

A golden retriever is captured mid-shake, with water droplets flying in all directions. A blue garden hose lies on the ground behind it. The background is a blurred outdoor setting.

Best in Show

Creature Comforts

The latest and greatest finds for animals and the people who love them

FIELD NOTES

The Dog Days of Summer, Explained

During the season's hottest days, the sun occupies the same part of the sky as Sirius A, aka the Dog Star, part of the constellation Canis Major, the Great Dog.

Sirius is the brightest star visible from Earth, and ancient astronomers believed its shine contributed to the sun's heat, leading to the stretch of especially warm weather. The period was dubbed *dies caniculares*, Latin for "dog days," and the name's stuck ever since.

Discover
more ways
to cool off
on pg. 48.



Gus's Corner

Here's what *Country Living*'s office dog is currently pawing at from his inflatable raft.

» This toy gives new meaning to "can you fetch me some lemonade?" \$10; barkshop.com



» The foldable, four-foot-wide "Pup Dip" dog pool is durable and festive. \$45; minnidip.com

» Keep canines cool with frozen treats made in this silicone mold. \$20; shopdogandco.com



Summer Reading List

Three books we'll be dog-eating this season



For Nostalgia
Chloe Shaw's meditation on a life with dogs is best read with a hanky handy.



For Learning
Science writer Sy Montgomery explores the magical world of hummingbirds.



For Laughs
Kelly Conaboy chronicles her misadventures with endearing rescue, Peter.



ON THE WATER

A dog life jacket is essential while on or near any body of water. Short-legged breeds aren't made for swimming, and even the best water dogs are no match for a current. Make sure the jacket has the four essentials: a handle, belly buckles, chest strap, and bright color for visibility. Fit should allow for stability and freedom of movement. Ruffwear (ruffwear.com) and Outward Hound (outwardhound.com) make some of my favorites.



ON THE GRASS

As your pooch enjoys a summer day in the yard, be mindful of protecting his paws. Inspect your grass for metal landscape edging, as this is one of the most common sources of cuts. Check paws frequently during long playtimes for abrasions or blisters. Extended play on hot grass can also be irritating, so before starting a lengthy session of fetch, consider applying a paw protectant such as Musher's Secret (chewy.com).



IN THE WOODS

Adventures in the woods are ideal for shade and stimulation, but be sure to guard against ticks, as they may carry diseases that can make dogs sick. A tick prevention collar is recommended for pups who regularly visit wooded areas. If the terrain includes thorny vines or sharp twigs, consider training your dog to wear protective boots such as Grip Trex and CovertSafe (both amazon.com), which provide traction and paw protection.

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A HONEY OF A HOBBY

So, You Wanna Be a Beekeeper

Backyard beekeeping has never been buzzier. If you're considering joining the swarm, start with this advice from two expert apiarists.

First, Study Up.

"The best beekeepers understand how a colony behaves, so read as much as you can before you begin," says Girl Next Door Honey's Hilary Kearney. Jay Williams of Williams Honey Farm LLC suggests taking a local class, too. "The advice will be specific to your area, and you'll have a mentor nearby if questions come up."

Then Get the Local Buzz.

"The best bees are native to your area because they know the local flora," says Jay. "Your state's beekeeping association can point you to local clubs, where bees can be purchased. Start with two colonies, which have about 10,000 bees each."

Buy a Smoker...

"You'll also need a bee suit and a hive tool, which can be ordered from websites like Mann Lake or Betterbee," says Hilary. As for hives, "There's no 'best' type, but Langstroth hives are the most common."

...and Tend Your Hives.

"Expect to spend an hour or two per week during the active seasons of spring and summer," says Jay.



Jay Williams owns and operates Williams Honey Farm LLC (@williams_honeytn) in Franklin, TN.



FIELD NOTES

Solitary Bees

While honey bees operate as part of a colony, solitary bees fly solo. Because they're not protecting a queen, solitary bees aren't aggressive and don't sting, making them ideal for gardens frequented by kids or pets. They're also excellent pollinators. Bring Mason and Leafcutter solitary bees to your own backyard via Rent Mason Bees, which mails bee cocoons and nesting blocks to subscribers. At the end of the season, send back the nesting block, now filled with eggs (no need to worry with cleaning it), and the new bees will be used to help pollinate orchards across the U.S.

