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## WELCOME

Congratulations on joining Victoria Stilwell Positively Dog Training - the world's first truly global network of professional dog trainers dedicated to providing the public with a humane, positive reinforcement-based option in dog training under Victoria's personal brand. Becoming a part of this network is a significant step towards realizing your full potential as a small business owner and valued member of your local community.

By aligning yourself professionally with Victoria, you have further signified to your local community that you are serious about your business, that you have all the skills and experience required to help change lives positively, and that you are indeed one of the most accomplished and experienced positive reinforcement dog trainers in the world. This guidebook will describe the ways in which being a member of Victoria Stilwell Positively Dog Training will help your business grow.

Running your own small business as a dog trainer poses unique, imposing and sometimes seemingly contradictory challenges. As members of an intensely personal profession, our clients come to us with dog behavior problems often rooted in deeply personal, intimate human issues, and we are expected not only to help the dog overcome its issues, but also to help guide the frequently aimless owner towards a place of calm, empathetic understanding. In order to effectively diagnose, address and treat these issues, we must first ensure that the owner is prepared to accept our constructive criticisms and is willing to tackle the problem head-on. Often, this can involve some relatively intense psychological introspection, which can lead to a significant and noteworthy bond between trainer and human. Despite this bond and the resulting relationships we develop, we must also remind the client that we are running a business for profit as dog trainers. This can sometimes be a jarring and awkward realization for the client, but as dog trainers we must be comfortable in the knowledge that while our business is indeed helping dogs and humans live in better harmony, we also must be paid accordingly for our expertise and should feel no hesitation in charging our clients a premium for the expert advice and care they receive.

Being a member of Victoria Stilwell Positively Dog Training will further cement your reputation among the client base in your local community as a preeminent source for training advice and a force for change away

from dominance-based ideologies and toward humane, science-based positive reinforcement methodologies. This network has been created so that you can utilize the full power of Victoria's brand in your local community in an effort to increase the productivity, awareness and reputation of your business as well as continue to move the needle in the debate over dog training methods worldwide.

While we offer you the tools which can help you achieve your fullest potential as a businessperson, the ultimate responsibility lies with you to effectively harness the power of Victoria's brand and actively pursue all that being a member of Victoria Stilwell Positively Dog Training can provide you and your business.

Welcome to the team. We look forward to working with you to help make the world a better place for people and their dogs... Positively!

## LETTER FROM VICTORIA

Welcome to the team!

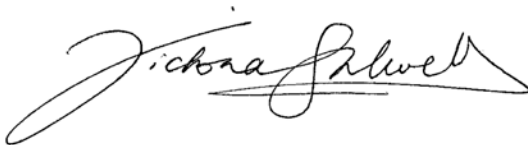
As you know, spreading the word about positive reinforcement-based dog training ideals has been a passion of mine for many years. Through many seasons of *It's Me or the Dog*, my books, live speaking tours and charitable events, I have been very fortunate to have been able to develop a platform from which I can help educate the public about the dangers of traditional training methods and the merits and rewarding nature of reward-based training. Now, with the rollout of Victoria Stilwell Positively Dog Training as the anchor of the Positively brand, I am excited to be able to spread that message even further.

With amazing positive reinforcement trainers such as you joining forces using one voice to champion our cause while providing the public with a clearly defined global brand they can trust, I am truly thrilled at the prospect of what we can all achieve together.

Of course, I realize that ultimately your decision to join the VSPDT team is a business decision, and I feel confident that we can help provide you with the tools you need in order to help your business grow and exceed all of the goals you have set for yourself.

Thank you again for joining us, and I look forward to working closely with you over the coming years.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Victoria Stilwell". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the left and then loops back under the name.

Victoria Stilwell

## MISSION STATEMENT

*Victoria Stilwell Positively Dog Training's mission is to create a global network of professional dog trainers whose collective goal is to help shape the future of dog training by promoting positive reinforcement methodologies while leveraging the popularity of Victoria Stilwell to increase the profitability of their business. With a commitment to providing the highest quality humane, reward-based professional dog training practices, Victoria Stilwell Positively Dog Training helps the public to better understand how the domestic dog's mind works, to communicate more effectively with our canine companions using positive reinforcement, to foster healthier relationships between dog and owner and to encourage responsible dog ownership.*

*"Those of us who love dogs know what an important part of our lives they share. That's why I've made it my life's mission to help create healthier, more balanced relationships between dogs and owners by spreading the word about positive reinforcement training. We all know that dogs need and want us to provide effective leadership, and I firmly believe that the only way to truly ensure that we are successful in achieving the necessary balance with our dogs is by using positive reinforcement and treating them with the same respect that we ask of them. Dogs are dogs, after all, and since they don't speak our language, the only way we can effectively communicate with them is if we learn to talk and think dog – Positively."*

Victoria Stilwell

## WHAT IS POSITIVE REINFORCEMENT?

Since the ideology of positive reinforcement serves as the backbone of what Victoria Stilwell Positively Dog Training is all about, we feel it is important to define the concept and detail why it is so integral to what we do and who we are as trainers.

Victoria Stilwell Positively Dog Training believes it is vitally important for owners to give their dogs the opportunities and the tools they need to live successfully in a human world. A dog that is given consistent guidance from an early age grows up to be a confident dog. Education brings security, security brings confidence, and a confident dog has no need to show anxiety-based behaviors. Modern behavioral science has shown that forceful handling such as physical punishment, leash yanking, or making a dog submit by rolling it on its back is psychologically damaging for the dog and has potentially dangerous consequences for owners. Instead, the most successful modern training theories suggest that reinforcing good behavior with rewards while using constructive discipline is much more successful.

***Positive reinforcement (i.e., giving the dog a reward in the form of praise, play, food, toys, etc. when it responds and offers an action or a behavior that you like) has been shown to be the most effective way to train a dog because rewarding good behavior will increase the likelihood of that behavior being repeated.***

Similarly, the use of constructive discipline (marking bad behavior by using vocal sounds to interrupt the behavior and refocus the dog onto something more positive, ‘time-outs’ or simply ignoring the dog) ensures that the dog learns which behavior is linked to the negative consequences of the discipline and is therefore less likely to repeat the behavior.

The strongest relationships between dogs and humans are based on cooperation and kindness rather than a human dominance/animal submission methodology which is central to outdated traditional training methods. Positive training helps to establish and maintain a connection that increases trust and therefore creates a stronger bond between dog and owner, because if your dog feels good about you, he will be a happier, more confident and better-behaved dog.



