

Speaker Key

SG Susan Garrett

Transcript

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In our last Shaped by Dog [podcast episode number 236](#), I gave you all of the reasons why dogs may be showing signs of fear. And today I'm going to give you the strategic plan to help overcome your fearful dog.

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Hi, I'm Susan Garrett. Welcome to Shaped by Dog. And the good news is what I'm going to share with you today is going to help dogs who are fearful all the time, dogs who are [afraid of just certain things](#), dogs who are just anxious, generally anxious, or maybe they're overexcited [or even reactive](#).

I believe the strategy that I have for you today is going to help all of those dogs. But I'm going to preface this by saying, if you really have a dog who is in a horrifically fearful way, you may need the help of applied behaviorists. And so, please do not overlook that. Please do not go alone. There are just some things you cannot dog train.

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And so, number one, I really encourage you to go back and listen to episode number 236, where I share what I feel are my top 10 reasons why dogs maybe showing signs of fear. And also, how you can eliminate a lot of those reasons.

Yes, some like genetics, you really can't do much about, but there are some things on my list you can do something about. So, please, before you go any further or at the very least scouts honor, or you're going to go back and listen to podcast episode 236 after you listen to my approach to overcoming that challenge.

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Now I'm going to tell you, this is different. I promise you, you will not have heard this approach anywhere else. My dog training has come from a base of my Bachelor of Science degree and my 30 years as a professional dog trainer. And yes, I'm primarily known as a dog sports trainer, but you can't get to be a great [dog sports](#) trainer without being a great dog trainer.

And because I have a deep curiosity for behavior of any kind, that this has evolved to a place where I have unique strategies. And these strategies have been proven to work with not just my own dogs, but with the thousands of students that come through our online programs every year.

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And so, you may have heard people say, "Well, the reason why there's so much more fearful and reactivity in the world today is because there's just this wave of reinforcement-based dog training." That's just ridiculous. To say that is even logical is pretty comical to me.

That's like saying, "Well, there's also an increase in electric cars. So, I believe the increase in fearful dogs and reactivity is because of the higher incidence of electric cars than there was 30 years ago." It doesn't make sense. It doesn't make sense to me. There could be a lot of other reasons. Podcast episode number 236 that I've just mentioned lists quite a few of them.



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The point is don't get hung up on, "Oh, these games or this reinforcement-based dog training isn't going to work. Dogs today are just spoiled, and they need somebody to take them in hand." It's just not true. It's just not the case. You can, if you have confirmation bias to believe that you can create a case for yourself. I have confirmation bias in a history of success that makes me not believe that.

And so, you are here because you would like to hear the strategies that I believe are going to work for your dog. They're going to [help grow your dog's confidence](#). I promise you that no matter where you're starting at.

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Now in my last episode, I gave you some homework. That was, I needed you to journal [your dog's T.E.M.P.](#) when they're calm and relaxed, when they're happy, various ranges of emotions. That is an ongoing process. I really want you to keep up to date, get yourself a brand-new journal.

I love buying journals. I may have a bit of a journal buying issue. It kind of goes with the dog bed and the dog leash and the dog collar issue I have, but I digress. Go buy yourself a new journal. [Start journaling](#) all of [your dog's emotional states](#).

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What are the physical signs that your dog will show? And guess what? You can ask other people this too. "You know my dog. What do you think when my dog is happy? What do you see?" Get the family's input. If you're working with a behaviorist, ask them. They're likely to give you the nuances of that behavior.

I've got some other homework for you in order to apply the strategies that I have. Number one, what are your [triggers for your dog](#)? Meaning, are there things that they are afraid of? Now you might be saying, "Susan, my dog's just a fearful dog. They're just kind of like nervous and scared everywhere we go."

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That's fine. But if you know, "Well, my dog is triggered by the vacuum cleaner," or somebody said that their Doberman was triggered by the overhead air purifier or air conditioner in their training building. My puppy is triggered by the vacuum cleaner. Whatever it is that your dog is a little bit afraid of, that is going to be a trigger.

List out all of your triggers and knowing that the triggers may change depending on the time of day, the time of year, what other dogs or people are in the environment. So, you can include as much information as you can gather. This is going to be a scientific approach to overcoming your dog's fears. So, we need to get some good data gathering.

