

WELCOME!



All right, you're not going to believe this. Really, you're not.

Oops, I'm getting ahead of myself. Mom sometimes warns me about that when she takes me on walks. Introductions first: my name is Chiclet and I'm four pounds of canine perfection, otherwise known as a Maltese. Anyway, I'm writing to tell you how scared I am, and how scared you should be, too.

That I'm writing to you is not the unbelievable part. I am a writer—some think a doggone good one. I can't see why that would surprise you. We dogs "see" for you Humans; we hear for you; we fetch for you; we herd for you; we do A LOT of therapy for you. Now, out of desperation, one of us is *writing* to you. You need the straight scoop on dog care and you need it from a source you can trust. So here it is.

SCARED POOPLESS

Almost everything you've been told about dog care is WRONG! We're supposed to be your best friends, but without even realizing it, you're treating us like your worst enemy. We know you're doing your best, and we haven't wanted to offend you by being confrontational, but the news just can't wait any longer.

You need information straight from the dog's mouth (far more accurate than from the horse's mouth) about what you're doing wrong. They say you can't teach an old Human new tricks, but I don't believe that. Like the writer Corey Ford said, "Properly trained, a man can be dog's best friend." (Women, too.)

Take a look at the front cover and you'll see a picture of my true love, Jiggy. If it appears that he's freaking out, it's because he is. The best of Human intentions almost killed him, just like they're hurting and killing so many of our friends.

Jiggy has autoimmune hepatitis. How we think he got it you're not going to believe. Our pal Sophie, only two years old, is dying of cancer, typically an old dog's disease. What's up with that? Other buddies of ours are scratching themselves raw, living on steroids and eating diets that taste like straw. And poor little Buster, he lost an eye to untreated gum infection. What happened to him shouldn't happen to a dog.

Preventable accidents are taking a lot of our friends. Harley, running loose, lost a fight with a truck. Sam ran away. Max broke his neck smashing into a dashboard when his Dad's S.U.V. was rear-ended. Saddest of all, a coyote ate my best friend, Courtney. (Mom says I mustn't hate, but I hate coyotes all the same.)

I ask you: when was the last time you heard of a dog dying peacefully of old age? Do you even know what *old* is? For most breeds, it's not eight or nine. We should be living to fifteen or twenty or even longer. And we would if you hadn't been brainwashed into thinking that it's normal for us to be sick and itchy and have the trots all the time. What a bunch of dogwash that is!

You're being manipulated for your money and misled by people who refuse to read the new writing on the wall. The more well-versed you are in what passes for conventional dog wisdom, the more likely it is that you're hurting us. Surprised? Don't be. I

mean, it wasn't long ago that the epitome of Human medicine was leeching, bleeding and magical elixirs.

Hey, give me a leech any old day over some of the crazy things Humans are doing to us now!

Anyway, lend me an ear (no, make that two ears; Humans don't hear well) and you'll be happy you did. You'll save a ton of money on vet bills, and your dog will likely lead a longer, healthier life. That's what your species calls a win-win situation. It's also a payoff that will earn you thousands of dog kisses you wouldn't have otherwise had. And guess what? You'll even eliminate the doggy breath that formerly came with those kisses (well, at least to a certain extent, but more on that later).

I know what you're thinking. I'm some sort of fanatic, a dog on a mission. You're right. Jiggy's illness really changed me. I went from being a carefree lapdog (and loving every minute of it) to an intrepid reporter. Mom says I'm a digger. Sometimes she sounds annoyed when she calls me that, but I'm proud of myself. I went digging for the truth. I went digging for Jiggy and you and your dog. And after learning what I learned, nothing will keep me from getting my message out. Okay, sometimes a fire hydrant will slow me down, but that's just a moment's distraction.

I guess you could call me dogged. I've worked my paws to the bone researching and writing this book. And I just didn't rely on the bark on the street. Mom and I interviewed the top experts in dozens of fields, read the latest reports and books, and surfed the far reaches of the Web. Eighteen veterinarian friends—most of them activists like us—taught us how to use our health care dollar to actually improve health, not just for patching us up until next time. We're going to tell you what we learned.

For controversial matters, like dental care and diet and vaccination, we'll give you all relevant points of view, supplying the facts you need to make intelligent, informed decisions—decisions based on studies and reason rather than habits, emotions or fear.

With all the facts in paw, I am armed and dangerous. I want you to listen to me as carefully as you would the warning growls of a junkyard dog.

Welcome!

either. You'll find numerous links (alas, not the yummy sausage type) to dog care articles, research documents, famous veterinarians, plus fascinating health and safety quizzes. Dog stuff of all sorts.

Within the pages of this book, I'm going to give you lots and lots of information, but my editor (a Human I call *The Gator* because he bites off chunks of my sentences) told me I had to keep all my explanations "short and sweet." He says it has something to do with Human attention spans. Anyway, I've had to sneak information onto my website before he gobbles it all up. (I humor The Gator, but just between the two of us, he's really not all that bright. I mean, what do you say about someone who arbitrarily pulled most of my photos from my own book?)

Okay. Let's move on. Bookmarking done? That's a good Human. Here's a treat.

Chiclet's Trivia Treat: *Do you ever notice your dog really boogying to music? You definitely weren't imagining things if you saw her react to the Beatles's song "A Day in the Life." To say "hi" to his Shetland sheepdog at the end of the song, dog-lover Paul McCartney added a sound audible only to dogs. And that wasn't the only time Mr. McCartney's muse had canine inspiration. He immortalized his sheepdog Martha in his song "Martha My Dear."*

Hey, Mr. McCartney? How does "Chiclet My Dear" grab you?

