

## Shape Up! Canine Fitness Seminar

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June 24, 2016

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## Fitness Agenda

- Movement & Conditioning Exercise Basics
- Tuck-sits & Folding-Downs
- Cavalettis
- Hind-leg Targeting
- Balance & Strengthening
- Fitness Equipment
- Workout Planning

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## Philosophy



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## Guiding Principles

- Safety for dog & person from:
  - physical harm
  - psychological harm
  - threats & force
- Empowerment for dog & person
- Reinforce behaviors you want

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## Getting Behavior

- Fitness exercises are behaviors
- SMART (via Kathy Sdao)

SMART = See MARK Reinforce Training

- See the behavior
- Mark it! e.g. click, "yip", "good"
- Reinforce the behaviors you want

Reinforcers are what the \*dog\* finds valuable.  
They strengthen behavior, e.g. yummy treats

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## Getting Behavior

- Encourage learning
  - Reinforce often; experiment with value-level
- Shape, lure, prompt, & capture
  - Luring (2-3 times & fade) & some prompts can fade
  - Capture: be creative
  - Shaping: think small approximations
- No forcing dog into position or on equipment

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## Fitness vs Rehabilitation

- Canine fitness involves exercises to provide:
  - Strengthening & cardio
  - Flexibility
  - Body awareness, including balance
  - Mental stimulation...
  - Injury prevention
- Canine Rehabilitation
  - Rehabilitates a body after injury, surgery, or diseases
- Fitness & rehab practitioner qualifications differ

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## Muscular System

- Action in groups of muscles
- Prime movers: most responsible for a movement, e.g. biceps brachii (elbow flexion)
- Synergists: assist the prime movers & stabilize the joints involved with the movement, e.g. brachialis (elbow flexion)
- Antagonist: perform opposite of prime movers, e.g. triceps brachii (elbow extension)

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## Muscle Actions

- Isometric contraction: the force generated is equal to the resistance; no change in m length & no ROM involved
- Isotonic contractions: m length changes through partial or full ROM against resistance
  - Concentric: m moves from lengthened to shortened
  - Eccentric: m moves from shortened to lengthened (deceleration)

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## Proprioception

- Proprioception:
  - The ability of the body to sense position & movement; i.e. where body is in space during movement
- Mechanoreceptors:
  - Are key in proprioception
  - Articular, cutaneous, & muscle receptors
- Stimulating proprioception through exercises is essential; cavalettis, wobble boards, paw pods, ...

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## Canine Physiology: Possible Issues

- Muscular weakness
  - Skeletal stress (e.g. weight, long nails)
  - Lack of body awareness
  - Habitual movement & posture patterns
    - sitting, standing, running
  - Injuries or surgery & possible after-effects
- Important to have your dog checked out by a veterinarian

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## Observation Skills: Physical Signs

- Standing out of balance
- Sitting to the side
- Being sensitive to touch
- Walking, trotting... with an uneven gait



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### Proper Alignment

- Head & neck in neutral
- Back is long, not roached
- Legs are square when standing
- Legs are normal width, esp hind legs
- Body is not twisted to the side
- Legs are in alignment in locomotion
- & more... Does the dog look comfortable? Aligned?

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### Before Doing Exercises

- Check with your veterinarian
- Weight management is extremely important
- Nails have to be short
- If your dog requires therapeutic work specific to an injury or neurological issue, then work with a rehabilitation professional

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### Benefits of Fitness Exercises

- Strengthens muscles
  - Including core muscles
- Supports joints
- Improves flexibility
- Improves alignment & posture
- Improves balance & stability

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### Benefits of Fitness Exercises

- Helps prevent injury & disease
- Allows dogs to age without weak hind-ends & loss of proprioception
- Weight reduction (lean dogs live avg +2 yrs longer)
- Improves confidence & behavior

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### Benefits of Fitness Exercises

- Encourages thinking & problem solving
- Improves endurance
- Improves body awareness & focus
- Improves gait & movement

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### Fitness Outcomes

- Trunk & core muscle strength
- Balance & coordination
- Flexibility & range of motion
- Body awareness
- Confidence
- Relationship

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**During Fitness Exercises**

- Your dog should enjoy the exercises
  - Never force your dog
  - Reinforce interaction you want to see
  - Progress slowly & incrementally
  - Progress in just 10-15 mins/day (Less is More!)
- Do exercises on non-slip surfaces
  - Set up your exercise area for success
  - Yoga mats & rubber floors work really well
  - Pick up equipment you aren't using

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**During Fitness Exercises**

- Take video
  - What cues are you using?
  - Are you reinforcing your dog? Timing?
  - Is your dog happily engaged in fitness?
- Watch alignment
  - How many reps before alignment changes?
  - How many reps before dog hesitates?

