



Greater St. Louis  
**Shetland  
Sheepdog  
Club**

December 2009

# Happy Holidays! December Meeting Cancelled

**Next Meeting Thursday,  
January 14, 7:30 p.m.**

**Webster Groves Animal Hospital**

A dog is the greatest gift  
a parent can give a child.  
OK, a good education,  
then a dog.

– John Grogan

*The SHELTYE VIBES is the official newsletter of the Greater St. Louis Shetland Sheepdog Club. SHELTYE VIBES is published monthly.*

*The Deadline for printing in the VIBES is the 20th of the month. Payments for listings or ads must accompany copy. Display ad for a full page is \$8; half page \$5. SUPPORT PAGE will run your business card size ad quarterly for \$5.00. (MEMBERS ONLY). Send all news, ads, materials, checks, etc., to the Editors. Make checks payable to GSLSSC.*

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Terri Poirier 618-655-1554

### **VICE PRESIDENT:**

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### **RECORDING SECRETARY:**

Debi Vetz 314-752-5709

### **CORRESPONDING SECRETARY:**

Marianne Glisson  
7701 Dittmer Road, Dittmer, MO 63023  
636-274-5319

fireside\_shelties@yahoo.com

### **TREASURER:**

Bob Piccirillo 636-274-7080

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Darlene Cutshall 636-668-6381  
Sandy Ganz 636-227-1578  
Ben Middleton 636-287-1428

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ARCHIVIST: Darlene Cutshall 636-668-6381

AWARDS: Lori Schulz 314-355-8861

### **AWARDS BANQUET:**

Marilyn Marlow 636-677-0085

CLUB PICNIC: Bob Piccirillo 636-274-7080

### **CONSTITUTION, BYLAWS & POLICIES:**

Marianne Glisson 636-274-5319

### **EDUCATION, HEALTH & WELFARE:**

Sandy Ganz 636-227-1578

EQUIPMENT: Donna Clifford 314-830-0552

MEMBERSHIP: Tammy Riggs 623-824-5226  
goldenskip@msn.com

SHELTYE INFO: Marianne Glisson 636-274-5319

### **SHELTYE PEDDLER:**

Donna Clifford 314-830-0552

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OBEDIENCE CHAIRPERSON: Cindy Lachnit

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SUNSHINE: Sarah Middleton 636-287-1428

VIBES EDITOR: Debi Vetz 314-752-5709  
mdvetz@sbcglobal.net

WAYS & MEANS: Vicki Piccirillo 636-274-7080

### **WEBSITE: [www.stlshelties.com](http://www.stlshelties.com)**

Amy Stoub 636-937-3508

astoub@earthlink.net

## **American Shetland Sheepdog Association**

WEBSITE: [www.assa.org](http://www.assa.org)

ASSA BREEDER REFERRAL

Marilyn Marlow 636-677-0085

## Club Picnic Recap

A big *GSLSSC Thank You* to Bob Piccirillo our 2009 Picnic Chairperson who organized the event. It was a great day with lots of food, friends, and Shelties. Also thanks go out to so many people who assisted Bob before and on the day of the event; Vicki Piccirillo, Amy Stoub, Ed Panoutsos, Marianne Glisson, and Anne Regan. If I missed someone it was not intentional.

There were some fun games and the agility run was enjoyed by so many who attended. And of course the food was delicious.

Thanks again everyone for a wonderful event where we could have fun and relax with our friends and dogs.

## DUES ARE DUE!

It's time to renew your membership and are due by January 1, 2010.

- \$20 Individual Membership
- \$25 Family Membership
- \$5 Junior Member

Make checks out to *GSLSSC* and either pay at a regular club meeting or mail to our Treasurer:

## BRAGS!

**Theresa Corcoran** lets us know that Keefer had a great weekend at the GAC Agility Trial. He completed his Novice FAST Title as well as his AXJ (Excellent Agility Jumpers) Title; and he earned two MXJ legs! So, he is now: Raisin Mischief in Motion RN OA AXJ.

