



PODCAST TRANSCRIPT

Canine Master on Pet Life Radio - Episode #20 Say Yes to the Yard!

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Chris: Hello, welcome to Canine Master on Pet Life Radio. Today, we're going to talk about saying yes to the yard. We're going to talk about how to prepare to spend the warm and spring summer months outside with your pooch. Here on the East Coast, the allergies are flowing amongst us all here. But the flowers are finally popping up and we want to spend more time enjoying the weather in our yards and to hang out with our dogs. But the problem is, after a long cold winter, many of our dogs need to brush up on their outdoor manners. They really haven't spent a lot of time outside and we got to get them used to again.

So today, we're going to discuss many of those unwanted behaviors that our dogs may be likely to sort of show and exhibit in the warmer months and how we can fix them. We have so much to discuss.

Now that we are spending more hours outside, we need to reestablish outdoor manners so our dogs know what to expect. And what is the best way to prepare them for this? So what are some of the unwanted behaviors? Jaimee, isn't it kind of crazy how we're getting into the summer months here and everybody's sort of contacting us saying, "About my dog doing this and that." Be we also have people that are living in this warm weather all the time.

Jaimee: Yeah, absolutely. I'm getting clients whose dogs were well-behaved through the winter. Now that they're spending more time outside, they want to talk about housetraining the dog to one area of the yard or stopping digging from the flowerbeds. So it's a really popular topic for this time of year.

Chris: Yeah, so digging and eating things also. I mean every dog tries to pick up a stick and then people start to freak out. People are also starting to be around a pool and how many times do we see dogs have bad pool manners, and as you said, potting in one spot. Dogs dig for many, many reasons. And what I will tell you is, is that digging becomes a real big pain in the rear for many of our customers and our clients.

So what are the reasons why dogs dig? Well one of the reasons why they dig in the summer is to stay cool. We see certain breeds tend to do that, they dig holes and it generally ends up right in your plants in your sort of flowerbeds. They pick the most soft dirt where you probably just put down mulch, right. I mean, we see that a lot don't we? But they dig and then they lie down and they dig these deep holes and it really becomes... it really messes up all your gardens. What are the other things, Jaimee, that they're talking about? I think they bury bones?

Jaimee: They bury things. And it's just hard because it's hard for them to be outside and supervise the dogs all the time. And when they go back out there, there's holes and things that are messed up and poop everywhere. Another thing is, containing them. They're chasing things in the yard and they want to be able to keep their dog safe.

Chris: Yeah, yeah. Well, one of the other reasons why, besides keeping the dog safe, is that they start digging for predatory reasons. Right around now, you're going to see those moles starting to hit your lawn. And when I see that I have moles... You know how I know I have moles? Is that the dog will actually start digging lines. He'll dig on the surface, not digging down deep. And he'll dig and he'll dig in another spot and another spot and it's shallow digging. And you know what? When you see that shallow digging, guess what?

Jaimee: Are there holes for moles, little holes in the yard?

Chris: No, so what they do is the moles' sort of stay on the surface of the grass so the dogs will just dig along the surface and you'll see these sort of lines and then you know you have moles. So then you're going to have to get somebody to help you with the moles. The other reason why dogs dig is, as you say, try to contain them, they try to escape. And that is a different type of way to fix it. We'll talk about that. The other reason why is boredom. They're bored. They dig because they're bored. And, of course, the last thing that they do is they dig because they're anxious. I know sometimes we see that. So some of these digging behaviors are similar to fix, we're going to come up with a bunch of different reasons they do this and others are more difficult because it's hard to supervise our dogs 100% in the yard.

Let's talk about why dogs dig to stay cool. I hear about Nordic breeds being a big one to dig to stay cool. I used to have, years ago, a Samoyed mix and it seems that that dog was always digging holes in the flowerbeds and drive my father crazy. So those heavy coated dogs, many times will dig to lay against that damp, cool dirt and it cools them off.

Those are the breeds we think of in Alaska out in the snow that they're very comfortable in those types of climates.

