

# What Every Dog Deserves To Have His Handler Know!

## Conditioning For Healthy Dogs

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### **Objectives of this lecture is to learn:**

What is canine conditioning?

What is specificity training?

What is cross Training?

What common sense training

Goals of an exercise

Example: Why I choose not to throw a ball to exercise my dogs

Mode of cardiovascular exercise

Why it is important to warm up your dog and keep them fit

The basic box exercises

The basic air cushion exercises

Conditioning is defined as "developing a state of health, readiness, or physical fitness." Simply stated, conditioning consists of a planned program of exercise. Fitness is the condition of being physically fit. Fitness includes, cardiovascular, muscle strength, muscle endurance, power, balance, proprioception, flexibility and more.

### **Humans**

American College of Sports Medicine sets guidelines what are the requirements to obtain & maintain minimal cardiovascular fitness and muscle strength.

### **Dogs**

There is no national canine organization that has set the fitness standards for dogs, based on research. Some vets and organizations have their opinion or recommendations, but there is not a national standard. There is an "American Canine Sports Medicine Association (ACSMA). You can go to [sportsvet.com](http://sportsvet.com) for scientific information on conditioning, but no specifics, at [Caninesports.com](http://Caninesports.com) gives you general information on fitness & conditioning.

Therefore, we must follow the **common sense rule (CSR)**. We tend to all get carried away and do too much, too fast, too soon. We must use common sense!

### **More and faster is not better. We must use common sense training.**

### **Specific Training For Your Sport**

Mimic the movements of your sport in your conditioning program. For example, if you do a 2 on 2 off 6'3' A Frame, you need to strengthen those muscles in that specific position without the impact of that obstacle.

### **Cross Training**

Get your cardiovascular workout or strength training using different muscles than you use for your sport in order to prevent overuse injuries. For example, swimming your agility dog.

## Goals of an Exercise

When I come up with an exercise, I must ask myself

#1. What is my goal?

Specific or non-specific? What muscles do I want to work? Fast? Slow? Strength? Endurance? Balance? Front end? Back end?

#2. What are the benefits?

#3. Can I accomplish two things at the same time?

#4. What are the risks?

With every exercise there is always a risk. Just like with people, not every exercise is for every person or dog.

#5. The most important question. Does the exercise benefits exceed the risks for this dog?

For example, lets use ball throwing.

#6. What is your goal? I have asked people why they are doing it; these are some answers I have gotten.

Exercising the dog, conditioning the dog, blowing off steam, taking the edge off, warming up my dog, playing with dog, burning calories (overweight dog), if I don't do it my dog will go crazy, to calm my dog down, attempting to get him tired

#7. What are the benefits?

Cardiovascular benefits, speed, quickness

#8. Can I accomplish two things at the same time?

Yes, Cardiovascular benefits & eye mouth coordination

#9. What are the risks?

Too focused on ball, therefore, run into fences, cars, other dogs, people and other objects

Too focused on ball, therefore not thinking about their body position & landing

Jumping high into air, causes big uncontrolled impact on landing, high risk for injury

Running after low ball is high risk for impact sliding injuries

If the dog is overweight or unfit, the risks are extremely high for injury.

Is this the play relationship you want with your agility dog i.e. pick up a toy and your dogs run out away from you

#10. Does the benefits of ball throwing exceed the risks for this dog?

If your dog was a competitive ball catching dog, the answer would be yes.

If you have an agility dog, my answer is no. There are many other ways to exercise your dog with out the risk of injury.

## Mode of Cardiovascular Exercise (Just to name a few)

Hiking with dog off leash

*Pros:* fun, good general exercise, blow off steam, burning calories, tire dog out

*Cons:* must have off leash location, takes time, not specific, not continuous, or controlled gait, dog stops to sniff, it will walk then trot, maybe run, it can pick its strongest lead (leg running in front) and turn to it strongest direction,

Super Slow Leash walking

*Pros:* forces dog to use their body evenly with no impact, good to use as warm up and cool down

*Cons:* very boring

Walking in deep sand

*Pros:* excellent workout with minimal impact on joints

*Cons:* Have to live near a beach or park with sand

Human Power walking (brisk) on a Leash

*Pros:* good easy movement, fun, gets the dog out, most dogs will be a trot

Walking Up, Down and transverse inclines, & Stair climbing at a walking (no hopping or skipping)

Excellent way to increase cardiovascular workout without the impact of trotting

Increase muscle strength of hind limbs

*Cons:* most likely not fast enough to be getting a good cardiovascular workout for dog

Jogging with dog trotting on leash (no cement or asphalt)

*Pros:* dog is trotting at a steady pace, great specific conditioning, outside

*Cons:* Human body has to take the impact of jogging

*Caution:* Just because you want run a 10K or marathon don't make your dog do it

Common Sense rule applies: 10-30 minutes of trotting is great, 45 minutes to 4 hours your risks are higher than your benefits

## Recall Work

Long distance recalls between two people

*Pros:* work on speed with focus being on a person rather than a toy, great recall training

*Cons:* need a large field or trail, need two people

Sit stays with long distance recall

*Pros:* only need with one person, you get to work on sit stays, you get to run to your position to work on your fitness (takes less time this way), with multiple dogs, release one dog at a time, (so the dogs don't bump into each other)

*Cons:* need a large field or trail

Riding a bike or scooter while dog is trotting (on dirt trail only, no cement or asphalt)

*Pros:* Dog gets great trot work, without impacting your joints

*Cons:* high risk of accident, dog & human, finding a dirt trail that allows dogs

Ground Treadmill

*Pros:* control speed, control incline, control intervals and warm up cool down, can do in bad weather, can do at night, increase knee extension

*Cons:* Expensive, need space, human treadmill belts not large enough for bigger dogs

Underwater Treadmill

*Pros:* Same as ground treadmill plus, decrease load of joints by increasing water height, increase workload of specific joints by adjusting water height

*Cons:* Must go to a facility that has one, expensive

Hydrotherapy Swimming Pool (swim X, endless pool)

*Pros:* fun, great cardiovascular workout, blow off steam and tire a dog out, burn calories

ramp into pool, swim vest on dogs, technician in the water with the dog, controlled exercise and rest intervals, no impact on joints, great cross training, swimming increase knee range of motion due to increased flexion

*Cons:* Must go to a facility that has one, or buy one yourself, either way, expensive

No functional weight bearing

Swimming

*Pros:* fun, great cardiovascular workout, blow off steam and tire a dog out, burn calories, great cross training

*Cons:* need to have pool, lake or swimming source, no functional weight bearing

Aerobic Exercise

Duration: Dogs: CSR People: 20 – 45 minutes

Intensity Dogs: CSR People: 60 – 80% estimated max heart rate

Frequency Dogs: CSR People: 3-6 days a week

## **Importance of warm up, keeping fit, ideal percent body fat, not overtraining for both dog & handler.**

The basic box exercises are going to improve muscle strength, balance, body awareness, coordination, and flexibility.

The air cushion is going to increase the difficulty from the box exercises in addition to increasing balance and proprioception

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