**Terri Poirier** reports that Trevor had some nice runs during the past two weekends of trials. He successfully qualified 9 out of 12 runs. He thus now has 17 QQs and 180 MACH points on his journey to MACH2.

## Investigation of Gallbladder Disease and Hypercholesterolemia in Shetland Sheepdogs

### NEWS FLASH! Genetic Mutation Found!

Dr. Katrina Mealey, primary investigator of the study, reported to the ASSA Research Advisory Committee in September, 2009 that her group has identified a genetic mutation in Shelties that is strongly associated with gallbladder mucoceles. It is important that the data be reviewed by scientists and veterinarians prior to offering a test for the mutation to Sheltie owners. The work will be submitted for publication soon. Once the work has been validated, a DNA test should be made available. Dr. Mealey's group is the same one that developed the DNA test for the MDR-1 gene.

Dr. Mealey said, "We sincerely appreciate the cooperation we have received from the American Shetland Sheepdog Association and we will keep you apprised of developments."

Sheltie owners and the ASSA played an important role in providing Dr. Mealey with the material needed to identify the mutation. It was only 18 months from the time the ASSA became involved in distributing information about the study in March of 2008 until the discovery of the mutation was announced in September, 2009! A special thank you to everyone who participated!

Hopefully, the DNA test will be commercially available sometime next year.

Mary Mahaffey, DVM  
Chair, ASSA Research Advisory Committee

## New Pet Policy at Motel 6 and Studio 6!

You may have already heard about the 10% discount that all AKC registrants can take advantage of when staying at Motel 6 and Studio 6 locations nationwide. But have you heard about their new pet policy?

Motel 6 is pleased to announce the following changes:

- The one pet per room policy has been lifted
- There is no longer a weight limit on pets
- And Motel 6 does not assess a Pet Fee (\*Studio 6 has a pet fee of \$10.00/day up to \$50.00/stay)

To take advantage of the 10% discount, AKC registrants can log on to [motel6.com](http://motel6.com) and enter access code CP542764 for Motel 6 or visit [staystudio6.com](http://staystudio6.com) and enter the access code CP542765 for Studio 6 reservations.

Motel 6 and Studio 6 hotels have been pet friendly since 1962 and offer the lowest price of any national chain without sacrificing comfort at more than 1,000 locations in the U.S. and Canada. Standard amenities include free local phone calls, no long distance access charges, free morning coffee, data ports, Wi-Fi Internet access and a channel line-up including HBO, ESPN/ESPN2, and CNN. All Motel 6 and Studio 6 properties welcome pets, and most locations offer swimming pools and guest laundry facilities.

– via *AKC.org*

## Snickerpoodles

1/2 cup vegetable oil	3 <sup>3</sup> / <sub>4</sub> cups white flour
1/2 cup shortening	2 teaspoons cream of tartar
1 cup honey	1 teaspoon baking soda
2 eggs	1/2 cup cornmeal
	2 teaspoons cinnamon

Mix up the oil, shortening, honey and eggs. Beat well. Add flour, soda and cream of tartar. Knead dough until mixed well. Shape dough by rounded teaspoons into balls. Mix the cornmeal and cinnamon together in a bowl and roll balls in mixture. Place 2 inches apart on a greased cookie sheet. Press the balls down with a fork. Bake for 8-10 minutes at 400F. Cool on a rack. Feed to the dogs. Store in airtight container. Feed some more. Dogs love this!

Whether a dog is being prepared for the conformation ring or the Iditarod, it is **essential that canine athletes be maintained at a correct weight**. There is no breed standard which states that the ideal dog of that breed should be "flabby, moderately overweight, and with a pendulous abdomen!" Instead, many standards expressly state that the dog should be shown at peak fitness. Excess weight increases the stresses on the musculoskeletal system regardless of the performance event. How can you determine whether your dog has excessive fat? When palpating the ribcage and the loin, you should be able to feel the bones of the vertebrae and the ribs under the skin. How can you judge whether your dog is fit? Stand behind the dog and feel the muscles of the rear legs. They should be firm and well-defined.