***Ultimately, positive training results in a dog who follows an owner because it wants to rather than following out of fear, while traditional training uses punitive methods to force a dog to behave, often resulting in a 'quick fix' that never truly identifies the root cause of the misbehavior while promoting insecurity and negative behavior.***

The process of changing a dog's behavior relies first and foremost on understanding and patience, while positive training relies on consistency, repetition and the following general rules:

- Identify WHY the dog is doing what it is doing. You cannot effectively deal with a behavior unless you know the root cause.
- Once you know the WHY, then you can ask yourself HOW to treat the behavior. It is vitally important that you understand each dog.
- Learn to talk and think dog. Effective two-way communication serves to increase the bond between dog and owner considerably.
- Find what motivates each dog to learn and use this while training. Rewards in the form of food, toys, praise or play are powerful, but every dog is different, so find what reward motivates each dog the most. Ignore those that say training dogs using food and/or treats is bribery. For a food-motivated dog, using treats in the training process is vital in helping the dog learn. Not only that, food literally changes the way a dog's brain functions in certain situations and can help rehabilitate a fearful or aggressive dog. Food is a powerful tool and is an essential ingredient when it comes to dealing with many major behavior problems.
- Be Kind! Never hit, scream at or yank a dog. Don't combat fear with more fear – recognize the dog's concerns, then slowly and gently help him learn to overcome them.
- Go very slowly when dealing with anxiety-related behaviors. The best way to rehabilitate an aggressive dog is to change how he perceives the stimuli that make him anxious. Do this by slowly showing your dog that the thing he fears is no longer scary.

Victoria Stilwell Positively Dog Training firmly believes that positive training equals positive results – it might take a little longer and require a bit more time and patience, but the positive changes that come as a result are worth it.

## **RULES & GUIDELINES**

In order to preserve the highest quality of service throughout the VSPDT organization and to ensure that the methods used by all VSPDT trainers reflect a consistent and philosophically sound basis, we ask that all VSPDT members make themselves aware of the following rules and guidelines. These rules are not designed to be restrictive to VSPDT members. VSPDT celebrates and encourages individuality and the specific strengths of each trainer, however it is vitally important that as team members, we all take care to adhere to certain core principles and ideals as positive reinforcement trainers.

Periodically, VSPDT will review client feedback surveys to ensure that all VSPDT members continue to practice as trainers using the guiding principles of positive reinforcement while avoiding outdated dominance and pack theory-based methodologies.

If you are unsure to any degree about any methods you may wish to use while training, please contact the VSPDT team and we will be happy to assist you.

### **VSPDT Rules & Guidelines:**

1. All VSPDT members agree to train in a professional manner to a high standard and have an understanding of all applicable laws relating to dogs and the public.
2. Members must procure and maintain adequate liability insurance.
3. Members are to practice as trainers by using gentle, reward-based and positive reinforcement methods of training.
4. Members are encouraged to continue their education as dog trainers by all possible means (books, seminars, conferences, etc.)
5. Members agree that all clients are the responsibility of the trainer. As such, the member is solely responsible for any damages caused due to the training provided to client and/or dog.
6. Prior to the use of any equipment (i.e. headcollars or harnesses) permission must first be obtained by the client and usage instructions are to be explained clearly and fully to the client.

You must ensure that the client can correctly assemble and put on any such equipment before leaving them with the equipment.

7. Under no circumstances should any of the following tools be used:
  - Electric Shock Collars
  - Pinch Collars
  - Choke chains
  - 'Shaker bottles' (stones in a bottle rattled at dogs)
8. Under no circumstances should any of the following techniques be used:
  - Scruffing and pinning of dogs
  - Aversive, hands-on approaches such as
    - Alpha rolls
    - Shaking of dogs
    - Yanking of collar
    - Helicoptering
    - Hanging of dogs
9. Members are to ensure that all clients' details and cases be kept confidential and are not to be used for any case studies or advertising without client's permission.
10. Members are not to engage in abusive or slanderous behavior towards other trainers and agree to avoid being the cause of any detrimental effect on other professionals or professions.
11. Members recognize and agree that they are ambassadors for VSPDT, and that they are promoting a brand that promotes the highest standard of dog training and behavior.
12. We encourage you to donate your time and expertise to local charities and shelters.
13. We encourage you to discourage puppy mills, pet stores and backyard breeders.

## **MARKETING STRATEGY**

The development and implementation of a sophisticated, coherent marketing strategy is the most important prerequisite to ensuring that your dog training business is running at its optimal level of efficiency and profitability. As dog trainers, the personal and emotional nature of our day-to-day activities often does not lend itself naturally to viewing the profession as a business, so we must make an extra effort to remind ourselves that we are running a business that relies on profit in order to continue to make a difference in our community.

Fortunately, once the decision has been made to devote the necessary time, energy and capital to a marketing strategy, there are many advertising and marketing outlets available which lend themselves extremely well to the business of dog training. Obviously, your operating budget will determine much of what you are able to achieve in terms of marketing, but even with limited resources, there is much you can do to ensure that your business grows and that you are able to reach the goals you have set for yourself.

### **Word of Mouth**

The emphasis on advertising and marketing notwithstanding, the most effective tool in your marketing arsenal as a dog trainer continues to be word of mouth buzz and personal recommendations by satisfied past clients. Be sure to provide each client with access to the online VSPDT Client Survey or a VSPDT Client Feedback Form at your last session with them. This provides the client with an outlet through which to express their gratitude, appreciation and/or criticism of your services. Not only will you then be able to find out your strengths and weaknesses as a trainer, you will also be building up a cache of valuable content that can be used in your marketing efforts through other outlets.

Make sure to gently remind your clients to recommend you to their friends and neighbors, and be sure that they know how to find your business on the web so that they can easily share it with others.

### **Free Local Advertising**

It is imperative that you develop and foster relationships with other pet-related businesses and individuals in your community in an effort

to increase public awareness of your business and the nature and quality of services you offer. Prospective clients place a premium on recommendations given by those they feel they can trust, and when it comes to their pets, the emphasis on that trust increases exponentially.

### ***Veterinary Practices***

A recommendation from a veterinarian can be one of the most valuable tools a dog trainer can have. They are often looking for a qualified, professional training option that they can recommend in good conscience, and the sheer volume of prospective training clients that they see each week cannot be matched. These clients are the ‘gold leads’, meaning they are a target-rich pool from which a great deal of business can be generated. Since they recommend you, the vet’s reputation is on the line as well as your own, and they therefore tend to be quite cautious about whom they choose to recommend – be persistent but professional.

