for breakfast and I got another cool treat. I got warm green beans at night." And they think they're getting two different treats a day and the dogs are thrilled. So you have to make sure you play it just the right way.

Laura Reeves:

And another one, Marty, my mom was the one actually who I got the ice cube thing from. It was her Clumbers that I first saw actually work the ice maker. A Clumber Spaniel could stand up on the refrigerator and work the ice maker.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Oh yeah.

Laura Reeves:

But mom's thing, and for years, and her dogs were in great health, and coat, and body weight. She would feed potato peelings, carrot peelings. As she's prepping dinner, she's putting those types of things in a bowl that's going to be a topper, if you will, for the dogs.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Right.

Laura Reeves:

Her dogs were insane for potato peels.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Right. And mine as well. Now, not every dog likes every fruit and vegetable equally, but you can do that. And then of course, when you get the wilted greens, if your lettuce was a little wilted, not slimy and gross, but a little wilted, or the stems of the asparagus or the broccoli that are just a little tougher than you care to chew on, the dogs have those big sharp teeth and they're meant to chew on things that are really hard, so there's a lot of ways that you can use it.

And then the other things of course is, I save all the bones that I have left from my meat, because I'm not a vegetarian. So if I have chicken bones and beef bones and that thing, I throw them on the freezer and I throw the wilted vegetables, the celery that might not be quite right or the carrots that aren't quite perfect, throw them in the freezer. And when you get enough of them in a batch, you can throw them in your crockpot or your instant pot, cook them down, take out the bones unless you run your instant pot. Now, if you run your instant pot, three or four cycles on 35 minutes each, then you can get those bones to be soft enough to just crumble in your fingers so you can throw everything in. It's great for puppies. I start my puppies on for some fruits and vegetables when they're really young.

I sold the puppy last year to a lady who has been a client for a number of years. And she called me this year and she said, "Did you feed cantaloupe when the puppies were little?" She said, "Because this year when cantaloupe came into season, Ember went nuts." So yes, I took the cantaloupe and the honeydew melons and I cut them in half and scooped up the seeds but I cut it like you would a grapefruit so that it was still in the rind, but the fruit was a little bit easier.

And so, every day I would give the puppy something different for a fruit of vegetable because it was a great experience. If you're going to do your puppy raising with a hundred experiences in a hundred days, and it was during COVID and

there was nowhere to go, then an experience was one day it was cantaloupe, and one day it was watermelon, and one day it was carrots and the next day it was broccoli. And so we can have a whole bunch of experiences and the puppies learned to love vegetables and fruits when they were babies. So this wasn't something to them that was foreign.

Laura Reeves:

I love that. And so that's a big part, what can we do to get their diet to an appropriate place? Now, how do we train our eye? Every single human being who owns a dog and has been to a veterinarian's office has seen those charts. And so, how do we make sure that people can apply that chart that y'all taped on the wall to their own dog?

Dr. Marty Greer:

Right, there's some scores that go one through five. So three is ideal, five is obese. There's other charts that go one through nine, where four to five is ideal and eight to nine is obese. So there's different ways to score it, but basically your veterinarian can pretty quickly score your dog's body condition. But to me, the easiest way to teach a client to do their own body condition scoring is if they make a fist with their hand and they feel the back of their hand between their wrist and their knuckles, the ribs should feel like the back of your hand, you should feel them, you should not see them unless you have a Saluki and then maybe you should see them.

If you have a dog that's underweight and you make your hand into a fist and you go across your knuckles, that how the ribs would feel if the dog is too thin. So you should not be able to feel big, bony ridges across the dog's rib, it should feel like the back of your hand. And then if you're not sure, then the other thing to do is to flip your hand over and feel the heel of your hand where that squishy spot is just above your wrist and that's what a dog feels like when they're too fat. So you've got 1, 2, 3, you've got the back of your hand is an ideal. The knuckles of your hand, which is too skinny and the ball of your hand, which is too fat.

Laura Reeves:

That is genius, Marty. That is genius.

Dr. Marty Greer:

It's simple. You teach it to your kids, you teach it to your spouse, you teach it to your kennel help or whoever's feeding dogs and it's really easy. Now standing from above the dog, you should see that they have a little bit of a waist unless they're a Labrador. Standing from the side, you should see they have a little bit of a tuck up in most breeds. So different breed standards are going to require slightly different body types.

