



THE OTHER END OF THE LEASH

Welcome to an ongoing inquiry about the behavior of people and dogs. I would like this to be a forum for people who are both intellectually and emotionally fascinated by the behavior of the animals at both ends of the leash. My hope is that it will become a place for an informed and thoughtful consideration of the amazing relationship between people and dogs—my two favorite species.

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Speaking for Spot Now Available

As you probably know, we don't offer a lot of books by other authors on our website, but we've just put up Dr. Nancy Kay's book, [Speaking for Spot](#): Be the Advocate Your Dog Needs to Live a Happy, Healthy, Longer Life. There's just so much good about this book, and it is such an important resource for those of us who consider our dogs to be family. I love Nancy's thoughtful and compassionate voice, and couldn't agree more with her encouragement to all of us to be active advocates for our pets' veterinary care. I will admit that there are times I've longed for the "good old days" when medical decisions were simpler—it seems most of my dogs develop complicated, confusing ailments that elicit completely different recommendations from vets, and create tremendous angst when it comes time to decide what to do. However, in the long run it is so much better to work with health care professionals who acknowledge that this is OUR animal, that medicine is both a science and an art, and that we all need to be involved as equals in health care decisions.

Nancy sounds exactly like the kind of vet I'd like to have (and do, lucky me!). I especially love her chapters on important questions to ask your vet, cancer (an entire chapter on cancer, yeah! It is such a complicated and loaded issue), when and how to say goodbye, and her section on vaccines. Vaccines are so controversial, and you may not agree with everything she says, but I love her careful and balanced approach (vaccines save lives, pure and simple; vaccines can be overused and cause terrible problems, including death). Certainly an entire book could be written on vaccines and more detail could have been provided (Lepto once a year not enough? How often if a dog lives around livestock and wild animals?), but in general she provides a good introduction to the pro's and con's of vaccinations.

Personally, I would love to have seen more on alternative medicine and nutrition, but that's just me, and besides, any single book can't address every issue. I think the book is essential for everyone who owns a dog, and will re-read her chapter on important questions to ask your vet before my next discussion about Willie's shoulder or Lassie kidney disease.

One additional note from me about making the most of a vet visit: I've found that no matter how ready I am with a written list of questions, I'll think of more questions as I drive away from the clinic. That's because it takes a while to process the new information I got during the visit—questions I couldn't have anticipated until the first discussion took place. So I always set up a time for a 'follow up' set of questions by asking "Can I call you tomorrow when I have had time to digest what we've talked about, or would you like me to come back in for an office visit?" (Okay, me and my vets prefer the phone call, but I'm trying to be respectful here. Not long ago I had 2 half-hour long phone conversations with Dr. David Ettinger, Willie's sport medicine vet, and was so grateful for the time and patience he took discussing Willie's shoulder that I insisted on sending in payment for an office visit. There are only so many half-hours in a day after all, and how nice for me to not have to drive all the way into Madison. It was well worth it, and surely it's important to reinforce our vets for being so dedicated, yes?)

Speaking of reinforcement, I'll reinforce Dr. Kay if and when I see her at a conference—she deserves it for a useful and compassionate book. (Who could not love a vet who says: **Thou shalt push thy veterinarian off her pedestal!** Page 66: [Speaking for Spot!](#)

Meanwhile, back at the farm: Jim spent most of Saturday morning building lambing pens in the barn. We had 6 ewes all

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due Sat and Sunday, and since Barbie likes to steal the lambs of others and Snickers and Truffles don't gently push the lambs of others way—they back up and attempt to kill them with ramming moves suitable for a Nat'l Geographic special—we wanted to separate out the ewes as much as possible. Well, animals just don't read the books, do they? Saturday afternoon: nothing. Saturday evening: nothing. Late Saturday night: nothing. Sunday morning (for sure there'd be lambs! Dorothy and Barbie are already several days late): Nothing. Etc. etc. Nothing nothing nothing. And of course, we stayed home all Saturday and Sunday just waiting for little bleating, soggy sacks of life-affirming spring time. Nothing. Darn (though it did give me time to bake baguettes and make a rhubarb, blueberry and raspberry pie from local fruit I stashed in the freezer last summer!)

Finally, this morning (Monday) old Martha delivered 2 healthy ewe lambs. Yeah Martha. Martha is very old and lost 1/2 of her udder to mastitis 2 years ago, but I couldn't bear to say good bye, so our good friend Donna came out and took home one of the lambs so that Martha only had to raise one. Donna raised dairy goats for years, and has some young kids and plenty of goat milk. That little lamb will do well, and Martha will only have one lamb to nurse, which given her age and udder is perfect. The remaining lamb was a bit slow about finding the milk source, but after some encouragement she discovered it early this afternoon, and had a lovely, round belly last I went to check.

Here's some spring time photos... every year spring means flowers, lambs, and adorable young children to come visit the lambs. All equally welcome and cherished.



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