- Get to know your local veterinarians and their staff.
- Be sure to provide them with Victoria’s Letter of Recommendation and inform them of Victoria’s endorsement of you as a trainer, as her relationship with the major veterinary bodies is very strong and can be harnessed to open more doors for you.
- Let them know that you practice positive reinforcement training methods and offer to discuss with them why you feel this is an important distinction. The majority of veterinarians are aware of the debate between traditional methods and science-based methods and will be happy to be given a clear, concise explanation of why they should recommend that their clients use positive reinforcement.
- Ask if you can place your business card, flyer or other promotional materials at their front desk.
- Offer your assistance to them on a pro-bono basis as a behavior consultant on difficult cases.

### ***Pet Product Stores***

Although some of the big-box stores (Petco, Petsmart, etc) offer in-house training services, some of them occasionally allow flyers and other promotional materials to be posted in their stores.

Smaller pet product stores can be another valuable outlet through which you can reach high-value leads. Pet owners that shop at smaller privately-owned stores are often willing to go the extra mile when it comes to their pets, and this is naturally the type of client you want to have. Ask if you can post your information and leave marketing materials in the store, and make sure the owner has a copy of the VSPDT Professional Recommendation Letter from Victoria.

### ***Local Events***

Be sure to find out when your local festivals, dog shows, and other events are taking place and explore whether or not you can be involved. This can include renting a stall, sponsoring an event, donating your time and expertise as a prize, or helping to organize the event. If your community does not have many such events, consider organizing a dog-related event of your own. The dog-owning population loves the opportunity to bring their dogs out in public, and these events are a great way to raise your business' profile within the community.

### **Paid Local Advertising**

While free local advertising is important, it is also usually very valuable to ensure that your business has a presence in outlets which charge for advertising space. You must be sure that you are aware of exactly how much of your budget you are able to devote to paid advertisements. Always include references to your association with Victoria in your advertising.

Once you have placed ads in various outlets, make sure you accurately analyze the effectiveness of the ad on your bottom line. It's not enough to place an ad in a local paper and think that your work as an advertiser is done. The most important aspect of effective advertising is in keeping yourself educated about what is working, why it is working, and to what degree. Only then will you be in a position to get the most out of your advertising investment.

### ***Newspaper/Magazine ads***

Explore your local newspaper and magazine ad rates and see if they fit your budget. A bigger return on your advertising investment can often be found in smaller, more neighborhood-

specific publications, especially since their ad rates are typically much lower than the bigger newspapers.

### ***Television***

In some markets, it is possible to buy advertising time from a local cable TV provider. Work with the advertising department of the provider to ensure that your ad is running on an appropriate channel at an optimal time. Check the Positively web site to find out when *It's Me or the Dog* is airing in your area and inquire about buying ad space at that time. Victoria would be happy to assist in the creation of your ad by providing you with a personalized video clip recommending your services to your community which you can use in your ad. Please contact VSPDT for information on how to obtain such a clip.

### ***Radio***

Radio advertising can be a very efficient way of reaching your target audience. By placing your radio ads specifically with radio stations that cater to your core client base demographic, you can achieve a far greater return on your investment. Note that the majority of decisions about household pets are made by the females in the household, and therefore you should choose radio stations that have high female listening audiences (religious stations, talk radio, etc). You can find out the demographics of each station's listening audience by contacting their sales department. Upon request, Victoria can provide a personalized audio clip recommending your services to your local community. Please contact VSPDT for information on how to obtain such a clip.

### ***Billboards***

In some markets, it can be advantageous to advertise using billboards in high-profile areas. Keep in mind that the majority of decision-makers in households are the women, so try to find billboard locations which target a mostly female traffic flow.

## **Online Advertising**

One of the most valuable aspects of joining the Victoria Stilwell Positively Dog Training team is that you are granted the exclusive right to host your business' online presence on the Positively.com

platform. Use this to your advantage by directing online advertising initiatives towards your Positively.com site – the association with Victoria will be further cemented in the minds of prospective clients. There are several valuable tools that can be used to increase your business' online profile.

### ***Google AdWords***

If you are not already doing so, using Google AdWords can have a massive impact on your ability to drive traffic to your site and if used correctly can generate a tremendous return on investment (ROI). In short, with Google AdWords you are able to create a unique online ad which is displayed as 'Sponsored Link' on the right-hand side of the page every time a user searches for keywords you have identified. The results are ordered based on the amount you are willing to pay per click – the higher the per-click amount, the higher your ad is placed. You set the associated keywords (dog training, dog trainer, obedience, etc) for your account and set limits on how much you are willing to pay per month. You also set a geographical limitation to your ad to ensure that only people within a certain radius of your location will see your ad.

For more information or to set up an account, visit [www.adwords.google.com](http://www.adwords.google.com).

### ***Facebook/Twitter***

Depending on your location and client base, it can be valuable to create and maintain an account or accounts on various social networking sites like Facebook and Twitter. These sites can be very useful tools in disseminating information about you, your class schedules, public appearances, or general news. They can also be a useful tool for generally communicating with your client base from one central hub.

It is free to set up both types of account:

Facebook - <http://www.facebook.com/pages/create.php>

Twitter - <https://twitter.com/signup>

Be sure to link to your social networking sites prominently via your VSPDT website.



### ***Local websites***

Buying advertising space in the form of banners and modules on locally-based websites is another way to increase awareness about your business and your association with the VSPDT brand.

## **VSPDT Marketing Tools**

As a member of Victoria Stilwell Positively Dog Training, you are entitled to leverage your association with Victoria and VSPDT to your advantage when marketing your business. VSPDT offers a wide array of tools you can use to this end.

### **Private Print Shop (PPS)**

In partnership with PrintingForLess.com, we have created a Private Print Shop (PPS) which is available exclusively to VSPDT members. The creation of the PPS will ensure that all VSPDT members have access to the latest printed product designs and all printed marketing materials in one place at reduced rates. This will help ensure continuity and consistent quality throughout the VSPDT network. Furthermore, it will significantly reduce the burden on each member to come up with his or her own designs, obtain quotes from printing companies and make sure that he or she is using the highest quality artwork and design.

Within each product offered through the PPS, you will have the opportunity to personalize and tweak each design, including the inclusion of additional logos (besides the VSPDT logo) and/or text. You will be receiving a welcome email and/or letter from the Private Print Shop with more information about how to get started using this valuable tool.