But you can go to the AKC website, look up your breed, look up the body type and you can very quickly see what the description and see the images that they have up there. Should the dog have a tuck up? Should they have a waist? Should they be slender? How deep should their chest be? All those pieces. But really the back of your hand is the easiest and most portable because most everybody has two hands. And so if you've got them both, you can very easily assess what the body condition score should be. It's simple, straight forward, teach it to your kennel help, teach it to everybody around you that's feeding the dogs and they can very astutely assess what's going on.

Laura Reeves:

And the great news is, once you know what the best weight is for your dog and you know what that looks like, it's very easy to assess when it changes. I have a young dog here that I just neutered. He's three years old. He's not going to my breeding program. He had run really thin and I'd been trying to get weight on him. I neutered him. And I do not lie to you, it was not a month before I'm like, "Dude, you are fat." So it's quick and easy, and you just cut out a small amount of food.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Right.

Laura Reeves:

He's fine. He isn't dying, but he was going to if he kept getting fatter.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Right. So we typically tell people that when they spay and neuter their pets, they need to cut their caloric intake by 25% almost instantly.

Laura Reeves:

It was almost instantly. I was amazed.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Yeah. Yeah. When they spayed me, I put on 10 pounds immediately.

Laura Reeves:

I wish it was only 10 when they spayed me.

Dr. Marty Greer:

So very quickly it happens. So that 25% caloric reduction helps, and then the other thing of course is to increase the activity level. And seasonally, that can be more challenging in some places than others. In our winter times, it's slippery, it's cold, it's dark, it's really tough to walk your dog and get good exercise because flat out, it can be dangerous to be out there when it's icy, and slippery, and scary. If you live in more temperate climates, of course you have other opportunities, but your summers are hotter, so you've got to time things so that you can walk when the weather is appropriate, and when the roads are safe, and when there's not too much salt down and all those things.

Activity level can be real difficult. You can buy doggy treadmills, you can buy treadmills and modify them. There's a lot of places that people figure out ways to increase their dog's activity. But frankly, cutting back on calories is probably the most effective way to do it. The other thing that we tend to use a lot of is, you can use popcorn that's not popped with oil or butter, or you can Cheerios. Cheerios have three Cheerios two, one calorie, not the other way around, it's not three calories to a Cheerio.

I actually had a staff member count a cup of Cheerios one day for me. So there's three Cheerios to a calorie, and then what we can do in that is we can take a sealed container, put the Cheerios, just plain ones, not honey nut, the generic ones are fine. Put a drop or two of liquid smoke in into the container that's sealed and the Cheerios then smell like dog treats and the dogs love them. So you can buy a bottle of liquid smoke for eight bucks at the store, and it will last you the rest of your life because it only takes one or two drops of liquid smoke in a jar of Cheerios. So, a box of Cheerios, a sealed container, a couple drops of liquid smoke seal, give it two days and the dogs think they're eating snacks. It's awesome.

Laura Reeves:

That is genius. Now I am very happy to know about the three Cheerios to a calorie because it's my favorite breakfast food, so.

Dr. Marty Greer:

There you go. You can eat a lot of Cheerios.

Laura Reeves:

I'm excited and Cheerios are gluten free for those of us who have that issue. Not usually the dogs, but me. Okay. So these are some really, really good ideas and suggestions as we go around obesity. So let's talk about some other ways that we can really love our dogs to death. And one of the ones that we talked about was boundaries, crate training, like that.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Right. And unfortunately, a lot of people are reluctant to use crates, whether they're traveling or whether they're at home, and we see far too many dogs that ingest foreign bodies or toxins, and they get into trouble because the client

doesn't want to put their dog in a crate or in a small confined room when they leave the house. And so the dog gets free run and they get into sugarless gum, or they get into rat poison, or they get into toys, and socks, and dish cloths and-

Laura Reeves:

Electrical outlets.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Yeah. There's so many dangers in our homes that we don't really think about. But when you turn the dog loose in the house and you leave them for four hours or eight hours, they have plenty of time to think of all kinds of things that you never would've created that they could have gotten into. So it's really important that we keep our dogs safe when we're not able to supervise them. Baby bottle nipples, socks, underwear, dog toys, squeakers, just you name it. If it could go down a dog, it's going to go down there. What I learned about dogs and humans are really interesting, because if a kid swallows something and it gets stuck in their esophagus, if they can get it into the stomach with an endoscope, the kid will pass it through their intestines. But dogs are the other way around, dogs can swallow things that are too big to pass through the intestines and in fact do it fairly regularly.