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The next thing I want you to list are environments. Where is your dog's behavior the absolute best? And don't just say 'at home.' Like at home in the living room, in your bedroom, in the backyard, in the front yard. I want you to list all the environments you can think of. And you can even score those environments from zero, "Oh, I would never go there" to ten.

And again, this might be different. My dog's behavior is great say in the living room but if there's [fireworks going off](#) then Tater Salad is not going to be at his best in the living room. He's much more comfortable downstairs in one of the bedrooms or believe it or not, in the car.



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I know it's a little strange, but let's not try to explain Tater Salad. List out all of those environments where your dog feels great. And also list out the ones where the dog is at their worst, where they're most fearful, where they're most worried. We need all of this information.

Now, many people will talk to you about overcoming fear using something called [Classical Conditioning](#). And that is also referred to as Pavlovian conditioning or Respondent conditioning, where if you remember the Russian scientist Pavlov's experiment, where he would ring a bell and then present food paste and the dog very soon, 15 to 25 repetitions, became conditioned and started salivating on the sound of the bell alone.

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Well, Classical Conditioning works to help overcome or counter condition a fear by presenting food in the presence of whatever your dog's afraid of. And that sounds good, but when I started out my dog training career, I just didn't see that working in a massively big way. And so, I changed that to include a little bit more [Operant Conditioning](#) with the Classical Conditioning.

And lo and behold, somebody wrote a paper about that in 2012. So, they talked about in the journal *Learning and Motivation*, [modifying counter conditioning procedures prevents the renewal of conditioned fear in rats](#). So, what they're saying is that the counter conditioning worked better and lasted longer when they included operant conditioning with rats.

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Well, lo and behold, guess what? I've discovered the same thing in dogs. And that's what I'm going to share with you today is the strategy that I have taken with my dogs and with my students' dogs. Let's grow confident dogs. That's what our goal is. Now, is your dog going to go from a 1 to a 10 after listening to this podcast? No, they won't, but I promise you they're going to improve.

And if you keep working at it, they're going to keep getting more and more confident in more and more environments. And that's what we're looking for because it's not just about counter conditioning. It's also about habituation. So, something that you might be afraid of, you kind of get used to. I'll give you an example.

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Two weekends ago, I was at an agility trial. It was an outdoor agility trial. I got out of my car, I'm walking and there was this loud bang, like a cannon going off. I could feel it in my chest. And somebody told me, "Oh, those are bird bangers. They have them for the local farmers so that they scare the birds away from the crops."

And I was like, "Well, holy crap, I can tell those are going to be working." But immediately I thought my poor puppy. He didn't care. He was sound asleep. But by 11 o'clock in the morning, those bird bangers that were going off every 20 minutes, they became white noise to me. I had habituated to them.

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So, overcoming fear often involves some yes, counter conditioning, habituation, [generalization](#), so that your dog will learn to generalize their confident behavior to many, many more locations and environment. They'll generalize that.

And so, that's what these strategies are going to give for you. I want you to think about a triangle. So, visualize a triangle.



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And I bet if you're watching this on YouTube, my team is going to put some amazing graphics over what I'm saying right now. So, visualize a triangle and the triangle has three corners. And I'm not sure what the little angles at the end of each corner, if I can remember my math, I think they're like vertices or something like that. Anyway, the little area there, those are going to be important to you.

So, three sides of a triangle. Inside is the confident dog. We're growing that confident dog. And these three sides of the triangle are the elements that are going to grow, that are going to contribute to your dog's confidence going up.

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Okay, on the bottom are [your dog's reinforcements](#). A hierarchy of reinforcement. Now you may say, "Oh, my dog doesn't really like anything." Then your job before we move on is to grow valuable reinforcements.

So, start with food and you can go to my website, I'll put a link in the show notes where I put [a list of all kinds of different foods](#) that your dog may find valuable. So, I want you to list out all the food and all the toys that your dog finds valuable and other things, events, activities. List out all of your dog's reinforcers. That goes on the bottom of our triangle.

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On the left-hand side of the triangle, that would be environments. And what we're going to have, is strategic plans in different environments. So, your environments are going to come from the first list I asked you to write. Where is your dog most confident? Where's your dog least confident?

