



## **Conditioning the Doberman For the Show Ring**

by Barbara Eastwood

Help your dog show himself! Give him the competitive edge he needs to succeed in today's show ring. Condition him so he can show to his full potential. Conditioning a dog properly is a slow process. It is done at home and usually takes time. It isn't something that comes out of a spray can five minutes before he walks into the show ring.

Proper conditioning is basically applied common sense. It has, however, both physical and mental aspects. Both are equally important. To compete successfully a dog must not only look like a show dog, but he must feel like a show dog!

### **GENERAL PHYSICAL ASPECTS**

#### **DIET:**

A dog is what he eats. Proper and complete nutrition is necessary to build a solid foundation for a healthy, well developed dog. His diet is the most important step taken towards conditioning, because conditioning starts on the inside of an animal and radiates outward.

Every dog, pet or potential show ring champion should be fed as though it was a show ring prospect. Pet pups have grown up to win the National Doberman Pinscher Club of America Specialty Best of Breed Competition. While there are ways to cut costs when raising a dog, food is definitely not one of them. All three stages of a dog's life require a complete and well balanced food appropriate for that stage. A number of different companies specialize in producing complete and high quality dog food. Their products are available in canned, dry, and fresh frozen forms. They may be obtained through breeders, pet stores, or local veterinarians. If all else fails these companies can be located through their advertisements in national dog magazines.

If a dog is fed the right amount of a nutritionally complete and properly balanced diet, within the limits of his inheritance, he should develop a structurally sound body. How quickly a dog matures and develops the desired musculature is another matter. This will depend upon his age, maturity rate of his line, and amount of exercise.

Both fat and thin Dobermans are highly undesirable. Excess weight, while unsightly and unhealthy in a mature dog, may pose a particular problem in a puppy. If a puppy carries too much weight his young joints may not be able to handle the stress, and structural defects may result. Rolls of adipose tissue over the croup of a mature dog are the unmistakable signs of a portly individual. Equally unmistakable are the ribs that show in a thin dog. If fed reasonable



amounts of a well balanced food, proper weight should not be a problem for any age dog.

Nutritional charts for all ages and breeds of dogs are readily available in canine publications, from pet food companies, and from local veterinarians. These charts, however, are only intended to serve as guides. Evaluation of how well an animal is faring must be made on an individual basis. A Doberman is an athletic dog and should be viewed as such. This means that he should be trim, lean, and fit. He should never appear to be portly, or almost starving.

While quality, nutritionally complete dog foods may appear to be somewhat more expensive than grocery store specials, based on results they are not. It is generally not necessary to supplement them because they contain all of the proper vitamins and minerals. Frequently, the vitamins and minerals are added to the food after the cooking process to prevent their loss. In addition most of the quality complete dog foods do not contain large quantities of filler or substances such as soybean meal that has been implicated as a possible cause of bloat or torsion in dogs. In terms of conditioning, dogs fed most of these feeds have a lean hard weight and a deep shine in their coats.

#### **PARASITE CONTROL:**

Parasite control is absolutely essential. Without a regular parasite control program whatever else is done correctly with a dog is just wasted effort. If a host of internal parasites are siphoning off the goodies in a well balanced diet, the dog is obviously not getting everything he needs. In addition to utilizing the food a dog digests, certain forms cause great damage as their juvenile stages migrate throughout the dog's bloodstream, liver, lungs, and possible even his heart. Certain forms may even alter a dog's blood chemistry so that clotting times are far longer than normal. Regular fecal examination for parasite eggs should be followed with as needed worming. For other intestinal parasites such as the microfilarial stage of canine heartworm, blood samples must be drawn. Once determined free of microfilaria, the dog should be placed on a preventative medication program. Many of the heartworm preventatives used also control other internal parasites. An annual check and regular heartworm preventative program is an absolute must. Currently, especially in the warmer parts of the country, there is a trend towards continuous rather than seasonal preventative programs. There is no reason to allow internal parasites the opportunity to sap a dog of strength, energy, coat quality, general condition, and perhaps even his life.

