

## ***The Lunging Lab***

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We would highly recommend Rory O'Neill to anyone who is looking to hire an animal trainer. Rory's excellent knowledge and skills are evident in the way she handles dogs and in the way she works with their owners.

We first consulted Rory when Naya, our 3 ½ year old lab-mix, began lunging and snapping at other dogs while on-leash. Rory was very helpful in explaining why Naya was displaying this behaviour: she was fearful of the other dog but because the leash didn't allow her to flee, she had no choice but to lunge to make the other dog go away. Rory educated us on how to read the body language of dogs so that we could assess any warning signs for aggression in Naya or the other dog. Rory recommended several strategies to help us build Naya's confidence and to prevent further lunging such as taking Naya to the dog park frequently to keep her socialized to other dogs, dropping the leash and allowing Naya to greet other dogs unrestrained so that she feels less trapped, and giving her lots of treats in the presence of dogs she finds scary to develop a positive association with these dogs. We have been practicing the strategies recommended by Rory for almost one month now and we have had no incidents of lunging.

We also consulted Rory when we adopted our second dog Jenny, an 11 week old Australian Shepherd/Husky mix. We were interested in learning about the preventative measures we could take to ensure that Jenny grew to be a well-behaved, well-socialized dog. Rory was extremely thorough in reviewing everything we could do to prevent behavioural problems such as pulling on leash, separation anxiety, food guarding, excessive barking, jumping up, and biting. Rory also helped us with basic obedience and leash training. She explained the difference between using food as a lure and as a reward. She also explained how a clicker facilitates learning and demonstrated its use. We weren't at all familiar with clicker training and were amazed at how quickly Jenny responded. We often hear comments about how well-behaved Jenny is despite her young age and we attribute much of the credit to Rory's early intervention.

We like Rory because she makes training fun, she is passionate about dogs, she listens and she is very patient, especially with us! But what most impresses us is that she is very knowledgeable about how dogs learn and she is very current with the latest dog training techniques. We now know that many popular books and T.V. programs (and even vets!) use out-dated, ineffective training methods based on a poor understanding of how dogs learn. Rory taught us that common beliefs about dogs are simply not true (e.g. dogs misbehave because they are trying to exert their dominance over their owner). To help us continue learning on our own,

Rory directed us to books and videos developed by leading-edge animal trainers. We would never have come across these resources on our own because they are not easy to find.

We strongly believe that anyone who has a dog with a behavioural problem or who has recently adopted a puppy or dog should hire Rory for training advice.