In addition to understanding the dog's overall shape and level of fitness, you should evaluate your dog's conformation, both standing and moving. Get the assistance of someone familiar with canine conformation and with the standard for your breed. Keep in mind your chosen performance event(s). Make a list of your dog's strengths and weaknesses (for no dog is without both) and use it to create a conditioning program unique to your dog. For example, while agility training a Doberman Pinscher that has minimal shoulder layback and a short upper arm, the jumps should be at full height only when excellent footing and a soft landing surface can be provided.

Prior to starting a conditioning program, your dog should be given a thorough physical examination by a competent veterinarian to ensure that he is free of any pre-existing medical condition that could compromise his health. In addition, your dog's hips should be radiographed, and the radiographs evaluated for hip dysplasia by a qualified radiologist. Evaluations can be performed by the Orthopedic Foundation for Animals (OFA) or veterinarians involved in the PennHip Study at the University of Pennsylvania. In some breeds, elbow radiographs should be obtained and evaluated. In some breeds a cardiac examination is also recommended. Finally, to ensure that the dog has no abnormalities of vision, your dog's eyes should be examined by a veterinary ophthalmologist.

### Designing a Conditioning Program

Once your dog has been given a clean bill of health, a conditioning program can be established. What exactly does conditioning mean? The dictionary defines it as "developing a state of health, readiness, or physical fitness." Simply stated, conditioning consists of a planned program of exercise and nutrition.

When **designing an exercise program**, consideration should be given to the dog's age and current level of fitness, to any pre-existing medical conditions or injuries, to the performance event(s) that the dog will compete in, and to the handler's time and physical constraints. Although young puppies can be introduced to some of the skills and tools of their future trade, conditioning exercises should not begin in earnest until well after a dog's growth plates have closed (at approximately 10 months in small dogs and 14 months in the larger breeds). The growth plates are the locations in each bone where new bone forms and damage to the growth plates can result in serious limb deformities.

Dogs that have physical conditions such as hip dysplasia that can result in arthritis should be given only moderate exercise throughout their lives. The best exercise for these dogs is swimming, because it is a non-weight-bearing exercise. The owner of a dog with hip dysplasia should ensure that it trains and competes only in ideal conditions, and should carefully monitor it for signs of fatigue or pain.

An **exercise program** should start gradually, should be consistently applied, should provide variety, and should progress towards a specific goal. Conditioning is not just a weekend activity. A Golden Retriever that is being prepared for the National Specialty 2 months away may be taken swimming on Saturday when there is more time for travel, and on Sunday it may undergo skill-training (practice stacking, free-baiting, and gaiting) in the morning and a 30 minute

trot in the evening. During the week, when the handler has less time to devote to conditioning, the dog may be trotted for 30 minutes on Tuesday and Thursday. On Monday and Wednesday, the dog may be worked on cavaletti and conditioning jumps, and on Friday it gets to watch a movie on HBO.

**Exercises** should include both general conditioning exercises and specific skill training. Some examples of general conditioning exercises are: swimming, retrieving, walking or running with the dog, mechanical trotters, conditioning jumps, canine cavaletti, specific agility exercises, and stationary exercises. Retrieving is a popular method to exercise a dog, but it has a high potential for injury. Frisbees as a retrieving tool should be avoided if at all possible, or thrown low to the ground to prevent the dog from twisting on landing. Mechanical trotters can be useful, particularly in hot or cold weather, when it may be difficult or unsafe to exercise outdoors. However, they can be exceedingly boring for owners and dogs alike. Agility obstacles can be very helpful in strengthening specific muscle groups and improving coordination. For example, the weave poles can help to strengthen the muscles of the spine.

**Stationary exercises** can also be used to strengthen specific groups of muscles. For example, teaching a dog to sit up can strengthen the back muscles. Stretching exercises, such as the play-bow should always be used to warm up a dog prior to training and competition.

