

Dog Behavior And Diet: Recovery For This! Beyond Dog Training Part 2

Speaker Key

SG Susan Garrett

Transcript

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SG If you listened to [podcast episode number 203](#), you would've heard the story of my journey with my two-and-a-half-year-old Border Collie This!. If you haven't watched that video, you might want to jump over to YouTube because there's a lot of great video footage of our training together of the times and things that didn't go well. But today I share the rest of the story.

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Hi, I'm Susan Garrett. Welcome to Shaped by Dog. And before I get into today, I just need to say I am reporting on my journey. I am not a veterinarian. I am not a qualified nutritionist. Anything I say is just sharing data of what I did.

Your journey will be unique to you and your dog, and I strongly encourage you that you seek out the help of a health professional and your veterinarian, before you try to undertake any of the things that I've done.

I got to the place in our last time together where I had a 19-month-old puppy who was basically shutting down, had no joy to work, had little connection to me, was exhausted after work, had to decompress. And what she loved was she loved birds, she loved chasing birds, chasing her mother, and she loved to swim.

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And for anybody who's afraid, I love birds, too. So, I never ever get near the birds. But her and the Barn Swallows, they have this relationship. It's a fun story. But those are things that I could use to help build drive. But you can't dog train a problem that isn't a dog training problem.

And so, I had come to the conclusion back in March of 2022 that this was a nutrition problem. And so, I was going to seek out people to help me with, and I was so blessed to have been introduced to a naturopath from Austria who was willing to help me.

She was a Recallers student and had the world of knowledge, and what I have come to learn is that what she does over there is she collaborates with other naturopaths.

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They collaborate data so they're exponentially able to learn about challenges that people have with their dogs. And she knew exactly what I was going through with This! and she did know how she could help me.

And so, some of the things that I'm going to tell you are not what a veterinarian would do. And I just want to be very clear and upfront with that.

The first thing that Andrea had me do was send pictures of my dogs' gums. From the top gums and the bottom gums in between the two canines. That seems weird, right?

And let me just preface this by saying, I do feed raw, and none of this has changed my faith in raw. I was a kibble feeder and I do believe that raw is the best way for me to feed my dogs. That's what I have discovered.



Dog Behavior And Diet: Recovery For This! Beyond Dog Training Part 2

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But I think there could be flaws in the raw food industry and I really hope that manufacturers of raw food in North America will listen to this podcast. And what I discovered with Feature who was dying of cancer was her gums between her two canines were very, very dark red. It was like she had braces of dark, dark red mark above them.

Now, every step along my nutrition journey with my dogs I collaborate with the brilliant [Dr. Laurie Coger of Healthy Dog Workshop](#). She's a brilliant veterinarian for formulating diets. If you want to feed your dog your own diet, Dr. Coger is the one to help with that, and she has helped me with that. And she said, "That looks crazy, like that's just got to be pigment."

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And so, she started to look at the dogs' gums as she started to examine them every day at work. But what I did is I looked at all of the dogs here and Feature definitely had this black mark that nobody else had. This! had one little spot and Momentum had two little spots. Nobody else really had any marks on their gums.

So, then I asked all the people who owned puppies from Momentum's litter, that were now seven years old. I said, "Can you send me pictures of your dog's gums?" And I was shocked to see the dogs who fed the lowest protein in their raw diet had no marks on their dogs' gums. And as the level of protein went up, the marks on the gums went up.

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So, the two dogs in the litter that were fed a prey model, one was a bitch, and one was a dog. They had that black mark. And so what Andrea explained to me is that's the sign of hyperacidity in the body. And it's not surprising with the North American style of raw feeding.

And she said what happens when a dog gets a mouthful of beef, their brain instantly goes, "Hey, that's beef!" And shouts down to the gut, "Let's dump a bunch of acid to digest that beef." And the dog swallows the beef and there's all this acid. But the beef has already been pre-digested because all of the raw in North America is already minced. So, there's not a lot of digesting that needs to happen.

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That's the first problem. The second problem is raw food in North America contains between 49% and 80% protein. And that's a big problem because that too contributes to the hyperacidity of a dog's body. And if you think about it from a human point of view, we know that there are people in the world that can digest fat better than many of us can. There's other people in the world that can digest rice or high carb diets better than many of us can. And we know that different diets are related to different parts of the world.

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So, think about Border Collies, where they're from. My dog This!'s father is generationally sheep dog from Wales, way back. And that's where the breed originated on the border of Scotland and England, Ireland, Wales. Guess what they were eating 200 or 300 years ago when this dog breed was being developed? Do you think they were giving their dogs 49% protein when they were eating potatoes?

