

A HORSEMAN'S BEST FRIEND

Dogs and their Equine Counterparts

By Megan Arszman



Equine and canine — they go together like peanut butter and jelly... peas and carrots... you get where we're going with this. Walk around at a horse show, anywhere across the country, and you'll find dogs of all sizes, breeds, and personalities escorting their four-hooved counterparts. Sometimes, you might wonder if there are more dogs than horses on the fairgrounds.

Having a dog as part of your horse show family is more than just displaying a fashionable accessory. For some, they provide a sense of companionship on those long, lonely hauls to the show. For others, they serve as a built-in security system for the tack stall. For others, it's simply a matter of bringing "home" with you, wherever you go.

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Animal Lovers

"It seems that most people who have horses have dogs," says Becky George, the owner of two English Bulldogs. "I guess we all just love animals."

Katie Grossnickle agrees, "Dogs are a major part of my life; they go everywhere with me," she says. "Well, horses are also a major part of my life. When I'm with them, and I have my dogs, it just seems to all go right."

At any given horse show, you can find many different breeds of dogs hanging out by the stalls or lounging underneath a horse trailer. Grossnickle has Miss Petey, a five year-old Pembroke Welsh Corgi, and Phoebe, a 10-month-old Catahoula Leopard. Tiina Volmer is a lover of Boxers, and Gerri Leigh Pratt has two Poodles and a Powder Puff Chinese Crested.

Volmer says, "They've always been rescue dogs," about her canine pack. "Even when we were growing up, our dogs were always some kind of 'drop off' or someone needed to get rid of them." In fact, the three Boxers she has now are all from rescues.

"There are so many Boxer rescues out there. For any kind of breed you want, there's a rescue out there. I'm really into that."

While Volmer might be known for her magic touch with horses, she also has a magic touch with difficult dogs like her rescues. One such dog, Bobbi, was rescued within hours of being euthanized at a local shelter. Bobbi has been known to tear apart the living quarters of Volmer's horse trailer. He's also guilty of eating a king-sized mattress. Volmer knows he can't be left alone and has been working with experts to help ease his separation anxiety. The difficult nature of some rescues still doesn't deter her. She recommends that dog lovers check out rescues when looking for their next canine companion.

"Rescues really want to fit the dog with the family," she says. "They'll know if the dog is good with cats or kids, or whatever. Yes, they might have some issues, but if you're not willing to deal with those issues, you can tell the rescue people and they'll be sure to find a dog that best suits you. I don't care if they have issues; I'm fine with it."

Traveling Tips

One of the most important things to remember when traveling with your dog is to try to keep his or her routine as close to it is at



home. Just like with horses, when you bring your own grain and hay from home, you want to bring the same dog food and treats on your trip. If you can, continue feeding your dog at the same time you do when you're home.

"The Boxers have a toy box in the trailer, just like they do at home," Volmer says. "It's pretty much the same from the house to the trailer."

When she's at home, Volmer tries to stay flexible so it's easier for the dogs to adjust to life on the road. "I try not to keep things too regimented at home," Volmer explains. "Yes, I feed morning and night, but not at the exact same time everyday. When you're traveling, you could be traveling late into the night and eating can be different."

At the Show

Loose dogs tend to be a common sight around the horse show, despite the visible signs that recommend for all dogs to be on a leash. While some believe it's harmless to let your dog trot alongside, sans leash, dog trainer Mandy Eakins warns that not having your dog on a leash might invite bad behavior.

"There are very few occasions I can advocate for a dog being off leash in a public area," Eakins explains. "Not only is having a dog off leash a safety concern for the dog, but also for those around it. Golf carts, cars, children, litter on the ground, other dogs, people, and, of course, horses are all safety concerns for off-leash dogs. By having your dog on a leash, you eliminate the possibility of the dog getting too far away and putting himself in harm's way. The best advice for having a dog stay by your side is [to use] a leash. There are options for leashes that attach to the body that give the owner hands-free options for keeping their dogs tethered."

Bringing dogs around the warm-up pen and into the show arena can be seen in either a good or bad light. One thing to think about when considering taking your dog up to a riding arena is where you're going to stand or sit. If it's in a building such as the Celeste Center at the Ohio State Fairgrounds, it's perhaps best to keep Fido in the stalls.

"In the stands, I wouldn't do it, because of the noise factor," Volmer says. "They could fall down or make a lot of noise and spook horses. That's not fair for someone showing. I don't think that dogs should be allowed in arenas during the show, because we are here for a horse show and to compete with our horses. It's not fair if something like that happens."

"I don't have an issue with them in the warm-up arena," Grossnickle says. "It's when they are barking and running into the arena while a class is showing and horses are having to dodge dogs that I have an issue."