Yeah, and this is a survival way also. I mean, they're trying to survive. This is instinctual and I think that that's a really [inaudible]. So one of the things we

can do, well we had one client do a baby pool, right? They put out a baby pool, they filled it up with a little bit of water and I think their Samoyed was laying in the baby pool. Another place is the basement, the cool basement floor or in the garage. And what other things, Jaimee? I think there's some great products out there as well. What is that one that's...

Jaimee: There's some gel mats that if you freeze them and you put them outside, they stay cool for longer. So giving the dogs a place where they can get cool can prevent them from trying to get cool from the earth by digging.

Chris: Yeah, and I also think that taking a towel and soaking it in water, putting it down and sometimes they lay on that as well. So these kinds of things can actually help you. It's the same dogs that are going to sit on the tile floor in your foyer in the summertime to try to stay cool, right?

Jaimee: Yeah.

Chris: So yeah. So the other thing that reason why dogs dig is that they're trying to bury things, they're hiding stuff. And this can really be an issue. You give your dog a bone and he takes it and he goes and buries it. We just gave Dave a turkey neck yesterday, we do it for the teeth. And he took the turkey neck, didn't eat it, ran outside and buried it right away. So burying, it can be a problem especially if they're burying it places that you want to keep nice.

Jaimee: In your vegetable garden.

Chris: In your vegetable garden. So one of the things you could use is when you go to see home start to bury, you could use a marker work, and we've talk about this in stopping some of these unwanted behaviors. You take a marker word such as "enough", when he start to dig, and then you can take a squirt water bottle with a stream on it, go over and squirt him on top of the head and the ears, he's going to realize that every time he goes to dig, you say, "Enough," and he's going to go, "Oh, here comes the squirt water bottle," and he's going to stop.

Jaimee: It's important to set it up, not just wait for it to happen so you can be prepared and catch him in the act. Right, timing's important?

Chris: Yeah, exactly. And timing's important and also making sure... So when you set it up, you might try getting a bone that you know he's going to go and bury, right? I mean, I think that works out. So one of the worst things you can do is to let the dog watch you dig in the garden. Let's talk about that. I can't tell you how many times people are saying, "Well, when I did, my dog digs." So he started mimicking the behavior. And so, what I tell people is, "Do not have your dog watch you while you're planting your vegetable garden because your dog's going to get the idea that this is family digging time. And that can really be a tough thing."

Again, I also had a client who designated part of the sandbox. So the kids were digging in the sandbox and the dog would go out and dig in the sandbox too. At least the sandbox became the place to dig and it was a designated spot. So I guess that's something you could do. Putting 12 inches of sand in a sandbox with their toys, they might be able to love it and it could be a great activity. Again, encouraging digging is probably not the best thing to do. But if you have a real digger, directing them to certain spots may be something that's helpful.

Predatory digging, how do we know if it's predatory? So again, we talked about those moles and circus digging. And if they dig multiple little holes, it's generally predatory. This is another one that is a little bit harder to fix because it's predatory. So curbing a predatory instinct is a tough one. One of the things I would say is, you might try getting somebody to help you get rid of the moles or the rabbits so that the dog doesn't do the predatory digging. I don't have any real quick fixes on predatory digging except for really monitoring your dog and then using a marker word with an aversive of some sort like a squirt water bottle when they start. But again, if your dog's predatory instinct is really, really strong, it's not going to really matter, it's really not going to help you. Get rid of the moles in the first place.

Jaimee: Did you try and occupy them with something else in the yard like a bone or something that might distract them from all the little-

Chris: Yeah, I think that is a good thing. I just think that sometimes dog's prey drive is so high, you could sit there and try to distract them all you want and they're just not going to stop. Again, probably getting rid of the moles in the first place will probably help.

All right, how about digging to escape. So a lot of people are using those underground fences, those pet containment systems with the electric wire in them. If you have a dog that is digging under fences and escaping. Escaping can be very, very dangerous, and some dogs just seem like they just want to get out. So what I would recommend doing in this case, because you can't always supervise them. Let's face it, you put the dog out and he starts to dig and gets underneath the fence and out he goes. Well, a couple of things you can do, you can use that electric wire fence. I would bring it about three feet in front of the fence. He's going to get himself electric stimulation and not going to want to go near the other fence to dig.