So there's a chance that my dog was getting too much protein. And so, I asked Dr. Coger if she could help me, who do I talk to? I want to know when they formulated raw food, did they do studies that said, let's look at feeding dogs 80%, 70%, 60%, 50%, 40%, 30%, 20%.



Dog Behavior And Diet: Recovery For This! Beyond Dog Training Part 2

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Because kibble on a dry matter basis is 20% protein and raw food on a dry matter basis is 50% to 80%. And she said, "Well, the man you want to talk to is Steve Brown. He's the godfather of raw feeding. He wrote the book, [Unlocking the Canine Ancestral Diet](#)."

And anybody that I've spoke to in the raw food business, the high up veterinarians, they just speak about Steve Brown in the highest regard. He's formulated a lot of the raw diets across North America. And Steve graciously agreed to join my Inner Circle for a conversation about raw feeding.

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And so, I asked him, "Were there studies?" And he said "No, there were no studies. But we knew we wanted to get away from all of the cereal that was in kibble we knew that was killing dogs. And so, we couldn't fill the raw food up with fat. Of course, dogs might get sick, fat might go rancid. And so, we filled it up with protein. But protein can be very expensive, so we filled it up with a lot of organ meat when we filled it up with protein."

And guess what liver does in an animal system? It collects all the toxins that goes through that animal. So, I then found a site, [Dr. Dobias](#) in Canada, who would do heavy metal analysis. You just send samples of your dog's fur and I found out some interesting things.

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Only This! had very high levels of mercury, arsenic, and aluminum in her test sample. She also had tin off the charts, which could affect the dog's ability to get zinc or selenium from their food. And in the analysis you got back something called the performance index, which tells you your dog's endurance level and speed level.

I did all my dogs, by the way. This!'s endurance level was normal. Her speed level was well below normal. Fascinating. And the report went on to say that it could be related to her thyroid functioning. And so nutrition and hormones were what I was left with looking at. Some very brilliant, brilliant people that helped me out in clearing the heavy metals from her system with her diet.

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That immediate change that I made, that I mentioned in the last episode, that immediately her brain started functioning better. Immediately she went from being able to bounce only eight feet in a grid to within days being able to bounce 11 feet and one striding up to 20 feet.

All that I did was I cut her food in half, gave her half of the meat patty and add fresh vegetables and fruit and some healthy fats to that. And what Andrea wanted me to do was she said, "Some dogs will require higher carbs." And she wanted me once I did a little more fat and a little more carbs in the form of fresh fruit and vegetables and making a green smoothie to put on my dog's food every day. And This! was amazing.

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And she said, "Hey, let's give her more carbs and less fat." And overnight she turned into a raving bitch, a raving like growling at everybody in my house. And I said, "Whoa, I'm pulling the plug on this high carb diet for her." It was crazy, it was like not even my dog.

Put her back onto moderate carbs and moderate fat, and she was a different dog. So that happened on April 12th. And on April 14th, my friend Zeljko Gora came in from Croatia.



Dog Behavior And Diet: Recovery For This! Beyond Dog Training Part 2

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Now, I had done virtually nothing with This! after the seminar on March 12th because my girl Feature passed away and I really was not in a place to do any dog training. So, I told Zeljko I can do some skills. Well, by the end of the first day he said she understands some skills, let's put it together in a sequence.

If you want to jump over to YouTube, you can see a little sequence of her running with Zeljko running with her toy, she loves to chase fast things.

I don't classify as one of those fast things. She loved to chase Zeljko. And my dog who just one month previous couldn't focus to even do a tunnel was suddenly doing agility.

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It was a mind blow to me. And so further to that, I worked with an osteopath and my chiropractor and my naturopath did a lot of energy clearing for This!. And then I met another fascinating woman, Danny was somebody who was recommended to me when I put my plea on Facebook saying my dog is dying, can anyone suggest anyone to help me?

I got two health practitioners names. One was the naturopath in Austria, the other was the herbalist who lived just an hour and a bit from me. And it's fascinating what she does. She uses these probes that are brass, and she balances you or me first touching acupuncture points that relate to all of the systems in your body.

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And when she's finished balancing me, then she balances the dog. And lo and behold, guess what system was completely out of whack on This!? Her endocrine system. The system responsible for hormones. And so that made a massive difference.

So now I have a dog with a clearer mind whose stomach isn't hurting her. I mean, I didn't know that, but I can only imagine.

So now I have to go back. And I can do the good dog training. I have to go back and help her to understand how to have joy. And I'd love to say like overnight it fixed just like the jump grids did. But it didn't.

I came up with new games for her. I taught her to speak on cue, on the word "are you a scary good girl, are you a scary fast girl, are you a scary smart girl"? The word 'scary' would instantly get her barking and jumping and bouncing.