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**Foundation Behaviors  
& Exercises**

- Targeting with paws
  - Front & hind-end targeting
  - 1, 2, & 4 paws
  - 2 paws same side
- Targeting with nose
- Sit-stands (tuck-sit, then kick back)

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### Foundation Behaviors for Exercises

- Down-stands (sphinx down, then push up)
- Spins & Twirls
- Side-stepping
- Backing up
- Lifting a paw

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### Tuck-Sit

- From balanced standing position
- Front legs are still & back legs tuck in for sit
  - The sit should be square
  - 6-10 repetitions per set, can do 2 sets
- Try front paws on a low platform
- Next step:
  - Front legs are still & back legs push out to stand (more difficult to do than the tuck-sit)

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### Tuck-Sit video

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**Tuck-Sit  
Sit-Stand**

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**Koji Sit-Stand**

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**Stand to Folding-Down**

- All 4 paws stay in the same location
- Dog folds back to sphinx position
  - All 4 limbs flex
- 6-10 times, can do 2 sets
- This is a nice one to use shaping for
- Next step:
  - Dog stands by pushing up with all 4 paws
  - All limbs are in extension & square

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**Folding-Down**

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**Down-to-Stand**

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**Movement & Conditioning:  
Fitness Exercises**



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### Benefits of Moving Slowly

- Encourages thinking & focus
- Brings awareness to both dog & handler
- Engages & connects the dog & us
- Improves proprioception
  - Feels body in movement
  - Experiences balance

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### Exercise Demo

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### Balance & Awareness



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### When Exercising

- Start off easy, don't push too fast
- Increase duration, frequency, OR intensity
- It can take 6-12 weeks to see changes
- Do exercises every other day
- Notice fatigue, pain, or resistance? STOP
- Your dog should enjoy these activities
  - If she isn't, STOP

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### Benefits of Platforms

- Narrows stance, if platform is narrow
  - Helps align sphinx down & sit
- Good for front & back leg targeting
- Useful prop for side stepping
- Provides stability for senior dogs
- Provides easy introduction to equipment
- Useful for stationing

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### Simple Platform Work: Great for Senior Dogs

- Start with front paws on 4" platform
    - 10 =>30 secs; gradually over 10-14 days
    - Set of 3, can do 3 sets
  - Move to 6", 10 =>30 secs; 10-14 days
  - Move to 8", 10 =>30 secs; 10-14 days
- Do these 3 days/week, as long as your dog improves. Add variation

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**Platform Work:  
Increasing Difficulty**

- At a comfortable working height, add:
  - Side-stepping
  - Weight shifting
  - Front paw lifts
  - Sit-stands with front paws up
  - Kick-backs
  - Balance disc or FitBone for 2 legs

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**Session One  
Foundation Exercises**

- "Touch" with nose to hand
- Walking backwards or side-stepping
- Front paws target (for this session)
- Lifting paw
- Tuck-sit &/or kick-back stand
- Fold-down & stand

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**Warm-up**

Benefits of a good warm-up

- Reduces the risk of injury
- Excites the nervous system
- Lubricates joints, increases fluidity
- Loosens muscles
- Improves reaction times

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### Warm-up

- Wrists, shoulders, neck, hips, knees, spine, & neck
- Takes 5 mins (same for cool-down)
- Weight shifts
- Trotting to targets or over cavalettis
- Sprints

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### Warm-Up

- Spins both directions
- S-curves or weave between legs
- Backing up & side-stepping
- Exercises that engage core muscles
  - Sit-stands & down-stands

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### Seven Warm-up Jumps

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## Cool-Down

### Benefits of a cool-down

- Releases lactic acid, preventing stiffness
- Gives you the ability to see if an injury occurred
- Heart rate returns closer to resting level

### How to:

- Work on new exercises or go for a walk

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## Cavalettis

- Walking & trotting over cavalettis
- Good for bending of joints in front/hind limbs
- Lifts paws, uses hip flexors
- Increases proprioception
- Increases focus
- Can add variation
  - Turns during walking
  - Change the distance between poles (trot)

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## Cavalettis

- Walking (8-12 times)
  - Start at stifle height (if hops, slow down or lower)
  - Closer together for high stepping, can add turns
  - Seniors need active recovery
    - E.g. a day of rest should include walks
- Trotting (20-30 times)
  - Start over 2" poles, distance at height of withers (+2")
  - Over time, lengthen distance 1-2" at a time
  - Hitting poles? Too much distance or fatigue

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**Cavalettis**

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**Cavalettis & Balance Disc**



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**Cassie Trots  
Through Cavalettis**

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## Warm-Up Variation

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- ### Benefits of Hind-leg Targeting
- Useful for movement in general
  - Increases awareness of hind end
  - Improves confidence & can reduce stress
  - Improves focus
  - Improves performance

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### Hind-leg Targeting

- Start with something low to the floor
- Can try walking over it at first
  - When back paw touches the object, then C/T
- Can eventually back onto & up objects
- Be patient: it takes some dogs a long time

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### Hind-leg Targeting

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### Hind-leg Targeting

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## Ipsilaterals

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## Session Two Foundation Plus

- Any foundation exercises
- Hind-leg targeting
- Cavalettis
- Ipsilaterals (most advanced)