External parasites can also pose difficult problems. Ticks, fleas, and mites are three common external or ectoparasites. They may be present all year long, but due to warm weather population explosions they become more noticeable nuisances in summer and fall. Because they may be carriers of disease and even other parasites, they should not be regarded casually. Ticks carry several



rickettsial diseases that affect dogs. One such notable disease is Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever. Once endemic to the Rocky Mountains, this disease is now found all over the country. Ticks are also capable of transmitting a protozoan from dog to dog that causes anemia, paralysis, and eventually death. Fleas, in addition to transmitting disease and tapeworm eggs, commonly cause flea dermatitis. This condition is an allergic reaction to their presence. It may be mild or acute. Mild flea dermatitis usually results in a patchy thinning or loss of hair. Frequently this occurs around the animal's tail. In the acute form the dog may have raw patches of skin. Both forms are usually accompanied by a great deal of scratching. One type of mite causes microscopic lesions by burrowing into the skin. These lesions may become infected by a secondary invasion of bacterial agents such as the ever present *Staphylococcus*. If the dog acquires a secondary *Staphylococcus* infection, he may have a real problem.

Ringworm, or fungal infections can also be transmitted by exoparasites. Nothing can ruin a show dog's coat faster than a full blown case of *Microsporium canis*, or ringworm. It is well worth the effort to guard against exoparasites. At times the task will appear to be almost insurmountable. Persistent effort will be well rewarded. Disease or loss of hair coat during the show season can prove disastrous.

#### **VACCINATION:**

Any time large numbers of dogs from distant areas congregate briefly as they do for dog shows controlling the spread of contagious disease becomes a definite problem. The likelihood of exposure to a wide variety of disease causing agents under the stress conditions of a show renders the possibility of acquiring a disease salient than in the home environment. While there are many instant diarrheas, coughs, colds, and nondescript viruses that a show dog will simply have to gain immunity to through exposure, there are several more serious diseases that he should be vaccinated against. Vaccination against rabies is an absolute must!! It is an incurable disease that can be transmitted to humans. In many states the law provides a clear mandate to vaccinate against this disease. Immunization against three other serious canine diseases, distemper, hepatitis, and leptospirosis, plus parainfluenza is usually accomplished with a single inoculation known as the DHL-P vaccine. An annual booster is recommended. Parvo, once the scourge of dog shows is a devastating canine viral disease that is usually lethal. It may or may not produce the obvious symptoms of vomiting and foul smelling bloody diarrhea. Currently vaccination is recommended annually. Booster vaccinations every six months may be considered if exposure is great and risk is high. Corona virus causes a similar, but slightly less serious disease. There is also a vaccine available to protect against this disease. It is advisable to stay current with all recommended vaccinations.



## PHYSICAL SPECIFICS

### FEET AND NAILS:

Doberman Pinschers are bred to have well arched, compact, and cat like feet. They are supposed to stand up on their toes. If a Doberman is to stand correctly on his feet his toenails must be kept short. Long nails force the dog back off his toes and allow his feet to spread out. In later life this may cause the dog some foot problems that could have been avoided. Proper nail care should start at an early age and continue throughout the dog's life.

The canine toenail is very similar to the human nail except that it is tubular rather than flat. The quick containing the blood supply is located in the center. Given proper and regular attention it is relatively easy to keep the quick pushed back. If however, the nails are not cared for on a regular basis the quick will creep out into the long nail very rapidly. Then it will require both time and patience to push it back.

One of the preferred methods for keeping Doberman nails short is grinding them back with a power pet nail groomer. Nails may also be clipped with a nail clipper and then filed smooth. Standing a dog on a grooming table to have his nails done also expedites matters quite nicely. Regardless of how it is done there is absolutely no need to make it a traumatic or bloody experience. Certain individuals have grown to hate having their nails groomed to the point they have been known to find the power grooming tool, sneak it out of the kennel and bury it in the garden.

When a power nail groomer is used a small portion of the outer layer of hornlike tissue is ground off all around the quick. The quick should be taken back to the point just before the blood supply is reached. If this is done cautiously and carefully there will be no need for a blood clotting agent to stop bleeding. However, it should be available just in case it is needed. A dog occasionally moves his foot at just the wrong time. The finished nail should present a clean, polished appearance.