### ***What's Offered***

For a list of the products offered for sale through the PPS, please visit the shop here: [www.printingforless.com/positively](http://www.printingforless.com/positively).

### ***Instructions***

Once you log in to the PPS, you will be walked through a step-by-step process which will ensure that your order is correct and any modifications are included in the design.

***Please note: You do not have to use all of the fields available when customizing your product in the PPS. If you leave a field blank, the design will simply skip that field. For example, if you do not want to include your address on the business card design, simply leave those fields blank. You can also replace information in any field with other information you want to include (CPDT, IAABC, etc).***

If you have any questions about the process, how to place an order, or the available designs please contact the PPS team at: [teamgriz@printingforless.com](mailto:teamgriz@printingforless.com) or (406) 222-4900.

### ***International (non-US) Licensees***

Contact VSPDT for instructions on how to download hi-res PPS files for local printing in your area.

### ***Proof Approval***

Any order placed via the PPS will be subject to approval by VSPDT. This is designed to protect Licensees and VSPDT against unauthorized use of the PPS by non-members. Proofs will be approved within one business day.

### ***Initial Complementary VSPDT Business Cards Order***

As a new VSPDT member, you are entitled to receive your first 500 VSPDT-branded business card order free of charge. Please place your order directly through the PPS and pay for the order in full. Once you have received your receipt from the PPS, please email a copy of your PPS receipt to [vspdt@positively.com](mailto:vspdt@positively.com) with the subject heading "VSPDT Initial Business Card Order" and we will reimburse you for the cost of five hundred 120#, dull/matte cover, one-sided, non-coated, non-spot varnished business cards.

### ***Feedback***

We welcome suggestions and feedback about what you need from the PPS in order to better serve your needs as you launch your campaign to announce your membership in VSPDT. The PPS has been designed to be a dynamic tool which you can utilize and help shape as needed. If you have suggestions about products and designs you would like to see included, please don't hesitate to contact VSPDT to discuss them.

### **VSPDT Logos & Artwork**

Included in your VSPDT Welcome Package you will find a CD-ROM with all applicable VSPDT brand materials. This disk includes logos, fonts, color palettes and press photos of Victoria which can be used to develop your own marketing materials. Please note that all member-created materials using Victoria's name and/or likeness or the VSPDT name or logo must be approved by VSPDT in advance. Digital proofs or photos should be sent to [vspdt@positively.com](mailto:vspdt@positively.com) for approval.

#### ***FTP/Dropbox link***

A digital package including all of the same files on the CD-ROM is available to download as well. It can be found at <http://bit.ly/VSPDTDocs>.

### **Recommendation letter from Victoria**

As part of VSPDT's effort to equip you with all you will need to expand the reach of your business, we have enclosed with your VSDPT Welcome Package a personalized letter from Victoria which you are free to use in a professional capacity. Please feel free to provide the letter to local business professionals in order to introduce your public association with Victoria and her brand.

### **Certificate of Membership**

Also included in your VSPDT Welcome Package is a VSPDT Certificate of Membership. This certificate is your official designation as a full member in good standing of the Victoria Stilwell Positively Dog Training license program.

## INTERNET-BASED VSPDT MARKETING OPTIONS

Your public association with Victoria and her VSPDT brand will have maximum impact by taking advantage of the unique opportunity to include your business as a part of the Positively.com online platform.

### **Personalized Positively.com Site**

As a full member of the VSPDT team, you are entitled to free hosting of a personalized website (“Subsite”) for your business on the Positively.com platform. Templates for each VSPDT member’s subsite have been expertly designed expressly to heighten the user’s awareness of the close nature of the relationship between the VSPDT member and Victoria, as both the parent site and the VSPDT subsites use the same general design principles and techniques.

Prior to the launch of your subsite, you will be given the necessary tools to be able to easily edit and maintain your site, including the ability to add and remove pages, create submission forms, add images and text, alter navigation, add and remove web links, and much more. The subsites have been designed so that you can easily and quickly edit the look and feel of your site, all while utilizing the built-in consistency of pre-designed page templates of the Positively.com platform.

### ***Address Location***

Your VSPDT website will be located at:  
*www.firstname.lastname.positively.com.*

### ***Description***

Your VSPDT site can contain as much content as you would like. The default setup for each VSPDT site includes several standard pages, two dynamic (editable) modules on the bottom left and right, and a static (uneditable) sidebar banner which contains various links. Any of these pages and features can be edited, deleted or renamed as desired, and any number of additional pages or subpages can be created. All VSPDT pages will be created following the template site located at:  
[www.vspdt.template.positively.com](http://www.vspdt.template.positively.com).

### ***Login Information***

Your VSPDT site login information (username and password) will be sent to you via the email you provided during the application process. Use this login information to access your website design dashboard.

### ***Jloop contact info and rates***

In the event that you need further assistance in the design or maintenance of your site, arrangements have been made with the web design firm responsible for the original Positively.com site design and implementation (Jloop) to provide you with technical support at a discounted rate of \$100 per hour. Please note that all calls to Jloop will result in the starting of the billing process, for which you will be personally responsible. If your question is of a basic nature, you are advised to contact VSPDT support at (404) 946-8081 or [vspdt@positively.com](mailto:vspdt@positively.com) before contacting Jloop in order to avoid the associated billing charges.

Jloop contact information:

(562) 491-5667

431 East Broadway

Long Beach, CA 90802

### ***WordPress support links***

All VSPDT sites are based on the versatile and easy-to-use WordPress (WP) design platform, meaning that they are among the most user-friendly sites available in terms of site management and editing. Detailed basic instructions on how to use a WP-based site are available in the VSPDT WordPress Website Manual (included in your VSPDT supporting materials) and via the following support sites:

- [http://codex.wordpress.org/New\\_To\\_WordPress\\_-\\_Where\\_to\\_Start](http://codex.wordpress.org/New_To_WordPress_-_Where_to_Start). This is a general overview of how to use WP. Please be aware that the majority of the first 3 Steps detailed on this tutorial have been done for you (planning, installing and setting up WP). After getting a feel for how WP works in general, skip to 'Step Four – Set Up WP', where you'll find more relevant information about how to create and manage content on your site.
- [www.wordpress.com](http://www.wordpress.com) and [www.wordpress.org](http://www.wordpress.org)

## **External website listing on positively.com**

If you choose not to host your business' online presence exclusively on the Positively platform, you are still eligible to include your business listing (including your name, business name, location, phone number and email) on Positively.com's trainer search page. We will set up a basic Landing Page on the Positively.com website that will be dedicated to your business and link to your external website. Subject to VSPDT approval, you will be able to edit the content of the Landing Page as you desire. Instructions for how to access and edit the Landing Page will be the same as for a full Positively.com Site (see above).

