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Dog Sense: How The New Science Of Dog Behavior Can Make You A Better Friend To Your Pet

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Synopsis

Dogs have been mankind’s faithful companions for tens of thousands of years, yet today they are regularly treated as either pack-following wolves or furry humans. The truth is, dogs are neither - and our misunderstanding has put them in serious crisis. What dogs really need is a spokesperson, someone who will assert their specific needs. Renowned anthrozoologist Dr. John Bradshaw has made a career of studying human-animal interactions, and in Dog Sense he uses the latest scientific research to show how humans can live in harmony with - not just dominion over - their four-legged friends. From explaining why positive reinforcement is a more effective (and less damaging) way to control dogs’ behavior than punishment to demonstrating the importance of weighing a dog’s unique personality against stereotypes about its breed, Bradshaw offers extraordinary insight into the question of how we really ought to treat our dogs.

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Customer Reviews

It was the best of books, it was--not the worst of books, not by a long shot, but incredibly annoying in places.This is a serious effort at collecting in one place the current state of the science of dog behavior. Bradshaw discusses the evidence we have for how and when dogs evolved from wolves, as well as what dogs’ close relationship to wolves does and doesn’t mean for their behavior and needs in human households. For the last century or so, much training and dog management advice has been based on the idea that wolf packs are competitive, internally violent groups, dominated by the fiercest, most powerful male, or possibly the fiercest, most powerful male and female--the "alphas." Since, the reasoning goes, "dogs are wolves," dog owners need to establish themselves

as "alpha" and dominate their dogs, lest the dogs seize control of the household and become problems and even threats.Bradshaw explains in clear and understandable terms why every piece of this argument is wrong.The studies that showed wolf packs as violent groupings dominated by the strongest were done with artificial, captive wolf packs--wolves who were not related to each other and had no way to leave the group if they weren't happy with. They had no choice but to work out Who's In Charge Here, by any means necessary. Natural wolf packs in the wild have since been studied extensively, and they are, in contrast, peaceful, mostly harmonious family groups. The "alpha pair" are in fact the parents of the younger wolves. Depending on local conditions, offspring from past litters may stick around for a year or three, helping to raise their younger siblings before eventually heading off to find mates and start their own packs.

First off, the people who gave this book 1 star had the similar complaint that it was too lengthy and too academic. Reality check: you read books like this to be informed, not entertained.His training philosophy makes alot of sense. He explains that dogs need to be taught boundaries, and that permissiveness is inhumane. This leads to behavior problems which leads to the pound and euthanasia. The fate is no different than that of a dog who has been chained up and abused all its life. It annoys me when people spoil their dogs and don't bother to teach them how to safely get along in a human world. This is very detrimental to your dog, just as it would be detrimental if you allowed your child not to go to school. He also explains how the application of punishment is not a good way to train your dog. I wish more people would realize that, because every time I go out, I see someone walking their dog who is either ignorant of this fact, or does not want to learn.The information in this book was very well laid out and I appreciate his description of the evolution of dogs, and how that information is applicable to your current dog. You cannot understand your pet unless you have a comprehensive understanding of his ancestors and origins. Bradshaw did a very excellent job of delineating all the latest research and compiling it into a coherent concept on dog behavior.I really enjoyed how he explained what goes on in a dog's brain when he uses his nose. As humans, this is a very foreign concept to us. He goes on to say how in order to truly treat your dog well, you need to appreciate that his nose is his primary way of receiving information, no matter how gross it may seem to us.

I will give Bradshaw credit for several things, with which I strongly agree: that positive reinforcement is more effective than physical punishment, and that many breeders are ruining dogs by limiting their genetic variation and selecting only for looks. Further, he is a far cry and welcome departure

from other scientists, who in their attempts to be taken seriously, try to purge all emotion from the study of animals. This led (and still does) to many cruel experiments, and to insane beliefs that persisted since the Victorian era claiming animals are 'merely machines' and 'do not feel pain the way humans do.'Because Bradshaw champions ethical treatment of animals, encourages rescue, and promotes spay/neuter, I give him three stars. Otherwise, based solely on literary grounds, I would give two stars.I enjoy the theories, but was hoping for more hands-on advice in working with dogs. As others have said, far too much time is spent on tedious genetic data, and an attempt to convince the reader that dogs are not wolves. It's almost as if he's expecting us to argue the point, when I agreed with it fairly quickly. Differentiating between dogs and wolves, and especially between wolves in the wild vs. captive wolves was extremely useful. However, to presume that wolf behavior doesn't ever apply to dogs is premature. If you have worked with feral dogs, you will notice they have some wolf-like traits, and by understanding wolves a little, you can be more successful in socializing these dogs.Which brings us to an interesting point: Bradshaw repeatedly slams trainers who have no scientific education, yet he himself seems to have very little hands-on experience working with dogs. I found his criticism of Cesar Milan and Victoria Stilwell a major turn-off.

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