And so, in those least confident environments first of all, you're just going to stay away from them if you can for the next little while, we're going to start growing confidence in the more comfortable environments. But if you have to go, you're going to stay far, far away from any known triggers that may cause the dog to show anxiety, fear, or reactivity.

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All right. So, we've got our hierarchy of reinforcement. We have our environments and the strategic plans that we're going to take in those environments. And on the remaining side, we're going to have valuable games. Now, if you are in Home School the Dog or Recallers, you are set my friend, because you have so many valuable games.

If you're listening to this and you're not in Home School the Dog or Recallers, I promise at the end of today's podcast, I'm going to share with you a way that you can make that happen. But if you are in a position where, "Susan, I can't afford to take one of your online classes." then there's still lots.

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You can jump over to our YouTube channel. And there are [games that you can learn](#) from our YouTube channel. Now you're not going to get the coaching on the games, but you will get the step by steps. I share it on YouTube. Not all of the games I'm going to mention, but enough to get you started.

All right, valuable games. These games are not what you think are valuable. They're not what Susan Garrett thinks is valuable. I think all of our Recaller and Home School the Dog games are valuable. The dog is the only opinion that counts here. What games does your dog go, "Oh, I love that game! Let's play that game!" And what you have wanted to happen is that you've got [a transfer of value](#) for those games.



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Meaning, if you ask your dog to play them and you didn't have any food on you, that they would go, "Yes, I love this game!" And if they don't, then you've got to work hard to get a transfer of value so the games themselves become valuable before you start putting them into the strategies.

So, the games, valuable games have to be broken into two categories. So, we're still on the right-hand part of the triangle. The first category are valuable stimulating games. Now these games are individual and compounds.

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So, things like tug, retrieve, behaviors like spin or speak. These are valuable stimulating games in that they change our dog's arousal state. If you go back to the Yerkes-Dodson curve, [the arousal curve](#), I've spoken about many, many times in my Shaped by Dog episodes. If you go to that arousal curve by playing these valuable stimulating games, we change our dog's arousal, which means they no longer are noticing the insignificant things in their environment. Super important.

So, then we want to create compound games. So, I might have my dog spin, then bow, then lie down. Or spin, then bow, then speak. Or tug, then sit, then tug. So, we want to combine these, so we get combo games.

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And these are really important but stick with me because you can't use those games in all environments. But we're going to play all the games I mentioned. Get started at home first. The second category of games are valuable yet calm games. Valuable calm games.

The valuable calm games are going to include things like [ItsYerChoice](#), hand targeting, maybe a nose freeze to something, a chin hold, Hot Zone, hop it up on something, on a bed, on a towel, on a blanket. The behavior that we use for [cooperative care](#) in my Pedicure Please Program, you're going to find out all about that on [podcast episode number 107](#), where I described exactly the steps you can take to create a calm behavior where your dog just lies on their side.

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So, those are a few calming behaviors. So, over here we've got some valuable and stimulating behaviors and then we also have some valuable calming behaviors. That's just a list of a few. We have many, many more that you can use, and you will use and that I do use with my own dogs, but I just need to get you started.

So, we have strategic plans in different environments and where the vertices where they join the two triangle, let's just go with the lines of the triangle where it joins the valuable games. You will know you're going to play these valuable games in all of these environments, but you're going to start at home.

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And you're going to start with the room in your house your dog feels most comfortable at the time of day your dog feels most comfortable and you're only going to pick the games that the dog does really well. Now, if you haven't played any of these games, that's fine. You can start today and just start playing one. And you're going to see a difference in your dog's confidence. I promise you will. If you start, just say like, I play a lot of games in the bathroom because it's small and the dog can't be distracted. And so, you're going to find your dog's going to love to go into the bathroom.



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We tell our Recaller students, our Home School the Dog students to create a training den somewhere in their home. And you're going to find the dog wants to go in that training den because they start to learn to love these amazing games. So, the games are only played in your home at first.

Now let's go to the bottom. We have reinforcement, and then we have our valuable games. So, you're going to choose high value reinforcement when you're first introducing these games at home. But when the dog loves them, then you're going to go to lower value reinforcement.

