

Who's Training Who at Your House?

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As the ATCA website says, Airedales are not necessarily for everyone.

However, my husband and I have had four of them in the past 13 years and have enjoyed every minute with them (well, almost every minute!). We currently have a five-year-old male, Bob that I train and show in obedience and rally and Bob pheasant hunts with my husband as well.

Bob joined our family as a smart, high energy eleven-month-old "teenager". At that time, you would think that after the experience of three other Airedales (and 20 years previously with raising and showing horses) that we should have been able to handle any Airedale. However, I am here to tell you that one forgets what it is like to expend the energy to consistently enforce rules and expectations with an independent, smart young dog.

Currently there is popular program called *The Dog Whisperer* on the National Geographic channel with Cesar Milan. This program was just perfect for my husband and me in reinforcing the basics in dog ownership so that you can have a dog you can live with. The program isn't about teaching sits, downs, and stays but ensuring that you as the owner assert your position as leader of the household in the day-to-day life with your dog.

Getting Bob as an eleven-month-old, we were more concerned that he thought he was "loved" than thinking he needed rules and training. We initially made the mistake of thinking Bob would somehow love us more as well if he could be on the furniture and bed, run out the back door into his yard, be on a flexi-lead, eat as soon as food dish was down and that his mouthing was just "love bites". Wrong! He was very happy to run the household, control the furniture, bed, walks, food and didn't seem to mind if he was "loved" or not!

So, my husband and I had to remember back when our first Airedale (Max) was a puppy. Back then we had read all the training books that told us that we needed to apply consistent rules and discipline. And, surprise, surprise, Max grew up and matured into a wonderful family dog and companion.

After initially going down the wrong path with Bob, we decided we needed to "changed our ways"!! Some examples of the changes that we made for Bob were:

- ❖ Dogs are not allowed on the furniture or beds.
- ❖ Daily walks are done in heel position and not on a flexi-lead.
- ❖ Once back from a walk, they sit and wait in the foyer until we have our coats off before we come back to release them.
- ❖ Dogs wait in a sit position until they are released out the backdoor to go into their yard.
- ❖ Dogs wait in a sit position until they are released to eat their food.
- ❖ Going into a building, dogs are behind us going through the door.
- ❖ Leaving the house, dogs are behind us going through the door.
- ❖ When eating in the kitchen, dogs are in down position – no begging.
- ❖ No pushing into the refrigerator when it is opened.
- ❖ They must sit before being let out of their crates.

Again, while this all seems rather basic, it really takes a lot of energy and consistency from the owner/owners. I think the far majority of owners don't really "sign up" for this. They just want and expect a dog to behave on its own. If they are lucky, they will have picked a dog with a

personality that fits their lifestyle. If not, those are the dogs that often develop problems and end up in rescue.

For my husband and myself, by being willing to be consistent leaders in the house, I am happy to report that Bob is slowly and steadily maturing into a wonderful dog that is a pleasure to live with. One of the biggest lessons I learned was that if I truly wanted to be competitive in the Obedience/Rally ring, I needed to address rules and behavior as a total package, meaning both inside the ring and outside the ring. By dealing with these things at home, he has a far greater potential in the Obedience, Rally, and Hunting events.

In the end, Bob has been a great experience to relearn the basics of what my responsibilities are to the dogs to ensure that they will live successfully with me. They know and are secure with their place in our family. So, if you are challenged by your high energy Airedale, just look at it as an opportunity to become a better owner and handler remember ***who is training who!***