

For Those Considering a Beginners Dog Training Class An Important Announcement

Having run dog-training classes for a great many years, I can say with certainty that group classes usually are not the best way for inexperienced owners to train a “green” dog. I am not speaking here about socialization classes for young puppies (I think they fill a very important role) rather I am thinking about those older puppies/dogs that have already become difficult for the average family to live in harmony with.

The combined needs of teaching the various obedience exercises while establishing clear leadership is far more difficult in a room full of out-of-control dogs and inexperienced owners. Further, classes often do not address many of the behaviour problems people are having with their dog. It is far better to first establish a foundation of basic exercises, attention and respect in individual lessons before joining a group class. Once those ingredients are established, classes then have much to offer.

According to recent surveys, dog owners (that had little to no foundation or prior knowledge of handling dogs) who began with private lessons and then joined group classes got much better and faster results than those who started in a group class setting. Working in private followed by group classes is by far the best way you can train your dog.

This process does in fact, cost a bit more - but it is well worth it. A cost breakdown and comparison follows:

<u>Prepaid Private Package</u> ^(*note)	<u>Group Classes – 10 weeks</u>
Consult Video & Book 4 Private lessons <div style="text-align: right;"> Total \$349.00 . (All taxes included). </div> The material covered in this package would be roughly equivalent to ½ the material covered in a full 10-week traditional novice program. Using this as a guide, you can double the figure to arrive at the cost of a fully private Novice program with a goal of off-leash reliability.	Pre class assessment Workbook and instructional materials 10 Group classes <div style="text-align: right;"> Total \$249.10 (\$235.00 + \$14.10 GST) </div>

(*note) Accounts will not be kept open for longer than twenty-six weeks. When someone purchases the prepaid packages, they do so with the understanding that all private lessons must be scheduled and taken within a twenty-six (26) week timeframe.

Important Exception to the Effectiveness of Group Classes: The dog training pendulum, for quite some time, has swung further toward classes where ‘positive only’ reinforcement training approaches are taught. The result was that many dog owners faced with very real dog training

needs had only “fun and games,” “cookies and kindness,” “hugs and drugs” from which to pick. In many instances, these approaches simply did not address the problem. Fortunately the pendulum is starting to swing back toward the center so that more and more people are looking for a more balanced “traditional” approach. In addition to teaching the training exercises, if the instructor is prepared to address unacceptable behaviour and show dog owners how to effectively and efficiently correct those behaviours, classes can in fact address the needs of both the owner and their dog.

Recently demand has increased to the point that I am prepared to make time in my busy private practice for just such a class. Beginning in September 2007, I will be offering a 10-week Koehler based course. The Koehler Method of Dog Training is one of the most successful dog training programs ever developed. The end goal is (and always has been) reliable off-leash response and dependability. It is my plan to make time for two such classes per year.