Exceptionally long nails can be ground every 3-4 days until the nails are taken back to a reasonable length. In this case the outer hornlike layer should be ground back just a bit further than normal leaving the quick at a slight point. This will encourage the quick to recede a little faster than normal and should not yield bloody results. Nails on the front feet will require a little more attention than those on the back feet as a dog wears the nails on the back feet faster than those on the front feet. It is very easy to maintain the nails on some dogs, while others present a real problem. Extremely short nails are a tradition in the Doberman show ring!



### **FEET AND PADS:**

The pads on a dog's feet are very important. They support the foot and absorb the concussion of his body weight every step he takes. To do this properly he must be able to step squarely and fully on each pad. If he is unable to do so, in time, secondary difficulties such as a sore back may develop.

It should be routine to check a dog's pads for dryness and cracks. Both conditions lead to bloody, sore feet. A little petroleum jelly applied to dry or cracked pads works wonders. A dog can not work well without his proper foundation.

Tough supple pads tend to resist being cut by sharp objects, etc. A deeply cut pad will insure a lame dog until it heals. This may take months. For this reason alone pads should not be neglected. The pads of a dog's feet can be toughened by working him over a limited amount of gravel daily.

### **ELBOWS:**

Keeping the elbows on a Doberman covered with hair and the size they should be requires supplying the dog with a comfortable place to sleep or rest. It may be difficult to convince some dogs that they should use their comfortable place rather than a bare wood floor. Dobermans are prone to developing swollen elbows, a condition commonly referred to as "house elbow". The condition may be brought about by the lack of a padded place to lie. It may also be encouraged by the habit certain dogs acquire of collapsing on a floor when they lie down rather than carefully settling down. Regardless of how the condition develops, it is very difficult to deal with and requires the assistance of a veterinarian, as well as the tincture of time to heal. Unfortunately a dog with "house elbow" is usually lame.

Keeping the elbows covered with hair is also related to where and how they choose to lie down. Again, if they prefer or are given a hard surface to lie on the hair on the elbows will be rubbed off. Keeping the skin on the elbow soft and supple with a cream or salve will definitely help.

### **COAT:**

A Doberman's coat is a true reflection of his general health and condition. His coat should be short, shiny, hard, and thick. In addition, according to the standard of the .breed, it should be close lying, solid colored, and with the appropriate markings.

A glossy coat with the depth of sheen is the glow of good health and not layers of grooming spray. The glow of good health can not be duplicated. Unfortunately Dobermans commonly have coat problems due to heredity factors including hypothyroidism, allergenic sensitivity, and dry flaking skin. A greater predisposition to these problems appears to be linked to the recessive red and



blue coat colors.

While hypothyroidism appears to be more prevalent and pronounced in red, blue, and fawn Dobermans it is also known to occur in blacks. Manifestations of this syndrome are seen as excessive weight, two color coats, and loss of hair to the extent of alopecia or baldness. Interestingly, even hyperactive dogs can have this condition. With a veterinarian's guidance it can be treated with thyroxin. It is regrettably a condition that is becoming more and more prevalent in the breed.

Allergenic sensitivity involving the skin may be major or minor depending upon the individual and the agents to which it reacts. Conditioning sprays, shampoos, food products, stinging insects and fleas are all common agents that can cause allergenic sensitivity reactions. Sensitivity is usually a highly individualistic thing. What plagues one dog may not affect another. The single greatest exception is flea dermatitis, a condition that is very common in dogs that serve as a flea bus. There are even individuals who host a very limited number of fleas for a very short period of time and still break out in a scaly, itchy, patchy rash as well as the blotchy spots devoid of hair characteristic of flea dermatitis. Usually this is easy to remedy with a good flea control program. Since animal flea sprays, powders and shampoos are usually part of the control program, caution should be exercised when using these products. It is not uncommon for a dog to react to these compounds in much the same fashion that sensitive dogs react to flea infestation, certain shampoo and grooming sprays.