So many, many dogs end up in surgery for corn cobs, and underwear, and socks, and dish cloths, and dish towels and all kinds of stuff. And so, the things that dogs tend to eat are the things that smell the most like us. So the palms of our hands, the bottoms of our feet, our underwear, things like that, dogs are really attracted to, unfortunately, so it's pretty dangerous for them to get into those things. If the small things that are going to pass, I feed canned spinach and get them to pass through that way. But canned spinach isn't going to get the dish towel to pass through the dog, so you're going to have to pay for surgery and that's going to be several thousand dollars or you're going to lose your dog. So tutus. I mean, you name it.

Laura Reeves:

I can't even...

Dr. Marty Greer:

Yeah. Dogs swallow knives.

Laura Reeves:

Unbelievable to me sometimes. And the leave them alone all day, I think about the one that somebody turned their back on for half an hour and ate, God only knows what, and we nearly lost her and an entire litter of puppies.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Yeah.

Laura Reeves:

She had to have a C-section two days early and everybody lived and it was a miracle, and that was 30 minutes of inattention. So the thought of leaving... I mean, okay, when a dog gets to be 10, it's probably, probably not going to do this anymore, but young dogs, absolutely.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Every chance they get.

Laura Reeves:

For me it's like, would you leave your five year old unattended in the house for four, five, six, eight hours?

Dr. Marty Greer:

No, not even close, no. And the same in vehicles, a lot of people are reluctant to put their dogs in a crate when they're traveling. And unfortunately, even a quick trip to the grocery store, the dog could end up going through the windshield, getting out of the car, accidents happen very quickly. I actually have one client that I am quite certain passed away in a car accident because her dog was an aggressive dog to begin with and when she had a very serious car accident would not let the EMTs get into the vehicle to help her without them becoming injured. So I think that delayed her care enough that we probably saw her pass away because of that. So think about things that you never would think about. So your pets should be in crates when you're traveling, it's just not safe for them. They can be a projectile in the vehicle. They can step on the gas, step on the brake, fly around the vehicle.

Laura Reeves:

Distract you.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Exactly. So it's just not safe for your pet to be wandering around in the car. And actually, I personally rolled a vehicle when my kids were in junior high and if the cat had not been in a carrier... We ended up upside down, wheels up in the air, kids hanging from the seat belts. My daughter has never forgiven me to this day for releasing the seatbelt on my son before her because he was closer. So she still carries around this baggage from 20 years ago like, "You got him out of the seatbelt first." But the cat would've escaped out the broken back window and would not have ever been seen again if it hadn't been that he was in a crate. So it's super important that you think about those things. Airbags, dogs on the front seat, airbags will kill a dog. So even tethered or even put in a little seat.

Laura Reeves:

I was going to ask you about, I have people that I've talked to and they feel so strongly about this and it's really hard for me to speak to them and help them visualize why this is so important. As a veterinarian, can use speak to the concept of these doggy seatbelt harness things.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Well, they're better than the dog being loose in the vehicle, but they're not safe enough. I've still seen cars in bad accidents that the dog ends up really badly injured. I've seen dogs with broken backs and dogs with broken appendages, and so it's just much better. One of my favorites was a dog that had bitten into a fishing lure. And so, they put the dog in the car and they brought it to the vet clinic, and by the time they got there, it was a treble hook. And so now the treble hook, one hook was in the dog and the other hook was attached to the seat of the vehicle, so now we had to release the dog from two things. So before we could even get it out of the car to bring it into the clinic to treat it, it had attached two of the treble hook pieces to the seat. So if it can go wrong, it will.

Laura Reeves:

My jaw is literally hanging open. That is a new one. I thought I had seen a lot of crazy stuff.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Oh yeah. There's always something that you haven't seen. I've been in practice for almost 40 years, about the time you think you've seen it all, you're like, "Oh, look at that. I never could have imagined that that would actually happen."

Laura Reeves:

Who knew?

Dr. Marty Greer:

Yep. It was a John Deere fishing lure, I still remember pictures. I take pictures of everything because I got a lot of great pictures. And then of course the other things are medicating and brushing your dog's teeth. So we have clients that

come and say, "My dog won't let me put eardrops in. My dog won't let me give him a pill. My dog won't let me trim his nails. My dog won't let me brush his teeth." And seriously, when they're little babies, you need to get him accustomed to being handled and all those things happening because it is craziness that you can't medicate or treat your own dog. So it's important that when they're little, you teach them these things. You teach them these skills. You don't have to have to come to teachers meeting. You just have to be firm and you have to give them good rewards so that after their teeth are brushed, give them a piece of cheese because cheese is good for the teeth, but there are certainly things you can do to convince your dog that it's appropriate for you to go through all these things.