Kits from \$40;
rentmasonbees.com

Gus's Corner

Here's what *Country Living's* office dog is currently pawing at from his pillow.

» Four-legged gardeners will love this Bond & Co. watering-can toy made with recycled plastic. \$10; petco.com



» Your pooch will be garden-party ready in a floral bandana. \$26; thefoggydog.com



« Rose extracts in this wash leave fur soft and sweet-smelling. \$13; sleepycotton.com

» Dogs nose for treats hidden in this snuffle mat's "grass." \$32; dogmega.com



RESCUE DOG 101

In honor of National Rescue Dog Day on May 20, CL's vet, Dr. Tricia Earley, shares the top things potential owners should keep in mind during each stage of the adoption process.

1

BEFORE YOU GO

Dogs are social animals and need daily attention, so make sure you're truly ready to provide enough play, walk, and snuggle time. Ensure you have the financial resources to take care of your dog's needs and a means of providing healthcare for the unexpected, such as pet health insurance or a pet savings account. Establish expectations with your family members by agreeing on who is responsible for daily food and water, walking, poop scooping, etc.

2

AT THE SHELTER

Keep an open mind but be realistic. If you have a small apartment, you may not want a young, energetic dog. If you live an active lifestyle and want a running buddy, maybe an elderly basset hound is not for you (though sometimes one look from a sweet animal in need can send preconceived ideas out the window!). If you already have a dog at home, consider arranging a visit to see how the dogs interact. Sometimes your dog can help pick your new pooch for you.

3

BACK AT HOME

Be patient. Remember, your home is a foreign land to your new dog and is likely a little scary. It takes most dogs three to four weeks to adjust. Be understanding if your pet is distant, wants to hide, or has accidents. A kind voice, lots of petting and belly rubs, and avoidance of harsh corrections will go a long way in establishing trust. If you have existing pets in the household, introduce them slowly and on a leash, praising both dogs when they interact calmly.

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SPRING CHICKENS

The Rise of the Hen-fluencer

The return of warm weather makes April ideal for hatchlings. If you're considering joining the growing flock of chicken-keepers, follow these accounts for inspiration.



For Farm Fantasies @wildfeatherfarm

Caroline Scott posts snaps of her Texas homestead, which she shares with about 50 chickens (plus goats, geese, mini donkeys, and a potbellied pig).



For Practical Advice @fresheggsdaily

Author and blogger Lisa Steele documents life with her flock in rural Maine and shares helpful tips for raising chickens.



For Lots of Laughs @littlehenandco

"They're hilarious, sassy, and inquisitive," says Ashley Register of the seven chickens that star on her funny feed from North Carolina.



FIELD NOTES

Hatching by Hue

Collect a spectrum of colored eggs courtesy of these beloved breeds.

Light Sussex

Leghorn

Araucana

Cream Legbar

Easter Eggers

Olive Eggers

Australorp

Plymouth Rock

Black Copper Marans



PET PREP Gus's Corner

Here's how *Country Living's* office dog is gearing up for April showers.



These biodegradable wipes are a quick-clean option for muddy paws. \$10; wildone.com

Slip-on Wellies come in a rainbow of colors. \$49; wagwear.com



A classic yellow raincoat protects from wet weather. From \$50; elliedogwear.com



This doormat offers a gentle reminder for humans, too. \$40; 504designco.etsy.com

FARM STAY

Liberty Hill Farm & Inn

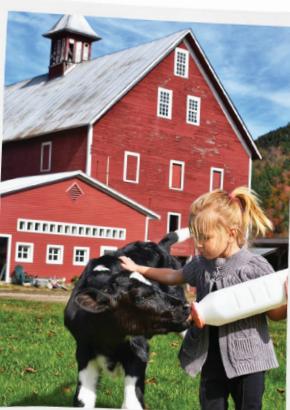
Offering guests a taste of country life since 1984, this Vermont property has a loyal following of animal-lovers.