## **Positively.com email address**

All VSPDT members will be given a Positively.com email address.

### ***Email Address***

Your email address will be:

***firstname.lastname@positively.com***

You will be notified via the email address provided with your VSPDT application when your email address is active, and you will be sent a temporary password.

### ***Account setup instructions***

Instructions for setting up your Positively.com email address with your mail server can be found here:

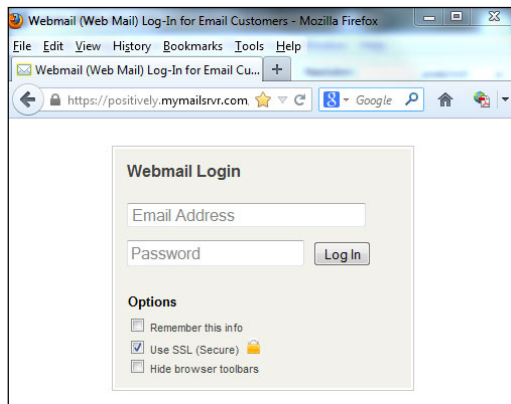
<http://bit.ly/Y6GLkg>

*For all setups, please use "positively" wherever the instructions use "mydomain".*

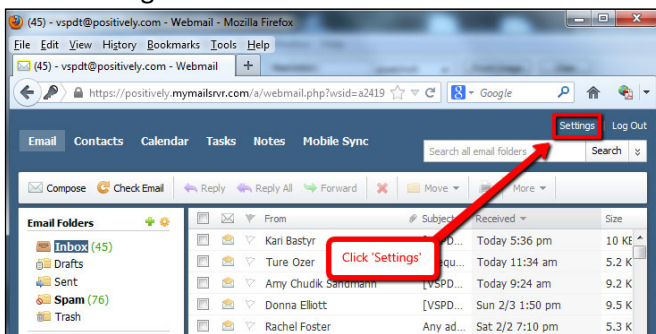
If you have any questions during setup, please contact support at (404) 946-8081 or [vspdt@positively.com](mailto:vspdt@positively.com) with the subject heading "VSPDT Email Account Setup Question"

### ***Email Password Change***

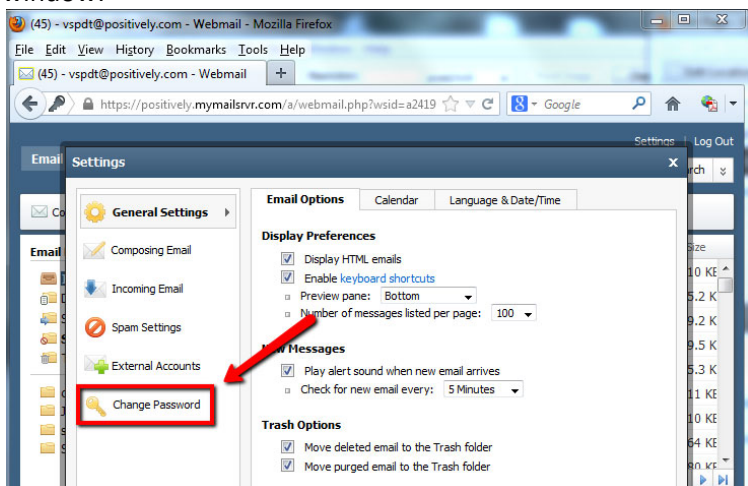
You can change your temporary email password by visiting <https://positively.mymailsrvr.com> and entering your email login information (login is [firstname.lastname@positively.com](mailto:firstname.lastname@positively.com) and the password is the same one that was sent to you for your website login:



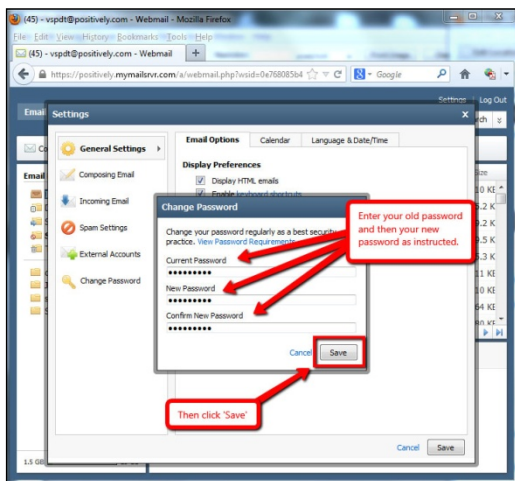
Click 'Settings':



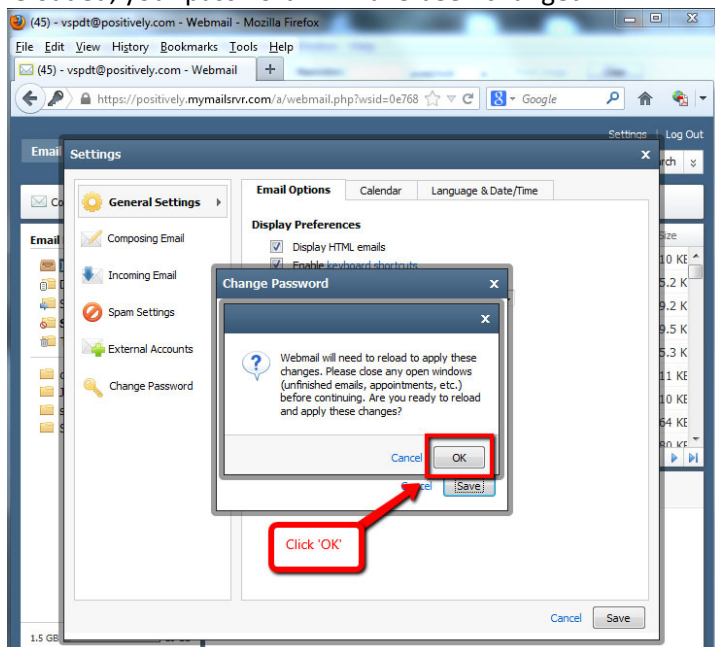
Click "Change Password" on the left side of the new popup window:



Enter your old password followed by your new password twice, then click 'Save':



Click 'OK' and allow the page to refresh. Once the page is reloaded, your password will have been changed:



**Please note – your WordPress website password will remain unchanged even if you change your email password .**



## **SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS**

In your introductory package, you will receive copies of supporting documents which will help to maximize your membership in VSPDT while helping your business run more smoothly. These documents are available in hard copy format (except the Quarterly Reports), on the VSPDT CD-ROM, and via redirected download link by visiting <https://vspdt.com/vspdt-support-docs>.