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## Fitness Equipment

- FitPAWS, Blue-9 Klimb, & Pet Tutor
  - [SeattleTTouch.com/Fitness-Equipment](http://SeattleTTouch.com/Fitness-Equipment)
  - FitPAWS 15% off code=**16E-AMBL5**
- Introduce your dog to all equipment slowly
  - Reinforce for interacting appropriately
  - Alternate with something familiar & return
  - Wear a properly-fitting harness (e.g. on peanut)
- Watch your dog for proper alignment
- Put equipment away when not using it

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### Gusto Hind-end Strengthening

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### Gusto End of Session

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### Balance Exercises

- Weight shifting for balance
  - Shift side:side or forward:back
  - Wobble or rocker board
  - Balance Disc, FitBone, then Peanut
  - Lift a paw from ground or use balance equipment
  - Figure 8s through cones or spin/twirl
  - Side stepping (adv: on FitBone)
  - Neck stretches (up/down & left/right) from ground or balance equipment

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## Strengthening Exercises

- Sit-stands with front paws
  - Progressively higher
  - Unstable surfaces
- Down-Stands
  - Unstable surfaces
- Sit Pretty
  - Increase duration
  - Unstable surfaces
  - Sit Pretty to Stand

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## Koji in Balance



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## Strengthening Exercises

- Side-stepping
  - Front or back legs up
  - Unstable surfaces
- Backing up
  - Back onto stable then unstable surfaces
- Back up inclines
  - Back legs on raised (stable or unstable surface)
  - Front legs bend to elbows (downward dog)
  - Nose to ground

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## Strengthening Exercises

- Ipsilaterals
  - Same side up on low incline
  - Increase incline
- Planks
  - Front & back legs, abduction planks
  - Unstable surfaces
- Paw Pods
  - 4 paws up
  - Off & on plus weight shifting

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## Koji on Paw Pods

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## Session Three Foundation Plus

- Any foundation or session 2 exercises
- Using more of the equipment
  - Planks: front & back
  - Paw pods
  - FitBone
  - Balance Disc
  - The Klimb

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## How Often? How Much?

- About 15 minutes a day works just fine (5-5-5)
  - Similar exercises every other day
  - Don't strengthen the same muscles every day
  - Plan a day off each week, i.e. light activities
  - 6-10 reps for many, not all, exercises
  - 5-30 seconds for many, not all, exercises
- Increase difficulty, duration, or frequency: 1 at a time

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## Planning Workouts

- Time your workouts (~15 minutes)
- Warm-up, workout (5 mins)
- Workout portion (5 mins)
  - Whole body or front-end/hind-end days
  - Try to do 2-3 sets of each exercises
  - Repeat entire routine
- Cool-down (5 mins)

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## Sample Workout

### Warm-up (5 mins)

- Cavalettis (10 reps)
- Sit-stands on floor (3-5)
- Down-stands on floor (3-5)
- Spin/Twirl (3-5)
- Back-up or side-step (3-5)

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### Sample Workout

Workout (5 mins; 2-3 sets)

- Balance disc or FitBone
  - Front paws up: sit stand, pivot around
  - Walk fwd to back paws up: pivot a few each direction; push up (play bow or nose to ground)
  - Reverse back over the disc & come forward
- Planks (front/back or abduction)
  - Bones or Peanuts with Klimbs

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### Sample Workout

- Cool-down (5 mins)
  - Work on new behavior for 1 minute, e.g. slow cavalettis, pod targets, ipsilaterals
  - Go for a walk

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### Session Four Sample Workout

- Foundation exercises
- Specific exercises on the floor
- Specific exercises on equipment
- Short version of a 15 minute workout

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### Performance Dogs



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### Performance Dogs

- Often have muscular & skeletal stress
- May lack focus at times
- May refuse to do a behavior, e.g. jump
- Can exhibit stress-related behaviors
- May lack body awareness
- May only have one speed

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### Performance Dogs

- Training should include focus on the systems & structures involved in the sport
  - Work the specific muscles used for the sport
- Endurance (freestyle, hunting, sledding) versus Sprinting (agility, flyball)
- Cardio, strengthening, core, front-end, hind-end, & flexibility

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## Performance Conditioning Planning the Year

- During the performance season
  - Primarily exercises that use & support the motions & muscles of the sport
- During the off-season
  - Cross-train: working all muscles & movement
- Competing: take day before & after off
- Class days: if light, can add fitness in

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## Resources

- [SeattleTTouch.com/fitness-equipment](http://SeattleTTouch.com/fitness-equipment) (FitPAWS, The Klimb, & Pet Tutor)
- [SeattleTTouch.com](http://SeattleTTouch.com), DVDs, webinars, workshops
- [facebook.com/lori.stevens.543](https://www.facebook.com/lori.stevens.543)
- [onlineveterinaryanatomy.net/content/muscle-flashcards-keynote](http://onlineveterinaryanatomy.net/content/muscle-flashcards-keynote) for muscle education

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## Questions

Web: [SeattleTTouch.com](http://SeattleTTouch.com)  
Email: [Lori@SeattleTTouch.com](mailto:Lori@SeattleTTouch.com)

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