A common reaction in dogs sensitive to applied products is an instant crop of hives. The individual swellings may range in size from small pinpoint to bumps that resemble strawberries. Loss of hair coat may also occur as a reaction to certain applied products. The reasons for allergenic reactions in dogs are just as mystifying and complex as those in humans.

Flaking dry skin or dandruff presents a never ending problem in certain dogs. It is especially prevalent in those with a red or blue coat color. While the underlying cause appears to be an hereditary predisposition to the condition, environmental factors can also play an important role in its occurrence. Lack of essential oils in the diet may have a significant influence on the condition. Drier than normal air in heated homes during the winter months may affect house dogs unless the proper precautions have been taken to balance air moisture in the living quarters. However, in the show dog one of the greatest single environmental culprits is shampoo. All too frequently a Doberman emerges from a bath devoid of all natural skin oils and looking remarkably worse for the effort. Weeks of otherwise proper conditioning can literally go down the drain if this happens to a dog a day or two before a show. A bath should enhance a dog's appearance, not ruin it. This is one of the reasons that baths are usually given several days in advance of the show. Any touch up bathing necessary is usually done with a wet sponge or dry shampoo.



There are a number of fine dog shampoos, both dry and wet. Most of the available products work very well if they are completely rinsed out of the dog's coat. Products intended for other purposes, such as dish washing detergent, should be avoided. They are not compatible with the chemistry of the dog's skin. A human product that can be successfully used on sensitive Dobermans is balsam creme rinse. It can even be used the day of the show. It leaves the dog's coat with a clean bright shine.

There are a number of topical applications, salves or cremes for the temporary relief of dry flaking skin. There are also several types of non-allergenic oils specifically for dogs, and some that are intended for human use that can be used with great success. If the dog is not sensitive to it mink oil will help combat the problem and in addition leave a sheen on the coat. Unfortunately it will also pick up dust and dirt that can help produce a dirty film on the coat. A daily massaging of the skin to bring out the natural oils definitely has a positive effect.

There are other things that will damage the coat on a show dog. Exposure to strong sunlight for extended periods of time will result in a bleached coat. This will be particularly obvious in red-coated Dobermans. Mud can also ruin a dog's coat. The hair on the coat of a dog that is consistently dirty will not lie close to the body. It may even raise up in patches all over the body. Individual hairs of the coat will also have a tendency to break off.

Daily general grooming with a rubber curry and soft brush is an absolute must! The use of a flexible rubber curry, preferably the type with many finger like teeth, will reach down through the coat and massage the skin. This stimulates the natural oils in the coat and brings them up to the surface. A gentle, but brisk massage with a curry followed by a slow and thorough brushing with a very soft brush will not only make the dog's coat glow, but also will please him. Most dogs love to be brushed. In addition it provides an opportunity to be alerted to any problem such as minor abrasions, ectoparasites, etc.

When a Doberman goes into the show ring he should look his very best. He should go into competition with a clean shiny coat free of ectoparasites and dandruff. Applying mink oil to his coat is not necessary, but properly done it will add a final touch. If the dog is not sensitive to it, mink oil can be applied to his coat by first spraying a little on a clean dry cloth and then wiping his head and body with the cloth. His head is especially important. Properly done it should enhance his inner flow of good health.

#### **CLIPPING THE COAT FOR SHOW;**

Clipping the Doberman for show is not a major operation. It is more a matter of trimming whiskers, and areas where rough scraggly hairs protrude. When clipping a Doberman it is well to bear in mind that inexperienced hands can easily botch the job and make him look far worse than if he had not been clipped



at all. It takes weeks for the coat to recover. A cautious approach is definitely in order.

When clipping a dog for show there are several things that are important ingredients for successfully accomplishing a polished look. They are also instrumental in avoiding disastrous little goofs that remain for weeks. The necessary ingredients include a grooming table with an arm, daylight, attention to detail, sharp blunt ended scissors, a good clipper with sharp blades and most important, a great deal of patience.