- VSPDT WordPress Website Manual
- VSPDT Client Feedback Form
- Quarterly Financial & Activity Report
- Quarterly Client Report
- Unresolved Issue Notification Form

## **PRICING**

VSPDT does not require members to set the cost of their services at a certain rate. Each individual market has contributing factors which dictate pricing for dog training services in that market, and therefore a uniform, set price is unrealistic. If you are unsure of how much to charge for training sessions, we suggest that you conduct a small market survey in order to make sure you are pricing your services appropriately. While you should not aim to be the cheapest dog training option in your community, you also probably do not want to be the most expensive. Get recommendations from previous clients, vets and other professionals in your community, and if possible, find out how much your competitors are paying. In most cases, customers will be willing to pay a slight premium for a trainer associated with a strong name-brand such as VSPDT.

## **VSPDT FACEBOOK GROUP**

In addition to the VSPDT web forums, you are encouraged to join the private VSPDT Members' Facebook Group. Since this is a closed group whose members and content is not visible by the public, you must first 'friend' VSPDT so that we can extend an invitation to join the group. To do so, please email [vspdt@positively.com](mailto:vspdt@positively.com) with your Facebook name and page info so that we can send you a Friend Request. Once you have

accepted that request, you will be sent an invitation to join the private group where you can communicate with fellow VSPDT members.

## **QUALITY CONTROL**

### **Overview of principles**

Central to the mission of VSPDT is the premise that all VSPDT trainers are professional trainers of the very highest quality who employ only positive reinforcement-based training methodologies. As such, the only way to ensure that all members of the network are meeting the high standards expected of all VSPDT trainers is to periodically conduct reviews based on client feedback. These reviews are not intended to be nor will they ever become an intrusion into the intimate trainer-client relationships that often result from training sessions.

### **Client Feedback Survey**

All VSPDT trainers are requested to provide clients with an opportunity to provide feedback on the services they receive. This can be achieved by directing them to the online VSPDT Client Feedback Survey located at [www.positively.com/survey](http://www.positively.com/survey). Any surveys which are completed by your clients will be provided to you immediately for your records and marketing purposes. This is an invaluable tool for compiling testimonials, getting pricing feedback and further discovering your strengths and areas where improvement is needed.

### **Client Feedback Survey Rewards**

All clients who submit an online VSPDT Client Feedback Survey will automatically be entered into a quarterly drawing to win a personalized copy of Victoria's first book, *It's Me or the Dog: How to Have the Perfect Pet*. A pre-designed postcard with information about this opportunity is available from the Private Print Shop.

### **Quarterly Client Reports**

VSPDT requests that you prepare and provide quarterly client reports which include information about how many clients you worked with during that quarter and some basic contact information. While this is not a requirement and is completely voluntarily, we ask for these reports so that VSPDT can better understand what we can do to help support your business while ensuring that client feedback is accurate. A template Quarterly Client Report is included in the VSPDT supporting documents package.

### **Unresolved Issue Notification Form**

In the event you finish work with a client and are unsatisfied with the end result of the training and/or relationship, please prepare and send an Unresolved Issue Notification Form to VSPDT as soon as possible. An online version of this form is available at [www.positively.com/vspdt/unresolved-issue-form](http://www.positively.com/vspdt/unresolved-issue-form) (preferred method). In addition to being able to potentially gain an outside perspective on what may have gone wrong, submitting this form gives you an opportunity to provide VSPDT with your perspective on the situation in the event that a client provides less than positive feedback via the survey.

## **FINANCIAL & ACTIVITY REPORT**

### **Overview of principles**

In order for VSPDT to effectively provide its members with the highest level of support, it is important for us to have a clear snapshot of how profitably each VSPDT member's business is running. As such, VSPDT requests that all VSPDT trainers provide us with Quarterly Financial & Activity Reports. The submission of Financial and Activity reports are optional and are not required by VSPDT.

### **Description of requirements**

Each Financial and Activity Report should include the following:

Number of potential client contacts made during the quarter (including contact initiated by prospective client)

Number of clients booked during the quarter

Price list used during the quarter (include group, individual and multi-session rates)

Total revenue generated during the quarter.

### **Quarterly Report Template**

A Quarterly Financial and Activity Report form template has been included in your VSPDT supporting documentation.

### **LIMITATIONS ON LICENSEE DENSITY / PREMIER LICENSES**

VSPDT will place limits on the number of full trainer licenses granted in any given geographical area. No more than one VSPDT license will be granted in each geographical area whose population numbers 100,000. If a commonly recognized geographical boundary (city or town limit or radius) has a population of greater than 100,000, one VSPDT license will be eligible to be granted for each multiple of 100,000 people.

In certain situations, Licensees may wish to ensure that no further VSPDT Licenses be granted to trainers in or near their principal place of business, regardless of the population density in their area. In such cases, Licensees are eligible to purchase Premier Licenses which expand the Limitations on Licensee Density from one trainer per 100,000 to one trainer per 250,000 within their 'work area' – a one hour drive from the trainer's base of operations and/or a mutually agreed-upon geographic area. Please contact VSPDT if you would like to take this precaution.

Alternatively, you may request that VSPDT notify you if/when an application from a potential VSPDT trainer in your vicinity is received. Upon such notification, you will have the first right of refusal to upgrade your license to a Premier License in order to prohibit VSPDT from granting new licenses in your area subject to the terms above. Please note that a Premier License does not automatically guarantee that no further licenses will be granted in your area, but it does reduce and limit the number of potential licenses granted in relation to your area's population. For example, in a city of one million people, up to four Premier Licenses may be granted (with 250,000 people attributed to each Premier Licensee). In certain cases, mutually agreed-upon geographic boundaries will be used to determine the boundaries of each Premier License. Premier Licenses can be purchased for \$1175 per year.

### **ANNUAL LICENSE FEE / RENEWAL**

As stipulated in the VSPDT License Agreement, the License will be automatically renewed annually unless the Licensee or VSPDT notifies the

other party in writing 60 days prior to the Effective Date of the Agreement. Licensees can pay by check (US only), wire transfer or credit card (<http://positively.com/vspdt-fees>), and must do so within 30 days of the renewal date in order to remain in good standing. Annual payment reminders will be sent via email 30 days prior to the renewal date.