Now, that said, I'm not a big fan of electrifying your dog at all. But I do know that some people have a hard time containing their dogs and that real fences are very, very expensive. And so expensive that many people can't afford them.

Jaimee: And dig under them.

Chris: And you can dig under them. So if you find yourself having to go that route, I would find yourself a really good company that's reputable, that has a very good training program. Anybody can shock a dog, but a good trainer with these kinds of fence systems, the dog won't even get shocked if they really are doing their job right. So finding somebody who has a good training with the system, is the best way to go, if you are going to do a regular fence system.

If you're going to do a regular fence, you can dig the wire down about two feet, if you can, that's a lot of work, and then you bend the fence. It goes down two feet, or down 18 inches, and then bend the fence to the inside. So you actually do a bend in it and that goes another two feet so that when the dog goes to dig down, they actually hit wire. That can work. A lot of farmers will do this for keeping predators out, out of their livestock. And this actually works really well when doing a real fence. But again, real fences are expensive unless you have the manpower or the desire yourself to put your own fence in, it can get pretty expensive. So you should go and dig a hole and go out and collect... Okay, hold on. I was just thinking of something, when a dog digs out of boredom, let's talk about that.

When a dog digs out of boredom, they're usually digging a deep hole and they usually dig in the same area. So I'm going to give you guys a technique that's an old... the old timers used to do this for dogs that dig. What they do is you take some poop, some of their poop, you dig a hole that is where they have been digging and you stick the poop in the hole and you cover it with a small layer of dirt. So let me explain. You're going to get some poop, generally their own poop, you're going to stick poop in the hole that they're going back and digging, and you're going to put a small layer on top. And sometimes this works, I'm just saying sometimes this works.

So when the dog goes back to that hole to start digging, he's going to dig and he's going to hit poop and many dogs are going to hate that experience and it'll become very, very unpleasant and they won't want to do it again. That's an old technique. Old-timers use it. I have seen it work, I've seen it not work. If your dog's one of those dogs that loves to eat poop, bad exercise, don't do it.

Jaimee: And don't let them see you do it.

Chris: And do let them see you do it, yes, thank you for that. All right, so anxiety digging needs to be addressed with a good obedience program or a good leadership program with a lot of structure. Dogs that have anxiety, dogs that are digging out of anxiety are usually digging because they don't have a good leader, they're the decision-making process and they're not a happy dog inside. So go back and listen to some of my other shows about how to become a good leader and I think that you'll find that anxiety will go away. Dogs that have anxiety are not happy dogs and what they need is, they need structure to help them relax, all right?

Jaimee: And would you suggest not leaving them in the yard alone with this anxiety?

Chris: Well, yeah. I mean, I think not leaving them alone is not a bad thing to do. But I also think that a dog that has anxiety, it's going to manifest itself in so many different ways. So if you keep them inside the house, he's having anxiety. Anxiety needs to be addressed differently. It's just a symptom of the anxiety that they're outside digging. So I would actually get into that leadership program, teaching your dog not to be in the decision-making process, relax, we've got it covered and they'll start to relax and stop the digging.

Okay, one of the best deterrents I want to talk about, so anxiety or boredom, is getting your dog enough exercise. We really need to talk about that first, but probably, it's the most important. If your dog is having a digging problem, go and get him some exercise. You could actually swim him, which we're going to talk about in a little bit.

Well, we have a lot more to talk about and problem-solving for unwanted behaviors in your yard.

All right, you know the title of the show is "Say Yes to the Yard". And another way we can say, "Yes to the yard," is by preventing all that outside dirt and water and mud from getting into your home. You might try our Dirty Dog Doormat. This Dirty Dog Doormat is a microfiber special-blended fabric that traps the mud and the water and the dirt and keeping your floors clean. So when the dog steps onto the mat, what happen is it absorbs the dirt and the mud and the water and it doesn't track it into your home. This is an amazing product, we're selling them all over the United States and around the world and it's called the Dirty Dog Doormat. Find out more about the Dirt Dog Doormat at caninemaster.com, that's C-A-N-I-N-E master.com.