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I taught her to line up between my legs because then she was confident and secure. And those were two things that helped make a difference. In September of 2022, I decided to reach out to an old friend of mine who just happens to be the world's authority on the sport of fly ball and asked him if he had any classes and he said, "You know what, I could put one together for people who want to do agility and fly ball."

And This! has been going to weekly fly ball and what that's done for her, she has an activity. She can be fast without thinking. And that is amazing. She's not breaking any speed record, but we're not even putting it together. So, it's been six months that we've been doing weekly fly ball classes. And of course, we missed some for holidays, but we still haven't put it all together.



Dog Behavior And Diet: Recovery For This! Beyond Dog Training Part 2

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That's what great dog training does. That's what a great instructor does. They [train the dog in front of them](#). And so slowly by slowly we're building up this dog's drive. One of the other characteristics of This! I forgot to mention is, whenever I ran Momentum or whenever there were other dogs working in my building, she just fell asleep on a cot.

She never looked at the other dogs. She didn't care what they were doing. Anytime it wasn't her turn, she was sound asleep, laying flat out on her side. Just not normal. Now, she's a crazy barking lunatic and I'm okay with it. I've done nothing to try and curb it.

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So, restrained recalls into setups, barking at me, lining up between my legs, having somebody run and her chase a reward, those are things that have been important. Plus, I've got This! out to a lot of [new locations to generalize](#) this happy, joyful dog. Sometimes it's not so happy or joyful. Two steps forward, one step back. I'm okay because it's all about progress, not perfection.

We're moving forward to a place where she is loving what she's doing. And I'm loving seeing her come out of her shell. I'm loving seeing this new dog. Her need for that long decompression after work is no longer there. She's tired like any other dog, but she doesn't have to lay flat out and go unconscious. I make sure I keep my sessions super short with her as we were growing her drive for different behaviors.

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For example, weave poles were great near the pond, but they were horrible in the building. And so, I've done very little with weave poles. She knows how to weave, we're going to build up that speed eventually. She's okay, not breaking any speed records. I taught her to do a running seesaw rather than having her stop anywhere. Don't want her to think.

And we have a running dog walk, a running a frame, running seesaw just made sense for a dog like her. I go back to basics a lot with her to remind her, with all of the verbal cues that she knows, I want her to have joy in every single one of them. So, it's like I go back and do some really fundamental things.

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We have a game that I've called the Vito game after its inventor that I met in Italy. It's a simple game that she loves. It helps to engage her in a way that she's more joyful. I've been very intentional about playing games that create [dopamine spikes](#) with her, where she can't predict when the reinforcement's coming, when she can't predict what the reinforcement is. And that's helped her a ton to be more driven with the sport.

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I know a lot of you really just want to know more about the nutrition. And one of the things that I will tell you that I do, I do not feed any organ meat at all to my dogs, any of my dogs. From what Andrea told me, feeding them for a puppy is great, but not after a year old.

And so, what I would love to find is a manufacturer that feeds really good quality meat in chunks, but without the organ meat. Because I can find manufacturers where I can get the chunks for my dogs, but I cannot get the chunks without the organ meat. Or I can get the meat without the organ meat, but it's minced and it's not in chunks.



Dog Behavior And Diet: Recovery For This! Beyond Dog Training Part 2

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And I've got to tell you, when we changed This!'s diet, at that time she weighs 31 pounds and we put her on a detox diet. Her weight dropped down to 26.4 pounds. There was a lot of people in my world that were questioning that I was putting my faith in this woman I'd never met in Austria. But I just knew that this was what my dog needed. And slowly she did start to gain weight.

One of the mistakes that we made is we started bumping up her food, giving her more volume. But guess what, her guts couldn't take it. Her guts weren't the greatest to begin with, and putting more volume in just caused her to poop out whole pieces of potato, whole pieces of strawberry. And so, guess what, we started taking pictures of her poop. And when she wasn't digesting her veggies, we would blend them for her for maybe a month.

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And then we'd slowly integrate some whole pieces again looking at how well she was digesting, basing that on what we did with the food, whether we blended it or gave it whole. So, two or three times a week, we have a big steaming party here where we steam all kinds of veggies, put them into canning jars and put them in the fridge, and that gets fed to the dogs for two or three days.

We blend up a green smoothie with all kinds of great greens. We mix that up daily. We put an apple in there and mix up what greens get put in there every week. I tell my students just put those in ice cube trays and pop them out one or two of them to your dogs if you want to do what you're doing and just make a couple little alterations.

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Again, I am not a nutritionist, I'm not a veterinarian. My hope is that the raw food world will start providing chunks and no organ meat to those of us who really want it. I got to tell you, there's a dog food company that I love here in Canada. And I can get, it's like a beef steak from them. The bone is in and it's somewhere around eight or ten ounces.