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If you happen to be practicing with cones in the warm-up pen, you might want to keep an eye out for George's 6 ½ year-old English Bulldog, Hoagie. "Hoagie loves to play with cones!" George says. "If he sees one, he will just take off and attack it. His favorite part is moving

the trot poles or knocking over the trail cones so Tim Kimura has to fix them. He seriously drives Tim crazy."

Accommodations for your dog at horse shows should be considered before traveling to the location. Not only do you have to think about where they're going to stay, you should consider their safety. Pratt experienced heartbreak at the All-American Quarter Horse Congress a year ago when her beloved Poodle, Richard Pryor Pratt, was stolen from her car. "There are times that I leave them at home," she says. "I might just take one of them to the World Show, and I'll keep it in a bag and carry it around. My ordeal at the Congress kind of deflated my idea of taking them with me."

Doggie Basics

Before considering having your canine best friend join you on the road this year, ensure his safety, and the safety of others, by getting him used to being around horses. Take your time introducing your dog to your horse and the barn area. You don't want to overstimulate your dog by bringing him out while the horses might be running around in the pasture. That might turn on your dog's instinct to chase prey.

Keeping your dog on a leash will allow you to have control over how close your dog can get to the horses. If you have to do something that involves taking your attention away from Fido, place him in a crate or a stall where he can watch.

Talk with your veterinarian about what vaccines, if any, you should consider giving your dog if he's going to be around the farm. You'll also want to keep certain things out of your dog's reach, in an effort to make sure that he doesn't eat something he shouldn't. Some herding breeds, such as Collies, Australian Shepherds, and Shetland Sheepdogs, can become severely ill or even die from ivermectin poisoning, according to a study by Washington State University's College of Veterinary Medicine.

If you plan on keeping your dog in the horse trailer or motorhome while you're riding at shows, consider crating or giving your dog something to entertain him while you're away. Toys such as a Kong can be filled with peanut butter and given as a treat to keep him busy for a decent amount of time. Chews such as antlers are not only good for entertainment but for teeth cleaning as well.

Barking might be frowned upon by your neighbors, especially if it continues for a long time. Barking can be controlled by many methods, Eakins says. "Electric collars and spray collars are both management tools and don't actually fix the problem. Determining the triggers for the barking is first and foremost. Is movement of people or things a trigger? Work the dog at a distance, reward-

Teaching the Basics and Traveling with Dogs

- **Solid Obedience Education** - Sit and down on command, Staying in place and Coming when called
- **Not allow dog to run loose**
- **Leash Manners** - this includes bathroom behavior on leash, sitting to greet a stranger, and loose leash walking
- **Some Form of Identification** (which may include collar tags, tattoos, or microchip ID)
- **Crate Manners** - this makes hotel stays, trailer time, stall time, etc. safe, enjoyable, and less stressful

The American Kennel Club (AKC) Canine Good Citizen Program is a great blueprint for being able to take a dog into public. You can go to the AKC website and learn more: http://www.akc.org/dogowner/training/canine_good_citizen/.

Contact AKC national breed clubs to find a responsible breeder or the AKC Rescue Network for your next dog: <http://www.akc.org/>

ing the dog for quiet behavior. Slowly move closer and closer to the trigger, continuing to reward the dog for calm and quiet behavior. If the dog should start to bark, turn and walk away from the trigger and, at the same time, stop all rewards. Start again at the last area of success."

"Is the dog barking in a crate? Covering the crate will help keep the dog calm and quiet."

If you're worried about how your dog will react to being in a crate, work with a trainer to help resolve that issue. Eakins recommends crate training as early as possible with any dog. "Crate training should be started as soon as a new dog comes home. The dog doesn't have to be in a crate at home all the time, but they should be familiar with the crate for comfort, safety, and convenience while traveling," she explains. "Giving the dog a special treat or toy while in the crate, and only in the crate, helps associate the crate with good things. Food puzzles, interactive toys, automatic treat dispensers, and stuffed Kongs are all excellent ways to keep a dog occupied and busy while in the crate. Again, save these special treats and toys only for crate time."

We want to be able to share our time and companionship with not only our four-hooved loves, but also those with four paws. If everyone can play by the rules and use a little common sense, the show grounds can be a peaceful place for both man and beast of any species.

... and please be a responsible dog owner by doing things such as cleaning up after your dogs and never letting dogs infringe on the rights of others.

About the Expert: Mandy Eakins

Mandy Eakins is a professional dog trainer and dog sport competitor based in Nicholasville, Ky. She has been training dogs for the last 16 years and recently started Manners Matter - K9 Manner Training, (<http://mannersmatterky.com>), which serves clients in the Central Kentucky area. Eakins has trained and certified dogs in search and rescue as well as titled multiple dogs in conformation, agility, competitive obedience, and fieldwork. Working with several rescue groups as well as having a background as a veterinary technician, she sees the importance of basic manners and training with dogs to ensure a happy relationship between dog and owner.