Okay, what about eating things in the yard? How many times, Jaimee,, are we seeing customers and our clients talking about, "My dog is just ingesting and biting and grabbing everything."

Jaimee: Sticks and rocks and twigs and leaves now that they're outside in the grass, they haven't seen this behavior because they're not putting things in their mouth inside. But once they're outdoors, there's so much to explore and it really can be frustrating.

Chris: And I see people, it's generally new puppy owners because puppy's pick up everything, and here is the problem. There's a syndrome out there called Pica Syndrome, P-I-C-A. And Pica Syndrome occurs when the dog grabs an object and he wants to ingest it or own it, so he swallows it. And the reason why Pica Syndrome occurs is that many people, when they get a puppy or a new dog, everything that puppy grabs, they get concerned that the dog is going to chock on it so they go, "Oh my god, he has stick," and then they run over and they try to grab the stick. "Oh my god, he has a rock," or "He has an acorn," or he has this item or that item.

Now certain items are not good for your dog, but in general, if the dog was left to his own devices... You think that dogs like coyotes and wolves are grabbing objects all the time as puppies and their mom isn't taking this stuff out, they learn what to ingest and what not to. But by you panicking every time your dog picks up something, you go and quickly grab it out of their mouth, two things start to occur. Either they start to get... they clamp down and they get protective of it, or they swallow it but very rarely do they give it up unless you scare the bejesus out of them.

So what I would tell you you should do is that if your dog grabs something in the yard, try to redirect them. Pick up a Frisbee or take a squeaky toy or something like that and squeak the toy and when the dog drops it, just continue on about your day. Don't start panicking about everything that the dog grabs because you can actually cause a really bad behavioral issue.

Jaimee: It makes the objects more valuable because you want them, the dog thinks you want them and so they become more valuable.

Chris: Yeah, exactly, exactly and they become obsessed with picking stuff up. So start picking your battles kind of carefully, I would say. Is chewing on wood chips dangerous? Well I guess it depends on the type of wood chip because some wood chips have dye in them. Is chewing a rock dangerous? You know what? Swallowing a rock is dangerous. I mean, I guess a rock... But in general, I'm just not going to bother these. Grabbing a stick, I'm not going to really bother. I'm going to redirect him into something else. Now I would tell you, one of the people that works with us, her dog grabbed some poisonous berries, right?

Jaimee: Yeah, some toxic berries and the dog was just out in the yard and came across these and ingested them and got very, very sick.

Chris: I guess the dog almost died, right?

Jaimee: Yeah, and so you have to be aware of the types of plants in your yard and in your region so you know what to look out for so you can keep your dog from ingesting anything toxic.

Chris: Right, and I think actually hiring a good landscaper. Landscaper come walk your property with you and say, "Hey, what do I have here on the property that may be dangerous to my new puppy?" Right? So, that's an important thing to do. I'm not saying that there aren't things out there that are dangerous, because there are. Some of the fertilizers may not be good for them. And so you do want to be careful and get together with your landscaper and see what kind of products they're using on your yard, first of all. Because a lot of times we do see people using pesticides and things like this-

Jaimee: Mosquito spray.

Chris: Right? And tick spray and things like this. But also, what kind of plants they might ingest that might be dangerous.

One other thing you might do is teach your dog to drop it or leave it. So how you teach your dog to drop it? Well I usually do an exchange of some sort. I will usually use a low item on the totem pole, so to speak, sort of maybe with a ball or he grab something and then we'll do an exchange. I'll take a treat and I'll say, "Drop it," show them the treat. Drop it, show them the treat. When they drop the object, I'm going to take the object and exchange it for a treat. So teaching the dog how to leave it or drop it is a very, very, very good thing to do.

Jaimee: Can that create them though, then to pick up an object just to get a treat?