The grooming table with an arm and grooming noose is necessary to hold a dog in one place. It is much easier to trim a statue than a moving target. It is only necessary to attempt to trim a dog in poor or artificial light once to realize that the half of the animal that is in a shadow is impossible to see. When the dog is viewed in daylight all those little missed places will stand up for a head count. Detail is extremely important because the entire procedure is designed to enhance the appearance of the animal. The necessity of sharp blunt ended scissors, a good clipper with sharp blades and patience are obvious. While it is possible to produce good results without all of these things, it is infinitely more difficult.

It is important to develop a routine for clipping so that an area on the dog that might need attention is not missed. Since a Doberman presents himself head first, and that is the way he is usually viewed, it is only logical to start with the head. The whiskers on the muzzle, long hairs above the eyes and occasional tufts of hair on the side of the face and below the chin are the coarse hairs on the head that need to be trimmed. Interestingly, the dog has the ability to partially retract the whiskers on the muzzle. Be sure and check these a second time. All of the coarse hairs can be trimmed with a sharp pair of blunt ended scissors. Ears should be trimmed with a clipper using a number 30 or 15 blade, if the number 30 is not available. A number 30 blade will clip much closer and cleaner than a number 15 blade. A small piece of cotton should be placed in the ear so that clipped hair will, not fall into the ear canal. If these hairs do get into the ear canal the dog may either hold that ear down for several days, or continuously shake his ears. The results can be disastrous in the show ring. All the hair should be carefully clipped out of the inside of the ear. All of the hair down the back edge of the ear should be clipped in a straight even line. This is the edge of the ear that was cut when the ear was cropped. Neither the outside back, nor the front edge of the ear is clipped.

If the dog has a cowlick down the back of his neck all of the rough hairs that stick up should be trimmed even with the rest. This can be done with a pair of scissors. While some people make a great ado about cleaning up the hair under the throat of the dog, this is an area in which it is really easy to muff the job. All that is really necessary is to trim the unruly hairs. Unless the dog has a cowlick



on the back of his neck there will be a definite line of demarcation where the hair pointing down from the back of the neck meets the hair pointing up from underneath the neck. The unruly hairs sticking up from this line of demarcation should be trimmed to give the area a tidy appearance. If the dog has a cowlick down the back of his neck this line will probably not be present, and therefore not need to be trimmed. An expert with a clipper can feather down long hairs in the area under the neck if there is a great deal of hair present. However, since this requires real technique, it is usually best to just leave the area alone.

Legs and feet should be considered next. Occasionally elbows have little tufts of hair that stick straight out. These should be trimmed flat with the rest of the hair on the elbow. The rest of the leg usually requires very little attention. There may be a few stray hairs in the back of the wrist that should be clipped. The hairs between the pads of the feet should be removed. This can be accomplished with a clipper using a number 15 blade. It requires more patience but, it can also be accomplished nicely with a pair of blunt ended curved scissors.

On the rest of the Doberman body there is very little body hair that needs grooming attention. The hair that lines the fold of skin in the flank region should be trimmed in an even, straight line. Occasionally there are a few tufts of hair that stick out on the breeches of the buttocks. These should be trimmed even with the rest of the hair coat. This should not be overdone. It is easy to detract from the dog's true muscling in the hindquarters with a poor job of trimming in this area. Finally, the scraggly hairs on the end of the tail need to be cleaned up so that the tail has a nice, neat and trim appearance. If the dog has a great deal of scar tissue at the base of the tail care should be taken not to make it more obvious due to the way the hairs on the end of the tail are trimmed. All of these areas can be trimmed either using a clipper with a number 15 blade, or a sharp pair of blunt ended scissors.

The bottom line on clipping the Doberman is the end product. The dog should not look like he just ran through a clipper clinic. He should appear neat, trim, and well groomed, A Doberman show dog should present a clean, crisp image.

### **TEETH AND EYES:**

All dogs, especially show dogs should have clean white teeth. If a dog does not frequently and avidly chew on bones, hard biscuits, rawhide chews, etc., plaque will accumulate on his teeth. Accumulated plaque should be cleaned off regularly to insure healthy gums as well as a matter of appearance of the teeth. With a little patience and care plaque can be easily removed from a dog's teeth. A canine dental tool for this purpose is available through most kennel supply outlets. Veterinarians are also very happy to lend assistance in this area.