Although physical conditioning is important, **mental conditioning** is also essential. The best way to mentally condition a dog is to provide frequent periods of play and to incorporate play into the skill training exercises. Play is an essential part of a dog's emotional make-up. Games such as tug-of-war and chase-the-owner are a great way to relieve your dog's stress while at the same increasing his focus on the owner and strengthening the dog-human bond. Be careful not to over-train, whether it be in physical conditioning or in skill-training. Remember - just like you, every dog needs one day off a week!

This decade's explosion of interest in canine performance events will have many positive effects on dog and owner alike. Training a dog is one of the best ways to strengthen the human-canine bond. By learning as much as we can about canine structure and its relationship to performance, we can contribute to our dogs' general health and ensure success in our chosen performance event(s). Take time to appreciate your dog's marvelous athletic ability and to learn new ways to keep your dog fit and healthy throughout his life.

### Where to call

The following organizations provide information on conditions that can affect performance, keep registries of dogs that have been certified free of these conditions, and supply lists of veterinarians that can perform appropriate health checks.

#### Orthopedic Foundation for Animals

Hip and Elbow Dysplasia and other databases  
2300 E Nifong, Columbia, MO 65201  
(573) 442-0418

#### PennHip

Hip dysplasia

#### Canine Eye Registration Foundation (CERF)

Ocular disorders  
1235 SCC-A  
Purdue University, W. Lafayette, IN 47907-1235  
(317) 494-8179

#### American College of Veterinary Internal Medicine (Cardiology)

7175 West Jefferson Ave., Suite 2125, Lakewood, CO 80235  
(303) 980-7136

- via [www.caninesports.com/fitness.html](http://www.caninesports.com/fitness.html)



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December 2009

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## Canine Fitness

*Chris Zink, DVM, PhD*

The new millennium is an exciting time for the sport of dogs. More dogs participate in athletic events now than at any other time in history. Dogs and owners alike enjoy preparing for and participating in a variety of new performance events.

In the past several years the AKC alone has more than doubled the number of sponsored events. Retrievers, pointers, setters and spaniels can now enter non-competitive hunting tests at a variety of levels of difficulty, sighthounds can try their paws at lure coursing, herding breeds can work sheep in herding tests, terriers can test their mettle by going to ground, and dogs of all breeds can participate in agility, an exciting sport that tests the timing, coordination, and athleticism of dog and handler alike. Additional organized canine performance events include flyball, sledding, draft dog tests, coonhound trials, free-style heeling, weight-pulling competitions, Schutzhund, water rescue and more.

It is our responsibility to understand canine structure and locomotion, to learn how to condition dogs for specific performance events, and to feed nutritionally balanced diets—in essence to view and respect the dog as an athlete.

A coach for humans selects the best potential athletes, trains them in the skills of the game, provides them with appropriate conditioning exercises and diet, ensures that they receive expert medical care, and gives them emotional support and encouragement when needed. Those of us involved in canine performance events must play this role of coach for our dogs.

### **Dogs of all shapes and sizes**

Dogs are the most varied of all species. Humans have taken advantage of the plastic genetic make-up, short gestation period, and large litter size of the dog to mold his best friend into a variety of shapes and sizes. It is astounding to consider that the Irish Wolfhound and the Dachshund are not only members of the same species, but that both are members of the Hound group. Therefore, before beginning a program of conditioning and skill-training, it is necessary to objectively evaluate your dog's structure.

First consider whether your dog is of a heavy-set breed such as the Clumber Spaniel or the St. Bernard, light-boned like the Afghan Hound or the Whippet, or of medium structure like the Labrador Retriever or the Border Terrier. The heavier a dog is in relation to its height, the more stress will be exerted on the musculoskeletal system. Thus, although a Clumber Spaniel and an Afghan Hound may weigh the same, the Clumber Spaniel carries that weight on a smaller frame and will therefore create more stress on the musculoskeletal system while jumping, running, and some performance events, **proper conditioning and appropriate modifications** in training can provide significant compensation.

*Continued on page 3*

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