



RULES OF THE PACK

DOG DOMINATES MAN

- Pulls on the leash or walks in front of you
- Barks at the doorbell
- Paws you for affection
- Jumps on you when you come home
- Mounts or humps you

MAN DOMINATES DOG

- Go out the front door ahead of your dog
- Give affection only at appropriate times (after exercise and food)
- Remain calm and assertive
- Set clear rules and boundaries in the house, at the dog park and everywhere else
- Consistently reinforce the rules

Sources: *Cesar's Way* by Cesar Millan, *Bark Busters*

GETTY IMAGE

The result of the tug-of-war for supremacy between dog and owner will play a big role in determining whether the two have a pleasant, ordered life together.

Experts are teaching pet owners how to behave as if they were part of a dog pack

The loudest bark wins

BY AMY BROWN-BOWERS

Sandee Walser doesn't have a very convincing growl, at least not according to her dog Chevy who continues to tear around the apartment, chewing, humping and barking at everything in sight.

She stands up tall and tries again, uttering a half-hearted "Bah" with as much authority as a middle school supply teacher pleading with an unruly class.

Ms. Walser has shelled out a lot of money to learn how to growl like a dog. She is part of a trend among dog behaviourists who are teaching pet owners such as Ms. Walser dog-pack manoeuvres in order to solve common dog problems and reclaim their dogs' true canine natures.

It's all because North American dogs — overindulged with pedicures, peanut butter-filled konges and haute couture travel bags — have been described as some of the most anxious, aggressive, fearful and stressed out pooches in the world.

"Dogs by nature need a leader and if you're not the leader then their instinct takes over and says 'Well if you're not a good dog leader than I have to be,' because they're a pack animal and you're their pack," said Jeff Cooke, president of Bark Busters Canada, the company Ms. Walser hired to help put 17-week-old Chevy in line.

This line of thought explains Chevy's incessant barking when the Bark Busters trainer, Gord Sommerville arrives — the dog sees himself as responsible for protecting the pack.

Bark Busters is among those who say dogs instinctively know that isolation equals death and that they need to be part of a pack with a strong leader in order to survive.

A strong proponent of the power of the pack, Cesar Millan, dog psychologist and star of National Geographic Channel's *Dog Whisperer*, was struck by the "unique neediness," and "issues" of American dogs when he emigrated from Mexico to the United States.

"American dogs were exhibiting what seemed to me to be a very strange, very unnatural energy.... I had never encountered dogs that were so neurotic, so excitable, so fearful and tense," writes Mr. Millan in his new book, *Cesar's Way*.

He finds dogs north of the Rio Grande tend to be among the most insecure, anxious, frustrated and, consequently, worst behaved in the world despite the abundance of love, time and money given them. (Canadian spent an estimated \$4.2 billion on pets in 2004.)

But Jean Harvey, professor of philosophy at the University of Guelph, cautions against assuming that domestic dogs have the same needs as wild dogs.

Of course companion dogs need a guardian-leader to be watching over their safety, education and happiness, she says, but then this is the same in the case of cats and children and is true for any family where some members are vulnerable.

While she doesn't dispute that observing wild dogs and wolves may help us better understand our pets, she warns against simply transferring points about pack behaviour among wild dogs — things like a very dominant, even aggres-

sive leader and a clear pecking order where each member has his or her place — on to companion animals.

Over-generalizing is the concern. "In a number of ways many people still view companion animals through the lens of over-generalized stereotypes," said Prof. Harvey, who is presenting a paper at a conference next week about some moral implications of our relationships with companion animals.

While society has increasingly grown to see dogs as emotional companions,

proponents of the pack approach say that dogs' hard-wiring has not had time to catch up and that they still need leadership more than affection.

"Dogs are not small people," said Mr. Sommerville from Bark Busters.

"Better that you think of yourself as a dog than that you think of your dog like a person."

His colleague, Mr. Cooke uses the example of a dog barking at a doorbell to show how our lack of leadership is causing our pets undue angst.

"The dog is saying, 'Hey, you're not coming into my house. But the way I look at it, why is the dog having to make that decision. The dog doesn't know who your friends are, doesn't know who you've invited over to, say, fix an appliance,'" said Mr. Cooke.

"If you were the dog ... and you were consistently barking and getting agitated every time something went by the window, you'd be a nervous wreck."

In an ideal human-as-leader and pet-as-follower relationship, the dog would

trust you to decide who and what is a threat and would look at you when the doorbell rings rather than at the door.

As for Chevy, he continues to disregard his owner's requests and pulls a rubber steak from his toy basket.

"He's getting away with stuff he'd never get away with in nature," said Mr. Sommerville before emitting a fearsome noise from deep in his throat. Chevy is startled and drops his steak.

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