Some dogs routinely accumulate matter in the corners of their eyes. In others it is indicative of a problem. If there is also a reddening of the conjunctival sac, or



tissue surrounding the eye, this is an indication of an infection or the presence of a foreign body. Consultation with a veterinarian may be in order. Either infection or irritation in this area can be dangerous.

Regardless of the cause, all matter should be routinely removed from the eye with a clean cotton swab, or a soft damp cloth. This is especially important just prior to entering the show ring. It is a small thing, but forgetting to do this would not help project the desired glowing image of good health.

### **EXERCISE: A BLEND OF PHYSICAL AND MENTAL ATTRIBUTES**

The physical attributes of proper exercise are immediately apparent in the development of a well muscled individual. Regular reasonable exercise is also the key to canine well being. It provides a healthy outlet for pent up physical and mental energies. Unchecked these pent up energies could produce stress related anxieties that may lead to undesirable behavior patterns.

Whatever the form exercise takes it should be thoroughly enjoyable for the dog. It should be a high point in his day. In addition it provides an excellent opportunity to develop a close relationship with a dog. There are many forms of canine exercise that will also benefit his human supervisor.

### **FACTORS TO BE CONSIDERED;**

Regardless of the type of exercise there are several factors that can greatly influence the outcome of such effort. Establishing a particular time of day for exercise is important. It should become part of the daily routine. The time of day should be regulated by outdoor temperatures and feeding time. During the hot months of summer early morning or evening will prove most suitable. In the colder months, especially in a northern climate, the middle of the day will be more satisfactory. Feeding time or times also need to be considered. Exercise should be prior to feeding due to the fact that vigorous exercise on a full stomach can lead to torsion. Torsion can result in a ruptured stomach and a painful death.

The age and condition of the dog should determine the amount of and the pace at which exercise is conducted. A six month old puppy should not be subjected to the amount a mature adult would thrive on. Starting out slowly with a leisurely half an hour of fun type participation in any one of several forms of exercise is great. Depending upon the exercise, both the pace and time involved can be regularly increased to meet the needs of the individuals.

A leash for a dog is a matter of safety. There are a variety of reasons why a dog should be worked on a leash, especially if he is outside a fenced area, off his property, or in an area where there may be traffic hazards. In addition to traffic hazards, stray dogs, wild animals, traps, domestic livestock, parasite containing excrement, dead animals, cats to chase, etc., are all irresistible to the intellectual curiosity of the breed. The dog's safety should not be ignored. Consideration for



other people is also a good reason for keeping even a well behaved dog on a leash. In most cases it isn't really what the dog might do nearly as much as what other people fear he might do. After all in the eyes of other people he is a Doberman! It is totally unfair to make other people uncomfortable with the presence of a dog. While it is true that a dog might get four times as much exercise off leash as he would on leash, in most cases the hazards of the area in which he can be worked dictate that he be on a leash.

Adequate preparation for the exercise period is important. In hot weather a supply of water is very important. When working away from home water should be carried or should be available at given points along the way. In cold weather a light blanket might be necessary. When working away from home a rest break treat of crackers or cookies at half way point is a great morale booster.

### **FORMS OF EXERCISE:**

There are a number of desirable forms of exercise. High on the list are walking and jogging. Bicycling and swimming are also good choices. Because these forms of exercise are companion forms they will also help build a good rapport between canine and human, as well as facilitate physical conditioning. Whatever the form daily exercise takes it should be something that is suited to the dog and something he can really look forward to enjoying. Exercising a dog on a "dog trotter" or "road working" him from a car is ridiculous! Not only are both extremely boring for a dog, they are degrading to his self image. If he is to think of himself as a "something special show dog", he must be treated as one.