Chris: It could, it could, I have seen that happen. Yeah, so sometimes, like Jaimee was saying, sometimes dogs will just drop an item because you've been doing this exercise so much. But I think that if you start to break it up a little bit and-

Yeah, it's a good problem to have. I definitely would teach my dog to drop things. Where else might they pick up things? When they're hiking or on long walks. And an interesting tip also, if my dog is one that chews sticks. I used to have a Doberman Pincher years ago named Tyler. And Tyler, I think he ingested more sticks than he did food. And one of my veterinarians, I said, "I'm worried about blockage. I'm worried that my dog is going to ingest these sticks and they're going to get caught in his intestine and I'm going to have a vet bill." And at that time, I was training dogs and I wasn't making very much money during that time in my life so a vet bill of \$1,700 would've really set me back big time.

So what this veterinarian told me to do, and I have done it since with clients dogs and my own, is that you actually get Metamucil. Metamucil is that dietary... I guess it's for people-

Jaimee: Fiber.

Chris: Fiber, yeah. So what Metamucil does is it actually puts more moisture into the intestinal track. So I take a spoonful, tablespoon of Metamucil, which is fiber, which builds up the moisture as well, and I would put this in the food, in their food and this actually helps them pass things that might get stuck.

Jaimee: Those little pieces of stick.

Chris: Yeah, little pieces of sticks. So Metamucil, you can get it at the grocery store, and that will work really well. Anything else? I think that... All right well-

Jaimee: I think that covers it. But it's amazing how many times I go out to a new puppy and the client is just grabbing everything out of their mouth. And so really

preventing that Pica Syndrome can start at a young age and just be aware of it and pick your battles.

Chris: Yeah, exactly. I say pick your battles, exactly. All right, what about the pool? Oh my, we hear about the pool all the time. How many times do I hear about the dog that is circling and barking at the children when they go swimming in the pool? And the reason why the dogs do this is because they're trying to maintain control. They're getting all worked up, they're running around the pool, they're barking. I've even had dogs actually jump on the children or the people in the pool, which can be very, very dangerous, doing a total belly flop right onto their heads. So we need to be very, very careful about dogs around the pool when they start to get possessive when people are swimming or they start to jump.

When kids are screaming and yelling and splashing, it agitates the dog, they think there's chaos and then they want to go out there, they want to control the chaos, so they circle the pool, barking and barking and barking. This is a behavior that can be very, very dangerous. When I was a kid, I went over to a friend's house, I was out of college. I was going to get out of the pool and a Bouvier, her name was Molly, and this Bouvier came in and grabbed me by my head as I went to get out and it really freaked me out.

So I will tell you, I hear about aggression when people go to get out of the pool and I hear about dogs jumping on kids or jumping into the water and scratching kids. So this is a real problem. How do I fix this? Well again, those leadership exercises that we talked on previous shows is actually a really good thing. The other thing is, move the dog away from the kids and supervise them, always move them away. When I say move them, actually take your body and your legs, not your hands, and shove them about six to eight feet out of the pool area and you do this over and over again. So basically, what you're saying to the dog is, "I'm in charge of these kids." By moving the dog away from the kids, the dog starts to go, "Oh, these aren't my responsibility."

One of the other things is, I've gone over I think in previous shows, something called the back exercise. And this is where I take a rolled up towel, some people call it a bonker or whatever you want to call it, or can use a squirt water bottle. And what I do is, when the dog gets too close to the pool, I say, "Back." If he doesn't back away, I may have a boarder or a piece of blue tape or something on the deck of the pool, and I say, "Back," and I bring him back over the line. If they step over the line, I actually say a word like "phooey" or "wacko", I pick up the bonker and I throw it towards him. Now, you got to be careful, you're not hurting dog here, you're not trying to hit the dog, but you're throwing it towards them just to startle them to get them back.

Jaimee: It's serious, you can't take any risks. And I think because the pool is a place where parents are supervising their children anyway, then it's an easier situation to take control because the dog won't be there unsupervised by you.

So you can assert your leadership and let them know it's not their job to control the chaos.

