

The Nose Knows

Understanding and Fostering your Dog's Sense of Smell

By Nancy Secrist, Easdale: the best pet care

Next time you take Rover out for his evening walk and he pauses to thoroughly sniff a nondescript bit of paper and a few kernels of popcorn littering your curb, take a moment to consider what might be happening....

You may already know that a dog's nose is 40 times more sensitive than a human nose. Perhaps you have heard stories of dogs that trailed a person who passed by more than four days - six days - even eight days ago! Surely, you have read of explosive and drug detecting dogs. But you may not know that the tracking results of a Bloodhound's nose is credible and admissible in a court of law. That recently, dogs have been trained to detect diabetes, imminent seizures and cancer at the earliest stages. Customs service dogs can alert officials to smuggled contraband plants or animals. Each dog carries an entire analytical chemistry laboratory in their nose!

Engage your dog's attention through the nose. Allow a little extra time on the evening walk for a good sniff session. You can even play a "seek-back" game. Take an old wallet or glove that has no match anymore, something that is well scented by you. On your next walk with Rover, drop your scented item twenty steps or so before you turn around to go back home. As you turn to go back, check your pockets - imagine you just lost your REAL wallet! In a desperate tone, tell your dog to "Find it!" As you start the return home, point out different areas for him to sniff on the way back and let him find the carefully planted item. He will be naturally drawn to your scent, so you can have a small celebration and praise session. Gradually, you can make the search longer and less obvious to increase the challenge. Who knows? Perhaps someday you may need his help to find your wallet for real! Dogs like to have a job and to feel important, just like people.

When we say that a dog's sense of smell is 40 times better than ours, it's more than just stronger, dogs smell in 3D. They can maintain separate air flow from the left to the right nostrils. They have an area that we do not which allows them to detect and identify pheromones. Human language lacks the words to describe the rich and varied world of scent which is the primary sense for dogs. That bit of paper litter and a few kernels of popcorn earlier? Your dog would be able to tell that a four-year-old girl was having a tantrum after seeing a movie with her mother - which is how the popcorn landed on the ground!

Reawaken your own sense of smell to appreciate that of your dog's. People do make their living from an acute sense of taste and smell: sommelier, perfume designer, chocolate taster and more. If you would like to develop a finer appreciation for the sense of smell, try reading *Being a Dog: Following the Dog into a World of Smell* by Alexandra Horowitz. If you would like to develop your dog's ability to tell you about what he is smelling, check out the National Association of Canine Scent Work where as a hobby you can train your dog for nose work at NACSW.net.



At Easdale: the best pet care, we take our guests out on leash to explore the outdoors on four acres. Our rustic wooded trails are enlivened by the visits of chipmunks, rabbits and other wildlife. The walk isn't about going potty or even getting from Point A to Point B but the journey from what can be sniffed along the way. Come visit and let the sniffing begin!

Happy Holidays to All!



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