Walking and jogging are the simplest forms of exercise. Most dogs and people really enjoy stretching their legs out of doors. The only preparation required for either one is a little common sense and restraint. Basically walking is preparation for jogging. It must be remembered that dogs who have exercised only in the house are not ready to get up off the couch and run the 26 mile Marine Corp. Marathon Race. Initially a half hour walking at an elective pace is adequate. Both the pace and the daily distance should be gradually increased. A daily minimal amount for a conditioned adult should average approximately two miles and be accomplished in about half an hour. Puppies should not be worked as hard as an adult who will work for two miles and beg for more. When conditioning has reached the point where both dog and human are able to handle six miles a day in two hours they are both ready for jogging. Most adult Dobermans are good athletes and really enjoy jogging several miles a day. Once condition is attained it usually can be maintained by working every other day.

The major difficulty with both these types of exercise is finding a suitable place relatively free of hazards, especially traffic hazards. Added to this is the difficulty of finding a suitable surface on which to jog. Hard paved sidewalks, trails, or roads are very hard on the weight suspending joints of both canine and human.



If the jogging surface has some give the risk of stress related injuries will not be nearly as great. Proper canine conformation was designed to absorb the pounding shock of each step the dog takes, however it wasn't designed to do so on concrete or in deep sand.

Bicycling also has its hazards. Unless a special bicycle path is available automobile traffic is almost sure to present a problem. One of the major difficulties with working a dog alongside a bicycle is that the bike rider must remember at all times the dog is jogging while he is riding. A dog must be conditioned to the point that he is ready to jog before he ever begins to follow a bicycle. In this type of exercise the benefits to the dog will far outweigh the benefits to the rider because the dog is doing all the work. There is an additional hazard inherent in this type of exercise. There are Dobermans that have a real thing about attacking bicycles. This could make matters a bit difficult.

Swimming is one of the best forms of exercise because a dog does not stress its joints while developing its muscles and cardiovascular efficiency. It is great for young dogs and has been used as therapy for convalescent individuals. Here again the common sense approach is required in this sport. It is a fact that not all dogs can swim, or even like the water. There are also those individuals that would like to grow fins and remain in the water. It is important to ease into this sport slowly. Quit when tired is the best way to proceed.

If there is an indoor pool available this form of exercise will not have to be seasonal. If only an outdoor pool is available then it will work very well for part of the year. Lakes and rivers are not always the best places to swim with a dog. Many public areas have a great deal of litter including broken glass. A cut pad can take four months to heal. Additional hazards may include such things as snakes, dead fish to eat, strong river currents, undertows in lakes, etc. However, if there is a good spot available it can be quite enjoyable. Remember to bathe a dog after a swim in a lake or river to prevent infestation with aquatic parasites.

Once in the water the swimming dog must be kept under control using a technique other than a leash. A rousing game of catch and fetch the ball often works very well. Here again, it is imperative that the dog responds when called. Once back on the beach the leash should be used.

### **MENTAL ASPECTS**

There is a very real difference between a well conformed dog and a show dog. The show dog must not only be well conformed, and well conditioned, but in addition he must also have the proper mental attitude. He must think like a show dog. He must have self confidence and poise almost to the point of arrogance. Before he can show the world that he is absolutely the greatest Doberman that has ever lived he must believe it himself!



Mental attitude is not a quality that is instilled in a dog nearly as much as it is a quality that is protected as a puppy matures into an adult. A dog's self image is all important. If he is made to feel he is special he will be special. What many people, including professional handlers, fail to realize is that a Doberman is an exceptionally intelligent dog. Generally he is extremely perceptive and sensitive to the demands and feelings of the humans around him.

The experiences in a puppy's life should be positive and fun. This does not mean that he should be out of control at all times. It does mean however, that the early socialization process must be positive. Realize too what tremendous changes a little guy goes through during this period of his life. As a puppy he leaves his mother, moves in with a human family, decides to adopt that family, meets other young hopefuls in socialization classes, and finally competes in the show ring. Wow! All that by the time he is six months old! The transitions that the little guy has to make before he is six months of age are astounding. How well all these transitions are made will determine what kind of show dog he will be as an adult.