Chris: Yeah, I mean I will tell you, if your kids are in the pool and you're not around, and you're not there to supervise this, you might, when I say kids, your 14 year old kids, I assume that you're not having toddlers in the pool by themselves. But my point is, is that you're not around, if you're not able to supervise, you might try the electric fence, the underground fence system going around the pool and keeping them out of the area. That is an option if you have to. And then the other thing is teaching them to go to their spot when the kids are in the pool, but again, that entails you supervising.

Jaimee: Giving them a place to go when they're out there will make them feel more in control and less chaotic, they can go to their bed and that's their job is to stay there and that's where their place is.

Chris: Right, right. So I do think, I just want to be really clear here, aggression and dogs barking and dogs jumping on people when they're in the pool, can be very, very, very dangerous. So this is a serious thing. If you're having a hard time fixing this, get yourself a canine behaviorist or dog trainer to help you with this. I can't tell you how many lessons I do a summer, or my other trainers do every summer, to stop this kind of behavior around the pool. And it is definitely something you want to handle because it can be very dangerous to the people in the pool.

All right, one of the other things we talk about is potty training to the yard.

Jaimee: Yeah, I've been getting so many calls about that because it's been a long winter, now the dogs are outside and pooping everywhere. So they want to know how they can encourage them to go in one spot so they enjoy the bulk of the yard without stepping on poop.

Chris: Without stepping on poop but also how about those maniacs like my father in-law over his yard. The yellow spots are driving him crazy. Oh, I have little pee stains where the pee actually burns out the yard. So he's saying, "How do we stop a dog from peeing in the yard?" So it's literally the same process as you train indoors. So you basically are housebreaking them to your yard. And what we do is, we pick an area that we want the dog to go potty. So we're going to pick an area in the yard, maybe it's toward the back of the yard, where we're going to say, "Okay, this is where I want that spot to be." So what you're going to do is, just like in potty training, you wake up in the morning, you take the dog on the leash, you go directly to that area, when they go potty, "good potty" and give them a treat, could use a clicker to mark it if you want too. And as soon as the dog goes to the bathroom, you're rewarding them for going to that spot.

Chris: If you catch them going to the bathroom in the wrong spot, immediately start sort of a verbal banter, uh-huh, uh-huh, uh-huh, grab them by the collar or by

the leash if their leash is on them, bring them to the spot and have them go to the bathroom and then reward them in that area. So basically, you guys, it's the same way that you housebreak your dog to the inside of your house. You're yard-breaking them to the outside of the area and what happens is, pretty soon, the dog understand, "Oh, I'm supposed to go the bathroom in that area."

Jaimee: It's very hard though when you have multiple kids going in and out and doors being opened. Because anytime the dog gets out and goes to the bathroom without being corrected, they learn it's okay. So really being consistent right now, as your teaching them, is important so that they don't have access where they're not supposed to.

Chris: And by part of that consistency, Jaimee is actually making sure you're supervising. I mean, so once you start housebreaking the dog or yard-breaking the dog to your backyard, it is so important that you're actually, over the next few weeks, housebreaking them and you have to be out there. You can't housebreak a dog... or yard-break, I keep on saying housebreak, but really it's yard-breaking, a dog to not go potty in certain parts of your yard if you're not out there observing and be constant vigilance.

Jaimee: One of the things I did with one of my clients is having a set of railroad ties to mark the area so that the dog had a visual. And then we removed the railroad ties one by one and so the dog had a visual for the area. We even put poop in area to encourage him to go there.

Chris: And that's a great point. So, if a dog smells... If you take a little bit of poop, not too much poop because they won't want to go. But if you take a little poop or you clean up a pee mess on a paper towel and you stick it in that area, they smell the pee, they smell the poop and they actually go back into that area. It encourages them to go back and repeat the same behavior.

Now, one more thing, in your area, it is really important that you clean up the poop so that it doesn't build up. Because if the area becomes inundated with lots of poop, guess what folks? Your dog's not going to want to go to the bathroom in that area. So too much poop is a bad things. A little poop, a little fragment here and there will actually encourage them but too much poop, the dog will actually find another spot to go to the bathroom.

Jaimee: And a side note, which clients always find interesting, is try not to let your dogs see you pick up the poop.

