

Susquehanna Trail Dog Training Club

August 2026



Old Friends

by Connie Cuff

Do Dogs Feel Guilt?



Understanding what the “guilty look” means can fundamentally change the way you respond and ultimately lead to a happier, less anxious dog.

Dogs feel emotions including Joy, fear, love and anger. While they live rich, emotional lives, their ability to feel guilt in the same way that humans do is a different matter altogether.

A trial found that dogs displayed guilty behaviors based on how the owners behaved. Dogs who were innocent but scolded showed just as much “guilty” behavior as dogs who had done the wrong thing.

When a dog senses their owner is stressed, angry or tense, the dog uses behavior signals in an attempt to calm the situation. Dogs are incredibly skilled at reading human body language, facial expressions, and tone of voice. The guilty look is their response to you, not what they did.

Dogs live in the present moment. Although they can have impressive memories for certain things like people, places, and trained behaviors, their ability to consciously reflect on past actions and apply a moral framework to them is not supported by current evidence. A dog who chewed a shoe two hours ago, isn’t sitting in the corner feeling bad about it.

When an owner scolds their dog long after an incident has occurred, the dog has no way of understanding what the scolding is for. Research on dog training outcomes has shown that punishment based methods are associated with increased anxiety, fear and aggression without resulting in reliable improvement in the unwanted behavior. It teaches the dog that their owner is sometimes unpredictably scary, which is the

opposite of what most people want from their relationship with their pet.

How owners can respond more effectively to unwanted canine behaviors:

1. Only intervene if you catch them in the act. The two-second rule is a helpful guide. Re-directing a dog mid-behavior by offering an appropriate chew toy to chew and rewarding chewing on the toy is far more effective than “after-the-fact” correction.
2. Reinforce what you want to see. Positive reinforcement (with treats, praise or play) is the most effective and least harmful method of shaping dog behavior. Build on the habits you want them to have.
3. Stay calm when you discover a mess. Try to remember that your emotional response is what your dog is responding to.

What looks like guilt and remorse is actually a learned social response - your dog reading your emotional cues and doing everything in their power to de-escalate the situation. Dogs are not weighing right and wrong. They are highly social creatures deeply attuned to us and motivated to maintain harmony.

Next time you see the mess and find that guilty face looking up at you, take a breath and try to respond in a way that nurtures your relationship.

Till next time

Connie



Notes and Notices



Classes at the Marina are going well, with new members:

Jennifer Morris with **Cooper**; **Theresa Kuster** with **Marshall**; **Joyce Kuster** with **Sable** and **Katie Gegenheimer** with **Asher**.

We will have our Annual Club Picnic at the #2 Pavilion at the Shikellamy State Park Marina, on Sunday, **September 27th** at 1pm. **Please note the date change due to a scheduling conflict.** We bring the dogs and we ask for you to bring a covered dish and a dog related item for our Chinese Auction. We supply the hot dogs and drinks. There will be a signup sheet at class and if you do not get to class, you may reach out to RSVP.

PLEASE NOTE: **There will not be classes at the Marina on Tuesday, September 1st.**

Please check our calendar for updated visits. If your dog or puppy is not certified, you can visit nursing homes which is appreciated by the residents.

As ATD has notified us, you must have a **visit recorded once every 3 months** or you will need to be re-certified.

Our Club has a Private Facebook for members. If anyone would like to join, you can request to be added.

Congratulations to the following who have attained their **CGC**:

Ellie and Charlotte, handled by **Lisa Erdley**; **Wren** handled by **Kathi Schmouder**; **Daisy**, handled by **Chris Schmouder**.

Congratulation to the following who have been certified with **ATD**:

Tilly, handled by **Richelle Finerghy**; **Milly** handled by **Edna Wenrich**.

UPCOMING THERAPY VISITS AND CLUB ACTIVITIES

Aug 3 (Mon)	Mid-West Elementary (ATD only)	11:00 am
	Mid-West Middle School (ATD only)	1:00 pm
Aug 5 (Wed)	Riverwoods	10:00 am
Aug 6 (Thurs)	Lewisburg Federal Prison RDAP (Badged only)	12:00 pm
Aug 8 (Sat)	Decklen Wallace Benefit (ATD only)	1:00 pm - 3:00 pm
	@ Southside Fire Company, Riverside	
Aug 10 (Mon)	Nottingham Village Retirement Center	6:00 pm
Aug 12 (Wed)	Heritage Springs	10:00 am
	Buffalo Valley	10:45 am
Aug 13 (Thurs)	Mt. Carmel Sr. Living	10:00 am
	Mountain View Manor	1:30 pm
Aug 14 (Fri)	Mifflinburg Elem Summer Send off (ATD only).	4:00 pm - 8:00 pm
Aug 17 (Mon)	Columbia County Prison (Certified only)	1:15 pm
Aug 19 (Wed)	Riverwoods	10:00 am
Aug 20 (Thurs)	Mansion	10:30 am
Aug 25 (Tues)	Penn Lutheran	10:00 am
Aug 26 (Wed)	Heritage Springs	10:00 am
	Buffalo Valley	10:45 am
Aug 28 (Fri)	Bucknell Paws for a Shake (ATD only)	11:30 am - 1:00 pm
Aug 29 (Sat)	Bucknell Refresh @ Sojka Lawn (ATD only)	5:00 pm - 7:00 pm
Sept 1 (Tues)	<u>NO CLASSES AT THE MARINA</u>	

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
26	27	28	29	30	31	1
		10am - Penn Lutheran 6pm - CANCELLED - 7pm - CANCELLED -	10am - Heritage Springs 10:45am - Buffalo Valley			
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
	11am - Midd-West 1pm - Midd-West Middle	6pm - Advanced Training 7pm - Beginner Training	10am - Riverwoods @	12pm - Lewisburg Federal		1pm - Decklen Wallace
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
	6pm - Nottingham	6pm - Advanced Training 7pm - Beginner Training	10am - Heritage Springs 10:45am - Buffalo Valley	10am - Mount Carmel 1:30pm - Mountain View	4pm - Mifflinburg Summer	
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
	1:15pm - Columbia County	6pm - Advanced Training 7pm - Beginner Training	10am - Riverwoods @	10:30am - Mansion		
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
		10am - Penn Lutheran 6pm - Advanced Training 7pm - Beginner Training	10am - Heritage Springs 10:45am - Buffalo Valley		11:30am - Bucknell Paws	5pm - Bucknell Refresh
30	31	1	2	3	4	5
		6pm - NO CLASS - 7pm - NO CLASS -	10am - Riverwoods @		11:30am - Bucknell Paws	