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And you can bring in some even really low value and mix it in with the moderate value and throw in a couple high values, so you've got like a trail mix. Those are the reinforcements that you're going to use to play the game.

Of course, the games themselves will become part of the reinforcement that's on the bottom under the category of activities. It's really cool, how this all comes together. What's in the middle? It's your dog's confidence, and it keeps growing when you take the strategic plan of our triangle, and you act on it.

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So, I'm going to give you an example because this may be also esoteric to you. My dog This!, before I discovered nutrition as a big, big [part of her fear response](#), I would go to the local baseball diamond. Now, it had a conservation area on one side of it. It was a massive big park. So, there was all kinds of areas that I could go to.

My dog at the time, she was just under a year old. She was afraid of children, afraid of men, and afraid of other dogs. Big time fear would react and growl and bare her teeth and bark and put all the hair up on the back of her neck. She had a horrific reaction especially to dogs, but children and men weren't too far behind.

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And so, what did I do? I played all these games at home. She knew them, she loved them. I had valuable calming games and valuable stimulating games. And so, did I go, "Let me sit behind home plate and play these games?" No, way too much for that dog. That first week I just wanted her to be in this environment and do those calming games.

So, she had the chance to look around, but there was no threat because the kids, the dogs, all the activity was a long, long way away. So, I had success. I walked her back down the hill and I went closer to the activity on the way back to my car and did things like spin at my side, tug on your leash. And I could see she could play those a little bit higher-in-excitement games.

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The next time I went back, I started on the hill, but I quickly went down the hill and I played not far, far away, but far away. I know really exact descriptive distances. I played far away. I could play valuable stimulating games because that allowed her to not notice the children or the dogs.

But when you're playing these stimulating games guys, you have to know if there's a loose dog in the environment, you will be attracting them. So, I never played stimulating games if I saw any dogs in my environment. Remember it was a really big open park, so I could see if there were dogs around. And I would play games like tug and then look.



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And she could look at the dogs and look at the people when she chose to look back at me, boom. All of that is described in my book, [Shaping Success](#), chapter number 27. Back then I was using food, but you can use food or toys for this, whatever is valuable. We're not going to use something that's not valuable to your dog.

And so, it was just playing these games at a distance. Adding in some stimulating games and as well, adding some things like a nose freeze and a chin target I used for her just to give her reinforcement. So, it's Classical Conditioning with an Operant slant.

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She's doing behaviors, but she's getting reinforcement in the environment of the thing that she's afraid of. Which is, things that she really hadn't habituated to, children, men, other dogs. And so, then what I could do, there was these big rocks behind one of the baseball diamonds. And I got to the place where I could get her to hop it up on the rock and do hand targets, and then hop it up on the next rock.

And I would use what was in my environment, but doing behaviors that she found valuable, 'hop it up.' And I gradually brought her closer to the action. Now the big ticket for me was when I was able to walk up and down, there was actually a big ice cream parlor right beside the baseball diamond. It was part of the park.

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I could walk her up and down, the kids standing in line playing different games. One of the games I played was retrieve. Retrieve your toy to the back of the kids. So, if she had gone up and got her toy like cautiously, like, 'I'm afraid the kid might turn around,' that body language would have told me, "Susan, you made a big mistake. You put this dog into a cautious state." All I want is confidence.

So, would I use retrieve? Sure. I'd use retrieve maybe 50, 60 feet, maybe a hundred feet away. And where she only had to go maybe you know, a hundred feet within a hundred feet of those people and those kids. But I'd done so many of those other things.

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I was at a place where she loved retrieve so much and she could forget about those kids and play retrieve games. By the end of the summer, she was crazy in love with kids. She never reacted to any dogs and she, to this day, just wiggles when she sees children. That's how far we came. That's how far you can go with the strategic plan of using all three sides of the triangle.

It starts with your reinforcement. Getting strategic about your environments, knowing the ones that you will pick first. Grow the valuable calming games and the valuable stimulating games in those environments and then grow the environments.

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Maybe you go to your backyard, maybe you go to your front yard, maybe you go like me to a park, but you go to a park where you can get a safe distance away from any triggers. We need to take the training away from the triggers. We need to get the training into an environment where we can just overflow your dog's confidence.