I give that to This! once a week. The next two days are when she always puts on her most weight. So, seeing her chew, I've got to tell you, it freaked me out the first time. She's chewing this meat, swallowing it, bring it back up, chewing it, swallowing it. I text Andrea "What's going on?" And she texts me right back from Austria. She said, "That's the way dogs are supposed to eat their food, just relax."

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And she said over in Europe, most of her clients can get whole chunks food without the organ meat in. I'm hoping here in North America, that will be an option to those of us who want it as well at some point in time. And so I'm not telling you to change your diet.

I really do believe in the raw food diet. I don't believe my dogs in particular need that much protein. I've changed all my dogs to half the level of protein. And there's some great formulators out there like Dr. Laurie Coger who can help you formulate your dog's diet, so it is balanced.

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And so where are we at now? This! just participated in another seminar with Jess Patterson, the same presenter that she was with back in March of 2022. And it was a different dog. It was a different experience for me. And I decided to enter her in our world team tryouts, which is happening in just over a week. I'm not entering her with the hopes of winning a place on the team. I'm actually only entering her because the event is five minutes from my home.



Dog Behavior And Diet: Recovery For This! Beyond Dog Training Part 2

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But I'm excited by it, and I'm going to keep you all posted. I'm excited to see what joy I can get away from home in a big, exciting, busy venue. And here's my plan. I'll run the first run. If I see joy, I'll run the second run. Anytime I see joy missing from what my dog is doing I can declare F.E.O. (for exhibition only), I can bring a toy in the ring and I can make sure every moment of her time at that event is a joyful one.

So, wish me luck, wish This! luck. But most of all I want you to see I get that not many people are going to go to the extent that I've gone to with my dog. I just believe in letting your dreams be bigger than your challenges. I heard this line from a woman a few weeks ago and I loved it. It said, "Never let your setbacks be bigger than your comeback." And I'm like, that's This! and I. And we're not going to let our setbacks be bigger than our comeback.

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And it's ongoing. She'll be three in August, and I know as she gets physically stronger, she is now almost back up to 30 pounds. She had an unfortunate setback where she got sick a few weeks ago, but we're getting there. And I know I'm seeing the joy in her in many more places.

To prepare for world team tryouts, it's on dirt. And so, what I've been doing is I've been going over to the venue and renting it once a month and playing with her over there. So, anything you can do to help bring more confidence to your dog, just do it. Going out of your way and playing in dirt, not my favorite thing, but seeing my dog have fun sure is my favorite thing.

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I'd love to hear your comments. I'd love to hear if you can identify your dog in some of the things that I'm talking about. I've talked to many Border Collie people who actually had to retire their dog before they even got started because they had very similar challenges to what I had with This!.

So, if this is you, I hope it gives you hope that answers are there for you. But just remember, you can't dog train something that isn't a dog training problem. I'll see you next time right here on Shaped by Dog.

Resources:

[Podcast Episode 203: Reactive, Unmotivated and Fearful: Finding Resiliency For This! Beyond Dog Training Part 1](#)

[Dr. Laurie Coger: The Healthy Dog Workshop](#)

[Book: Unlocking the Canine Ancestral Diet by Steve Brown](#)

[Dr. Peter Dobias Website](#)

[Podcast Episode 183: What Does "Train The Dog In Front Of You" Really Mean?](#)

[Podcast Episode 172: How To Teach Your Dog Anything With My Training Plan](#)

[Podcast Episode 174: Dopamine In Dog Training: Anticipation, Rewards, And The Transfer Of Value](#)



Dog Behavior And Diet: Recovery For This! Beyond Dog Training Part 2

About Susan

A world-leading educator of dog trainers, Susan is also one of the most successful agility competitors of the last three decades. She has won multiple Gold Medals at National or World Championship events with every dog she has ever owned over the past 30 years. Susan was one of the very first dog trainers to share knowledge online when she opened her "Clicker Dogs" website many years ago. Susan has helped hundreds of thousands of people enjoy a great relationship with their dogs through her workshops and keynote speaking around the world, award winning books, DVDs, magazine articles, blog posts, podcasts, free dog training and dog agility video series, and online dog training programs.



A natural teacher and an entertaining speaker, Susan is world renowned for her dog training knowledge and practical application of that knowledge. Her understanding of how to apply science-based learning principles to both competitive and family pet dog training has been pivotal in changing how dogs are trained.

Susan is now helping many thousands of dog owners in 82 countries have the best relationship possible with their dogs. The real joy for her comes from bringing confidence to dogs and their owner through playful interactions and relationship building games that are grounded firmly in the science of how animals learn.



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