## **REFERRAL CREDITS**

VSPDT members in good standing are eligible for a \$50 credit off their next annual fee if they are responsible for the successful addition of another VSPDT member. The referred member must state who referred them on their original application in order for the existing VSPDT member to be eligible for the credit, and the existing member must also notify VSPDT of the applicant they referred before VSPDT receives the applicant's application. The referred applicant must also successfully complete the application process and be approved as a paid Licensee in good standing before the credit will be issued. VSPDT members may be eligible for multiple referral credits during each year, but the maximum total credit allowable per year is \$200 regardless of the number of successful referrals.

## **VSPDT APPAREL / PROMOTIONAL ITEMS**

As a VSPDT member, you have exclusive access to purchase VSPDT-branded apparel for your business use. To order VSPDT polo shirts and/or fleeces, please visit the VSPDT apparel store via Lands End at <http://ces.landsend.com/vspdt>. Please use the password 'puppi3s' to access the store. VSPDT apparel is not available for resale to the public, but general Victoria Stilwell Positively branded material is available at wholesale prices to resell to the general public and VSPDT clients. Any additional member-generated VSPDT-branded promotional items (clickers, pens, notepads, etc) must be approved by VSPDT.

## **VSPDT NAME BADGES, BANDANNAS, CDs, BOOK ORDERS & MORE**

As a VSPDT member, you have exclusive access to purchase personalized VSPDT name badges (magnetic or pin) for use in your everyday work and to wear at promotional events and conferences. For instructions on how

to order your VSPDT name badge, please visit <http://vspdtmembers.positively.com/resources/#NameBadges>.

Furthermore, VSPDT members are eligible to purchase copies of Victoria's books (*Train Your Dog Positively* and *It's Me or the Dog: How to Have the Perfect Pet*) at discounted wholesale prices. For more information and instructions on how to order, please visit <http://vspdtmembers.positively.com/resources/#Books>.

For a complete list of available branded products and services, please visit <http://vspdtmembers.positively.com/resources>.

## **RETAIL SALES**

VSPDT members have the right to purchase Victoria Stilwell Positively-branded materials and books at wholesale for the purpose of reselling to clients and the general public. Please contact VSPDT for a list of products available and pricing options.

## **VICTORIA'S LIVE TOURS & TRAINING SEMINARS**

Occasionally, Victoria performs in live touring events promoting VSP, VSPDT and positive reinforcement methods. In the event that a live tour event is scheduled in your market, VSPDT will contact you in advance and offer you the opportunity of appearing on stage with Victoria. This will help to promote your business locally and provide you with an opportunity to market yourself on a large scale to your local community.

To discuss hosting a Victoria Stilwell training seminar in your area (designed more for trainers and enthusiasts), please contact VSPDT.

## DISCOUNTS & SCHOLARSHIPS TO AFFILIATE ORGANIZATIONS

VSPDT has partnered with several great organizations to provide exclusive discounts and access to free scholarships for VSPDT members. Visit [www.vspdtmembers.positively.com/affiliations](http://www.vspdtmembers.positively.com/affiliations) for a full, up-to-date list of partner organizations and what they offer VSPDT members. Samples of the types of arrangements available include:

- **Doggone Safe**, a non-profit organization whose mission is promote education initiatives for the purpose of dog bite prevention and increased child safety around dogs, and is offering a year's free membership to VSPDT members. To take advantage of this free membership, please visit [http://doggonesafe.com/member\\_application](http://doggonesafe.com/member_application) and select 'Individual Full Member'. After entering your personal information, enter the discount code POSITIVELY at the bottom of the page to receive a 100% discount from the first year's annual fee. Subsequent years can be renewed at the regular rate.
- **Family Paws Parent Education**, which operates Dogs & Storks and The Dog & Baby Connection. Discounts are available to VSPDT members for duo licenses (covering both organizations), as well as 3 free scholarships annually. Exclusive discounts are also available for FPPE's Mentoring to License program.
- **Operation Socialization**, a dynamic young organization committed to increasing awareness of the importance of proper socialization for puppies. In addition to standing discounts on membership, 3 free scholarships are available each year to VSPDT members.
- **DogTec** discounts on consultations and products are available to VSPDT members.
- **Best Friends**, which includes VSPDT trainers in their recommended trainer list upon request.

Visit the 'Affiliations' page on the VSPDT members only website for more information about these and other opportunities.

## HOSTING A VSPDT DOG BITE PREVENTION CONFERENCE

VSPDT members now have the opportunity to explore the possibility of hosting a VSPDT Dog Bite Prevention & Awareness

Conference (DBC) in their area. We are pleased to announce that we have created a document and associated materials designed to help you determine if hosting a DBC is a good fit for you and how to proceed. You can download and read the official Dog Bite Conference Presenter Brief from the [www.vspdtmembers.positively.com](http://www.vspdtmembers.positively.com) website to find out more about the responsibilities involved with hosting a DBC event near you.

For more information about the Dog Bite Conference, please visit [www.positively.com/dbc](http://www.positively.com/dbc).

## **VICTORIA STILWELL FOUNDATION**

The Victoria Stilwell Foundation is a US-based, national charitable organization founded by Victoria. The mission of the Foundation is to provide financial support and dog training expertise to canine assistance organizations and small rescue shelters. Information about the Foundation can be found at [www.positively.com/foundation](http://www.positively.com/foundation).

A portion of all proceeds from VSPDT license fees is automatically donated to the Victoria Stilwell Foundation. As a VSPDT member, you are entitled to use your transitive relationship with and donation to the Foundation in your marketing materials.

If you would like to donate more than your portion of your license fee to the Foundation, please contact VSPDT.



## **“ALPHA NO MORE”**

By Victoria Stilwell

There are many different beliefs when it comes to the best way to train a dog and these differences of opinion have caused a definite split in the training world. But as the debate between compulsion training and positive reward methods rages on, science is revolutionizing our understanding of domestic dog behavior and tipping the scales towards the more positive approach. When I began training, pack theory and compulsion training was still a widely used philosophy, but now even these theories are being discredited by the very people that made them mainstream. Though compulsion trainers would argue that their methods yield great results, I know that if a dog was given the choice, it would choose the kinder approach.