Because a lot of times people are trying to counter condition with cookies with fearful dogs and those dogs don't have any behaviors. There's nothing that is valuable to them. And so, like once they get full of your cookies or the cookies don't have a high enough value, you can't [counter condition](#) anything.



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This combination of Operant and Classical, I promise you it will be a game changer, pun intended. I did promise you if you listen to the end of this podcast, I will share with you an opportunity to join one of our programs and get all of these games and the opportunity to learn how to get your dog to retrieve and enjoy the game as well.

Some of you may be saying, "I've looked at Recallers, I've looked at Home School the Dog, it's an expense I can't afford." And that's legit. Then this conversation isn't for you. If you look at that expense and go, "It is an expense, but it's an investment I can't pass up," then I need you to contact my team at wag@dogsthat.com.

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And in the subject line I want you to write, "I'm ready to invest in my dog." Alright? "I'm ready to invest in my dog." And then you can have a conversation with my team, and they can share with you whether you should start with Home School the Dog or jump right in with both feet and join us for a year of coaching in our Recallers program.

But either way, it allows myself and my team to coach you to that confident dog. I know it's possible. I've seen it not just with my own dogs, but I've seen such amazing turnaround with my students' dogs. But either way, you now have a plan that combines Operant and Classical conditioning, and you have the steps. [Jump over to YouTube](#) if you want to start with some of our games, they're there. I'll see you next time right here on Shaped by Dog.

Resources:

[Podcast Episode 236: Understanding Dog Fear \(Part 1\): Genetics, Trauma, And Your Dog's Well-being](#)

[YouTube Playlist: Fearful Dog Help with Susan Garrett](#)

[YouTube Playlist: Reactive or Aggressive Dogs: Key Insights with Susan Garrett](#)

[Podcast Episode 114: Dog Agility Training: 3 Big Mistakes All Dog Owners Should Avoid](#)

[Podcast Episode 168: Creating Confidence For Anxious, Stressed Or Reactive Dogs Part 1](#)

[Podcast Episode 4: T.E.M.P. \(Tail, Eyes/Ears, Mouth, Posture\)](#)

[Podcast Episode 227: My Foolproof Strategy To Overcoming Dog Training Challenges](#)

[YouTube Playlist: Emotional Regulation in Dogs: Dysregulation, Coping Strategies, Co-Regulation, Self-Regulation, and Habituation with Susan Garrett](#)

[Podcast Episode 112: Stressed Dog? How Trigger Stacking Might Be Putting Your Dog Over Threshold](#)

[Podcast Episode 156: Dog Fireworks Anxiety Prevention: How To Keep Your Dog Safe And Calm](#)

[Podcast Episode 171: Dog Training With Layered Shaping: Why Classical Conditioning Must Come First](#)

[Podcast Episode 146: Balanced Dog Training: Does It Really Exist?](#)

[Article: Learning and Motivation: A modified counterconditioning procedure prevents the renewal of conditioned fear in rats](#)

[Podcast Episode 184: Proofing Vs Generalizing In Dog Training To Grow Skills And Confidence](#)

[Podcast Episode 205: The Hidden World Of Reinforcement For Dogs And Why You Need To Know](#)





Episode: #237

A Plan For Your Fearful Dog (Part 2): Susan Garrett's Strategic Plan For Anxious Dogs

[Susan Garrett's Dog Training Blog: What's a Reward for Your Dog? List of Reinforcers](#)

[YouTube Playlist: Dog Training Games with Susan Garrett](#)

[Podcast Episode 90: Premack, Dog Training and Transfer of Value](#)

[Podcast Episode 86: How to Train Unmotivated or Overexcited Dogs](#)

[YouTube Playlist: Cooperative Care and Consent in Dog Training with Susan Garrett](#)

[Podcast Episode 106: Consent In Dog Training: The Misuse, Misunderstanding And Misapplication](#)

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

[Book: Shaping Success By Susan Garrett](#)

[Podcast Episode 161: Conditioning In Dog Training: Why A Recall And Positive Interrupter Are Different](#)

[DogsThat YouTube Channel](#)



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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Website	https://dogsthat.com
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TikTok	https://www.tiktok.com/@dogsthat
LinkedIn	https://www.linkedin.com/company/dogsthat
Pinterest	https://pinterest.ca/dogsthatcom/
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