Chris: Oh, yes. When a dog sees you pick up the poop, guess what? They think you want the poop, then it becomes a scarce resource. And guess what happens to that? We get dogs starting to eat poop because they want to own it. So again, when you go to clean up your yard in the summertime, don't have your dog, do that with the dog inside, you go out and you cleanup the area so the dog doesn't see it.

Jaimee: Chris, I had a client last year who had a puppy and she was amazed the puppy was perfectly housebroken. It had been a stretch of really nice weather and the dog was outside all the time so the dog could just go whenever they wanted. And then once they started to spend time inside, the dog had few setbacks because now he had to learn to hold himself again. So one thing I would say, when you have a puppy and you're outside, they can go at will and that may affect potty training.

Chris: Yeah, that's true. It is a tough situation. I do think that when you have a puppy, you're going to do things a little bit differently and it may be a step process. All right, we're going to get to some of your questions. Jaimee, what questions do we have from our listeners today?

Jaimee: Sure, our first question is from Gena from Louisville. She writes, "Chris, we love your podcast. I saw that you were going to discuss outdoor digging and I have a question. I have a Westie and she constantly is digging and scratching indoors on our rug. Also, she tends to do this before settling in her bed. Please tell me why she does this and how to stop it".

Chris: Well okay, so remember we talked about that sort of digging to stay cool? Well dogs naturally, canines will dig, many times dogs will dig holes right before they go to sleep. If you take a look at one of my old blogs, I talk about in India, where I have dogs digging deep holes in the sand and then they dig these deep holes and then they sleep in these deep holes as for protection. It is a natural canine instinct for dogs to dig a little bit to get down to the cool earth before they nestle down to sleep. So it's very, very, very natural. So digging on their bed is something that's a natural behavior. I don't think you're going to be able to stop it because it's something that is an instinctual response. It's sort of an instinctual response before I start to settle in. So it's not a bad thing unless it's actually ruining your furniture. And in that case, keep them off the furniture.

Jaimee: And that would be the same for on the rug as well?

Chris: Same thing on the rug as well, yeah.

Jaimee: Okay, next question, George from Denver. "Hi Chris, my dog is so distracted outside, every little squirrel or bird or noise and she cannot relax and settle with our family to just be at ease. She's always looking to chase something. Is there anything we can do to have her be more relaxed when outside?"

Chris: Well probably, here's the thing, she's really loving this. So we're looking again at predatory instinct, and your dog is literally in their hay-day. So a dog with a high prey drive, they love to look at the birds and that's why you're taking them on a walk. Now, one of the things that you can do is getting your dog to walk behind you. If you get your dog to walk behind you... And remember, that dogs come pre-programmed to walk behind you from the time they're

eight weeks old, and it's us here, mostly Western civilization, this sort of Europe and the United States, where we get our dogs to walk next to us. And that came from the hunters where they carried their rifle in their right hand or they got their dogs to heel next to them on the left. But instinctively, puppies come pre-programmed to follow. And if they're following you, then you're in charge and you're in charge of the hunt.

So if you have your dog walk behind you, then they're going to see you as controlling the hunt and they're going to be less likely to look at that, and look at that and chase that because that's instinctual response to them being in charge of the hunt. And if you're in charge of the hunt, then that actually will stop and those kinds of behaviors should subside.

Jaimee: Miguel from Florida, "Hi Chris, we have two labs who we adore. They absolutely love being outside and playing and chasing but they are constantly destroying our flowerbeds and garden even with fencing around it. We hate to limit their time outside but it is driving us nuts. What else can we do? It is so difficult because we have two."

Chris: Well this is a tough one. All right, exercise, exercise, exercise, we're going to talk about that. Go and take them for a swim, get them in the pool. Swimming is a great thing to do with your dogs, it's non-weight bearing. Five minutes of swimming is like 40 minutes of taking them on a walk or an hour of taking them on a walk, it's amazing. You have two labs, go take them swimming, they're going to really exhaust themselves and this kind of behavior's going to subside.

