Basic Wolf Pack Theory
A Wolf Pack Primer - Part I - An Introduction
By: Eric Lundquist

While many readers already have an understanding of this subject. Experience has shown me that many of my past customers did not have a grounding in this information. And often what they do know is either incorrect and misunderstood because they only experience it from the mind of the human, it is necessary to learn to see these things from the wolf's/dog's perspective. I hope that my interpretations are helpful to all in at least some small way.

To begin with it is necessary to accept the fact/premise that the true ancestor to our dogs is the wolf. This fact has been more and more backed by science and the arguments against it at this point are just remnants of outdated opinions which are now relegated to the archives of 'old wives tales'. (Please note, I refuse the be politically correct, p.c., when it comes to certain terms, phrases or conventions, no offense is ever meant.)

Whether we believe in evolution or creationism, the premise is still valid. If evolution created the wolf, or if God created the wolf, OUR DOGS were developed by the intervening of man's hand. The development of our dogs is in fact mankind's earliest manipulation of genetics! Wolves and hence dogs are PACK animals. A wolf pack is a social structure where every member ranks above and below each other. The only exception to this rule is Alpha male who is the top ranking pack member and Omega who is the lowest ranking pack member. No two members are ever equal! Whether we have a pack of 2, 3, 9, 16... EVERYONE is ranked in a pecking order.

While in play wolves can 'role play' and at times 'switch' positions. This is a temporary situation in play and does not effect the TRUE hierarchical structure.

Taken to the example of dog and man. Even one dog and one person constitute a pack from the dogs perspective. And since a dog is a pack animal, he MUST HAVE a pack, with its leader-subordinate relationship in order to not only survive but also to thrive. So even a VERY low ranking, VERY subordinate type dog will assume an 'alpha' position IF the human in the two member pack does not portray that image/position themselves. The dog MUST have a leader, and if you are not the leader ANY dog will assume the job of leader, alpha, top dog! Whatever term you prefer.

This does not require you to be macho or the tough guy type. It does mean understanding not only in our minds, but also in our hearts, that we ARE the leaders, NEED to be the leaders, and have a RESPONSIBILITY to be the leaders to our dogs.

Something of a side note, but very related:
I often find that when I work with behavioral problem dogs and households, that the underlying problem is rooted in a bad pack arrangement/understanding. Frequently when I go to meet an 'aggressive' dog, what I find is in fact a 'dominant' dog that acts as the leader/alpha in the household. If I can get the people in

the house to understand this and teach them how to establish the proper leadership roles, the previously 'aggressive' dog is no longer aggressive and in fact is MUCH happier being a follower instead of a leader.

Many problems would never even occur if people understood this well enough to raise their dogs more correctly from the start. Good puppy education training can accomplish this. The puppy program I offer is the dog equivalent of a head start program, and is done on an individual basis. It is not a group socialization program, known as puppy kindergarten classes, which do have their place, but it is VERY different from how I work on an individual basis.

A few of the more prominent similarities between wolves and dogs.

1. They communicate with body postures.
2. They communicate with vocalizations.
3. They communicate through their sense of smell. VERY important but often overlooked.
4. Less known, but of real interest, is the fact that they have identical digestive systems. This will be subject of future expanded wolf/dog connections in the form of nutrition. Biologically Appropriate Raw Feeding protocols. (B.A.R.F.)
5. They live and react VERY instinctively. Not burdened by excessive reasoning, and/or self doubt(s).

Hundreds, even thousands of years of mankind intervening into the process of our dog's development hasn't changed these factors. Other factors also exist, but for now the factors we are concerned with are those that deal with communication.

Whether our dog is a Maltese, a Golden Retriever, Rottie or a Wolfhound, even if a mixed breed of any size... all our dogs are the same animal and that is simply a 'domesticated' wolf.

Our dogs do not necessarily know their size. Size is a very small factor in the dominant/subordinate relationship. It is VERY possible for a Chihuahua to dominate a Great Dane. It has most to do with 'heart', with what the TRUE nature of each individual dog is.

That is it for the introduction. In the next installment, Part II, we will start to illustrate the methods of communication and how it relates to pack positioning and hence to successful training.

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