Dr. Marty Greer:

We have dogs that come in to the vet clinic that have to be sedated for things that are basic care because they weren't managed well when they were little. And sometimes it's not the owner's fault because they didn't have them when they were little babies, but you need to start doing those things starting with early neurological stimulation on day three and going all the way through puppyhood so that those little dogs are accustomed to being, not man handled, but appropriately handled and understand that what you're trying to do is not going to hurt them. Karen Oak Bell has a great video. She teaches her dog to hold his breath. So when you take an x-ray of the dog, literally inhales and holds it for the x-ray, it is the coolest thing. You can look online, find her video and learn to teach your dog those things.

Laura Reeves:

Yeah, I think it is so imperative. I mean as a professional dog handler, most of the dogs, not all, most of the dogs that I showed had had some foundation work. But I spent six years working as a pet group, and those six years were not attractive. And the number of dogs that... I understand that folks don't want to hurt their dog, and so they're afraid to trim the toenails because they might cut the quick. And so if people are interested in techniques on how you can trim your own toenails, we have variety of videos and a variety of things available here at the Good Dog Pod to talk about that. But it is so important, and I know kids aren't dogs and dogs aren't kids, I understand that. But the idea of boundaries is the same.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Absolutely.

Laura Reeves:

And if you say you shouldn't touch the hot stove and the child touches the hot stove and gets a bad burn, so it's safety for our animals and wellbeing for our animals. And just because the dog pulls us foot away is not a reason to not do that particular procedure is what I would suggest.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Exactly. So oral health, basic medications. I am stunned everyday by people that say, "Oh, he won't let me do that." I'm like, "Really? Don't you pay the rent? Don't you pay for the mortgage at your house? Why is your dog telling you what they're going to let you do? That's not okay." And you don't have to be mean, you just have to teach them and you can do it gradually. You can desensitize them. There's many techniques like you said. But I really don't like having to put a muzzle on a dog. I don't really like having to change the medications we use because an owner can't medicate their pet. I don't want to put them in the hospital or make them drive to the clinic twice a day for meds, it just doesn't make any sense to me. So by setting some boundaries and teaching some basic skills, you can do a lot of things to teach dogs to allow you to appropriately handle them.

And it's really pretty funny when I have dogs that come in and they love having their teeth brush so much that their owner can't brush their own personal teeth without brushing the dog's teeth. So those are all things about a mindset, those are all things about training. It's no different than teaching your dog to eat a carrot when they're a baby. There's so much you can do and there's so easy to mold into what you want them to be. If you start little, and you working with them and you work hard at it, you can make such an impact in your dog's future and their lifelong health.

I mean, we don't know anybody that comes to the veterinary clinic when their dog is elderly and says, "Yeah, really I'm ready for them to go. I'm ready." But by managing your dog's, dental health. By managing your dog's food intake and their exercise level, oftentimes give two years to your dog of healthy life, which if you wanted to do the seven year ratio,

that's 14 years to you and me. But we don't have people that come in and say, "Nope, I'm good. I'm good. I'm ready for them to go."

If you said to them when they're two years old, "I can give you two more years of life if you do X, Y, and Z," clients will do it because they understand it, but veterinarians need to teach them that and clients need to listen to their veterinarians and realize they're not trying to pick on them or beat them up, they're trying to provide good health. So good ear care, good dental care, good weight control, good exercise. All the things.

Laura Reeves:

Grooming. I'm going to go back to grooming.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Grooming. Absolutely.

Laura Reeves:

Awesome.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Absolutely. So we can make a difference in our pet's lives and give them good quality longevity by basic things. Just thinking about it and listening to what your veterinarian is telling you is best for your pet's health.

Laura Reeves:

Excellent. All right. Well Marty, thank you so much, I really, really appreciate your time. And I'm particularly grateful that you were kind enough to take a little, tiny moment out of your amazing vacation to talk to me. So thank you.

Dr. Marty Greer:

It's always a pleasure.

Good Dog is a secure online community that advocates for dog breeders, educates the public, helps informed puppy buyers connect directly with certified good breeders and promotes responsible dog ownership. Good Dog is offering its good breeders special advanced access to the video recordings and transcripts for the full three part Q&A webinar series with Dr. Hutchinson. All you have to do is sign up as a breeder [@gooddog.com/join](https://gooddog.com/join). That is GoodDog.com/join or click the link in the show notes.