But if I'm really having a flowerbed problem where they're digging in the flowerbeds, it's management. You might try the squirt water bottle. They start to go dig, "enough", grab a squirt water bottle and squirt them. Another thing you might do is go and get those electric fences, those ones that go underground and have them circle each flowerbed, that's going to fix it right there. So even if you have a real fence around them, by doing the electric fence, you'll find that the dogs will stay out of flowerbeds and that's a management technique, it's not cheap but it does work.

Jaimee: Last question, Melissa from San Diego, "Hi Chris, thank you for your podcast. So we have a five-month old Goldendoodle named Rex who is the love of lives. We spend so much time outside by our pool and we are not sure if having Rex allowed in the pool when the kids are in it is better or restricting him. We want him to be well-behaved and, most importantly, safe for everyone. What do you advise?"

Chris: Well, I guess I'm not really clear of your question. But one of the things I will say is if Rex is going in the pool with your kids, is he scratching them, is he going up to them? So sometimes, one of the biggest problems is that dogs will come up to a child who's swimming and he almost goes to get on top of

them. And the problem is, that he gets on top of them, which can make them sink, can be a drowning hazard. The other thing is, they scratch the children or you. So I will tell you, if you have dog that gets in this pool and does his own little swim and doesn't get all over you, then it can be fine. But if you have a dog that actually swims up to everybody that's in the pool and tries to get on top of them, it's probably better to restrict him from the pool when the kids are in the pool and then have his swim time be separate. That's what I would probably do.

This is a good time to talk about dogs and swimming. Are all dogs born known how to swim Jaimee?

Jaimee: No, and it's amazing, most people think they are, they're just born knowing how.

Chris: I can't tell you how many times I see, all dogs know how to swim. We had a man... At the canine center, Dog Gone Smart, we have an indoor pool where dogs get to swim. And many people will actually rent the pool. I had this man about a year and a half ago, he got a new dog and it was a yellow lab, it was a puppy, I think it was around 12 weeks old. And he took the puppy and he just threw him in the pool. And of course we saw this, we freaked out. We're like, "You can't do that." And the dog started panicking and the dog was scared to death. And he goes, "Well he's a lab, all labs know how to swim. They have webbed feet." And I was like, "No, not all labs know how to swim." Just because he's a dog, doesn't mean he knows how to swim especially those deep chested breeds' sort of like the Boxers, the Dobermans and the Bulldogs. I mean, those dogs don't know how to swim and you really need to teach them.

So what I would tell you to do is, get yourself, if you have either if you have what we call shortie or wetsuit, put that on or get a heavy sweatshirt and get them a life jacket, get in the pool with them and teach them safely and gradually and encourage them how to swim. It takes a little bit of time but by having the life jacket on them, it makes them less panicky and it also gives you some handles, which are on the life jacket, to control the dog, and this is really helpful.

Jaimee: Yeah, another thing we want to emphasize is that it's not just about teaching them how to swim, but how to get in and how. So sometimes we recommended putting a visual marker, like a tree by the steps, so when the dog-

Chris: Like a plant or something, yeah.

Jaimee: Yeah, a plant so when the dog is swimming, they have a visual guide to the exit and so they know how to safely get in and out of the pool, not just about swimming.

Chris: Yeah, so putting a planter by the stairs, think of it from their perspective when they're in the pool. So if a dog is swimming, it needs to be tall enough that they can see it from their perspective. So put your face close to the water, look and say, "Ah, I can see it from here." Because it all looks the same, all those edges to the pool looks the same. So teaching your dog how to get out of the pool, how to get up the stairs, is a really, really safe thing because every year, every summer, we got dogs falling into the pool. And last year, we had two clients dogs that drowned. So something we got to teach our dogs how to do.

Jaimee: Absolutely.

Chris: Okay, well that's it for today and thanks for listening. Thanks for joining me today Jaimee.

Jaimee: Oh, it was my pleasure.

Chris: So visit us on caninemaster.com and join our conversation about dog behavior. Send us your videos and photos so we can see what's going on with your dog and to help you solve the problems with your dog. Goodbye for now. See you next time on Canine Master where I will continue to help you master the relationship with your dog.