### **LIFE AT HOME**

To a point it is not the amount of time spent with a dog, but the quality of that time that is important. Sound like child psychology? That's precisely what it is. It is possible to be home with a dog all day long and still make him feel totally unnecessary. Time spent with a dog should be both positive and productive. Take the time to do things with him. Some dogs become so enthusiastic about their special time that they present their owners with their leash when exercise time is supposed to start.

Discipline is a difficult subject to approach because individuals and situations vary so greatly. However, bear in mind that dogs that are frequently overcorrected lose their self image very quickly. Over correcting a Doberman is generally far worse than not correcting him at all. A dog that receives praise and a reassuring pat for doing something correctly develops very positive feelings about himself. A Doberman usually tries very hard to please his people.

A Doberman needs to be part of his family and their daily routine. He has an overwhelming need to be included in everything. If this is denied, it only stands to reason that he would feel like a second class citizen. If he is shut up in a kennel and ignored he has not been given the opportunity to be treated like the "something special show dog" it is hoped that he will become.

### **LIFE AT THE SHOWS:**

All the positive experiences growing up at home can be completely dashed if the dog becomes a forgotten entity at the show. How he is treated starting with puppy socialization classes will have a direct bearing on his self image and interest in the shows. His early experiences are very important. If the person



taking the frightened youngster to socialization classes and match shows neglects to make him feel as comfortable and important as possible it will be an unpleasant experience. The worst thing that can happen to a pup is to be dragged to these classes, ignored, crated, and then finally dangled at the end of a leash while the person who is handling him talks to everybody but him. The dog was supposed to be the reason for entering the competition. The only thing that is a greater insult to a young dog is the superstar professional handler who talks to other handlers, directs the preparation of other dogs, discusses what his mature dogs have won. recently and finally drags the poor youngster into the ring when his turn in the competition finally comes around. Since he seems to be such an insignificant part of the whole process it is easy to see how a youngster could easily develop a here we go again attitude. This kind of negative experience can ruin a good young dog, especially if after his small part of the show he is returned to a crate for the rest of the day. Dogs do pick up human attitudes very quickly. Showing is hard on a dog. There are strange places every weekend, long hours on the road, slippery floors in the show ring, cold rainy spring and fall days, and steamy hot summer days to contend with throughout the season. The show dog has to find some special excitement about it or he will lose interest very quickly.

In order to succeed at the show the dog has to have a good rapport with his handler. This is true whether the handler is his owner, friend or a professional. Rapport, all important to success, is based on a good healthy mental attitude. It is far easier to condition a dog physically than mentally. A dog with a good self image will respond because he will have the competitive edge. When a show dog stands in the spotlight of competition for Best in Show, he will draw his 90 pound frame of bone and muscle, up and show the world he is a DOBERMAN!

### **Barbara J. Eastwood**

**EDUCATION:** M.S. degree in animal mycology (research for thesis conducted in the School of Veterinary Medicine), Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa. **ANIMAL**

**EXPERIENCE:** DOGS: Dobermans - both show and rescue dogs, 8 years.

Mutts, always. Assisted a small animal veterinarian on an as needed basis for five years. HORSES: Owned, bred, trained and successfully shown purebred Arabian horses for 30+ years. American Horses Show Association, Inc., judge and steward. AHSA class A show secretary - 6 years (includes The First International Arabian Horse Association Region XI Championship Show) Equitation Instructor, Department of Animal Science, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, Massachusetts.

**PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE:** Scientific research - private biotechnology corporation - culminated in a patent for a nematocide - 2 years. College level teaching - included teaching microbiology to veterinary assistant and allied health students - 14 years. Electron microscope technician - Department of Veterinary Pathology, School of Veterinary Medicine, Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa - 1 year.



**WRITING AND PHOTOGRAPHY SKILLS:** Free lance contributor to national dog and horse periodicals.

**MISCELLANEOUS: CANINE COMPANIONS:** 1 Doberman gentleman, 2 Doberman ladies, 2 Whippets and a "Mutt".

**HOME:** At the base of the Blue Ridge Mountains, 1½ miles from the Appalachian Trail.