Behavior is closely linked and influenced by emotions. Punishing a dog for not obeying a command or for unwanted behavior without understanding why the behavior is happening in the first place and the emotional effect it is having on the dog, only serves to make the behavior worse. Punishments such as leash jerks and collar corrections, ‘alpha rolls’ (where a dog is forcibly put onto its back or side and held down until it submits), hitting, hanging by the collar, or using electric shock or spray collars might be effective in suppressing negative behavior at that moment, but these techniques do little to tackle the cause of the behavior that is being punished and have the potential to make the dog behave a lot worse in the future. Owners who use these techniques are at greater risk of being attacked by their dog or causing their dog to attack someone else, as punishment destroys the human/animal bond and causes pain, fear, mistrust, agitation and increasing anger. For example, the ‘alpha roll’ is a technique that is often used to punish aggressive behavior. Aggression is a difficult behavior for owners to understand and many will resort to punishments like the ‘alpha roll’ to get their dog to submit without realizing that their dog’s aggressive response is often the result of an underlying insecurity and inability to function in a social situation. Holding a dog down teaches the dog to suppress its threat displays. The owner might think that their dog has calmed down, but in reality the dog has employed a survival mechanism of ‘shut down’ until the person releases it. Little has been done to address why the dog has aggressed in the first place. A dog that signals its discomfort is a less dangerous dog than the dog that has learned to suppress how it feels

through harsh punishment and therefore does not give a warning before it goes to bite. As a trainer who works with aggressive dogs, relying on threat displays helps to keep me safe because suppression of aggressive behavior without getting to the root of the problem creates a dog that is as dangerous as a ticking time bomb. Yet unaware owners are being taught these methods without realizing that they are making their dogs more unpredictable and dangerous. While harsh punishment might bring temporary relief for an owner's anger, it damages the human-animal bond and makes the dog's underlying insecurity even worse.

Traditional trainers base a lot of their methods on pack theory, (a theory that has proven to be highly flawed), and would lead owners to believe that their dog's aggression and/or general bad behavior is its attempt to dominate and establish rank. Following this logic, in order to get control back, an owner needs to exert their rank and status as pack leader by making their dog submissive towards them. This out-dated theory is based on research done in the 1970's with a captive wolf pack. Wolves from different packs were made to live together so that researchers could get more of an idea of how a wolf pack worked and these findings were then applied to the domestic dog. The resulting violence to establish dominance within the captive pack was studied and people applied what they saw to their own dogs, forcibly dominating them by putting them on their back or side and holding them down until they submitted, exactly as the captive wolves had done. But if researchers wanted to see how a true wolf pack functioned and apply it to the dog, they were headed in the wrong direction from the start, as their design of their experiment was based on some crucially flawed assumptions. Firstly, dogs are not wolves. They have had 15,000 years of domestication, and while they retain some characteristics of the wolf, they have changed in many very important ways. Secondly, what researchers were viewing when they studied the captive pack was the behavior of a dysfunctional pack, and it was this dysfunction that was causing the violence. David Mech, a senior scientist with the U.S. Geological Survey who has studied wolves for fifty years, explained that basing dogs' pack behavior on a group of captive wolves was problematic because, 'When one puts a random group of any species together artificially these animals will naturally compete with each other.' Furthermore, Mech clarifies that a natural pack is made up of a mother and father and their offspring. This pack survives rather like a human family where the parents take the leadership role and the children follow. In a natural pack, violence is not the norm and harmony is created because submissive behaviors are freely given by the younger

wolves, rather than being forced onto them by their parents. This deference avoids injury which would compromise the pack's ability to hunt prey successfully. So when humans attempt to dominate their dogs by using techniques demonstrated by the captive pack of wolves, they are not showing leadership at all, they are creating more dysfunction and replicating the role of the bully.

The term 'pack leader' and 'Alpha' also misleads owners. Dogs are smart enough to know that we humans are different, so how can we call ourselves their pack leaders? The term 'Alpha' has become synonymous with a dog or human who exerts control over others by using force and domination, but in reality a true Alpha doesn't need to use violence at all. True leadership is shown by teaching and influencing behavior in others without force. The human need to dominate dogs demonstrates an unfortunate lack of understanding and an inner weakness on our part. Any person can make an animal behave through force and fear, but it takes a real understanding of dog behavior to help it change the way it feels and give it the confidence to function well in domestic society without resorting to harsh methods.

Positive training is all about finding the cause of behavior and adopting ways to modify and change it by giving a dog the ability to learn and feel differently. It is a much smarter methodology where owners learn to connect with their dogs and work through problems in a humane manner. I encourage all owners to work on strengthening the relationship they have with their dogs, and that means the owner must restore order, have mutual trust, give affection and encourage cooperation. I believe that increasing a dog's enjoyment of social interaction will give the dog the confidence it needs to deal with the pressures of domestic life. Dogs that are trained using positive reinforcement methods are more tolerant, self controlled and behave much more predictably in different situations.

Positive training techniques are centered on working the dog's brain, being non-confrontational, rewarding positive behavior, establishing rituals, training incompatible behaviors that negate bad behavior and lessening a dog's anger and frustration while enabling the dog to feel good inside. Behavior is influenced without force so that the dog's trust in the owner will not be violated as a result of threatening treatment. Discipline in the form of vocal interrupters, time outs or ignoring bad behavior are used to guide the dog rather than making it behave through

fear. Rewards in the form of praise, play, toys or food are used to influence good behavior and heighten the chance of the dog offering the good behavior again. Positive techniques are much safer when it comes to training aggressive dogs and helps these dogs change the way they react by showing them that there is another way to feel so that there is no need to aggress.

The world's top scientists and behaviorists as well as the most respected veterinary institutions are now warning the public against using compulsion training and are encouraging owners and trainers to use positive reinforcement methods instead. In a position statement, the American Veterinary Society of Animal Behavior has declared, 'The AVSAB recommends that veterinarians not refer clients to trainers or behavior consultants who coach and advocate dominance hierarchy theory and the subsequent confrontational training that follows from it.' But habits are hard to change. As Mech observes, 'it generally takes 20 years for new science to fully seep down to the general acceptance.' I hope that by the year 2030 all dog trainers and owners will have switched to using positive methods – I know our dogs will thank us for it. As Mech states, 'the issue isn't one of semantics and political correctness. It is one of biological correctness that accurately captures the biological and social role of the animals rather than perpetuates a faulty view.'

#### Reference

Mech LD. 2008. Whatever Happened to the Term Alpha Wolf. *International Wolf*, Vol 8, No. 4: 4-8.