



Using the right tone of voice and body language is an important part of training dogs.



Kenneth Morgan has spent more than 30 years observing and understanding dog behavior. - PHOTO: STEPHEN CLARKE

# Inside the mind of a dog

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Kenneth Morgan is a dog lover who has turned his passion into a career. For more than 30 years, he has been training dogs in a variety of settings, including private homes, security services and animal shelters, and his reputation for being able to turn around even the most uncontrollable of dogs precedes him.

The key is understanding how a dog thinks, says Morgan. Watching their behavior and observing their reactions in different situations has enabled him to understand how best to get the results he wants from a dog.

## Who's the boss?

Training dogs to be obedient is all about showing them who is the boss.

"Dogs want to be leaders. Wherever there is a pack of dogs, one will

**"The hard part is training the owners."**

**KENNETH MORGAN**

be the leader of the pack. Even if there are two dogs in a household, one will be the leader of the other," he explains. "Dogs don't distinguish between humans and dogs, though, so dog owners have to show their dogs that they are the leader, not the dog."

The great thing about dogs is that if they cannot lead, they will follow, Morgan says.

In order to convey to the dogs he trains that he is the leader, Morgan says, he approaches them with a very upright, but relaxed stance.

"I walk into the house nice and calm," he says. "If the dog tries to jump on me, right there I correct it. As soon as he jumps up, I clap my hands – right in front of his face – and that

startles him. The dog will soon associate this clapping with his jumping and then he will stop."

Morgan does not believe in ever inflicting pain to teach a dog obedience or any other lesson. The lesson can be conveyed through body language and tone of voice.

Although they don't speak our language, dogs can be taught right and wrong through verbal communication, he says. It's not the words you use, but the intonation that conveys the message: A "telling off voice" is deep and firm, while the "praising" voice is lighter and higher pitched.

Just as parents might refrain from disciplining a child for fear that the child will not show them

the same love, dog owners may also fail to be firm enough with their pets – but one needs only to see the way dogs respond to Morgan to know that is a groundless fear.

## Safe spaces

"I encourage people to keep their dogs in a small area. Some owners think this is cruel, but if you watch dogs, they love small spaces. If you bring a new puppy home for the first time, watch its movements: the first place it will go is under a coffee table or dining table. The puppy knows nothing can come from above to get it, so it feels safe," he says. "Even if they are outside, dogs will find a safe, protected space."

"They will position themselves in a corner, where they cannot be attacked from behind, and make sure they are facing into any potential danger."

This is why dogs ac-

tually like crates and the sense of security it gives them. Just as humans will spend time relaxing in the open space of a living room, when it's time to sleep, we go into a different, smaller space, where we can close the door and feel safe. Dogs are no different, he says, and once accustomed will often take themselves off to their crates after about 9 p.m. to go to sleep.

## When to play, when to relax

Dogs love to be outside and to play with the things they find in yards and on beaches, Morgan says.

"They pull at plants, and the plants move. They pick up coconut husks and flip them in the air. They dig holes. It's all fun for them," Morgan observes. "But then, when you take them into your home, with your lovely sofa, they will try to play with that. If they chew at it a bit and some pad-

ding comes out of the hole they made, they will pull at it until more comes out. The dog doesn't see that as wrong, the dog is still just playing and having fun."

An important part of training a dog is therefore teaching a dog that the outdoors is the place for playing and using the bathroom, and the indoors is where they relax and spend their quiet time.

Training dogs is about far more than teaching them commands. It's about understanding the dog and anticipating what it will do next, Morgan says. The busiest part of his day comes in the evenings, as most owners are at work during the day, and it's vital for him to train dogs and their owners together. He can easily get dogs to do what he wants, but his objective is getting the dogs to do what their owners want.

"Training the dog, for me, is easy," he says. "The hard part is training the owners."