"The first visitors we ever had still come back each year, and now they bring their grandkids," says co-owner Beth

Kennett. Start the day by pitching in with farm chores like milking cows, then hike the nature trails running through the surrounding Green Mountains. Home-cooked breakfasts and dinners, as well as hot cocoa and cookies each afternoon, are also included in a stay.

libertyhillfarm.com

Guests can help feed the calves during a visit.



The inn's Greek Revival main house was built in 1825.

Ask a Country Vet

Dr. Tricia Earley separates fur fact from fiction.



How do I plant a dog-friendly garden?



To make your garden safe for your dogs—especially if they have a habit of chewing plants—carefully consider what you're growing. Avoid certain toxic ornamental plants such as oleander, azaleas, and ivy (get a complete list of poisonous plants from the ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center; aspca.com). Tomato plants should be grown in a restricted location, as they contain solanine, which can be toxic for dogs. Read fertilizer labels carefully (some are unsafe for pets), and examine mulch for mold before spreading, as it's common for it to grow in bagged batches.

"Pawty" Time

If you're of the pets-deserve-parties-too contingency, this delightful dog birthday kit makes it easy to celebrate your sidekick.

Each tin includes a "Happy Birthday" banner, colorful hat, a bone-shaped cookie cutter, and a booklet of dog-treat recipes in flavors like spiced pumpkin.

\$10; kikkerland.com





Editors' Pick

Attention, cat owners!

The folks at Fresh Step have created a 99.9 percent dust-free kitty litter that helps keep surfaces clean and feline family members happy.

Fresh Step Cat Litter combines Gain Scent with Febreze freshness and Ammonia Block technology for 10 days of guaranteed odor control.* Purr-fect.

Learn more at freshstep.com.

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@littleseedfarm

James and Eileen Ray left New York City for Tennessee and Little Seed Farm, where they create sustainable, organic bath and body products with milk from their grass-fed goats.



@mikayla_beth

Agra, OK, homesteader Mikayla Herrmann shares snaps of her Nigerian dwarf goats such as Oak (left), plus farming and food tips.



@bigpicturefarm

Louisa Conrad and her family's pretty, pastoral life with Saanen, Nubian, and Alpine goats in Vermont may make you want to start your own farm. Test out the idea with a stay at their new Colt Barn house via Airbnb.



RENO EDITION
TOOLS

Gus's Corner

Here's how *Country Living's* office dog is getting into the spring makeover mindset.



Gus is ready to get his paws dirty in this duck canvas chore coat from the work clothes masters.

from \$40; carhartt.com



Choose the right tools for the job, like these Dogzilla toys, designed for a good chew.

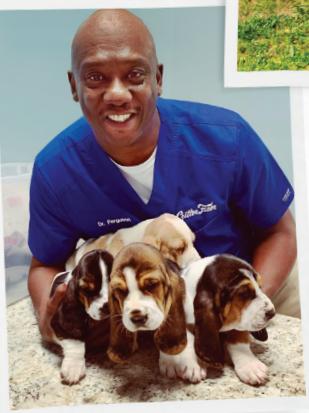
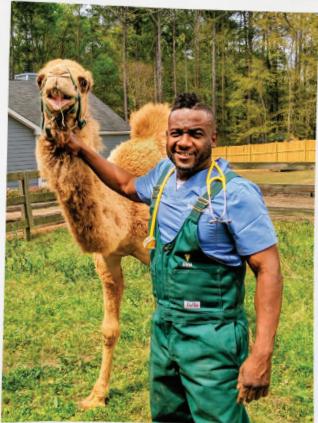
\$9; petmate.com



A solid frame is always important. This "Cabana" pet bed comes in a range of wood and cushion colors.

from \$130; whomhome.com

Dr. Vernard Hodges pays a camel named Mowgli a visit.



"Meeting puppies is the best," says Dr. Terrence Ferguson.

STREAM TEAM

Meet Georgia's "Critter Fixers"

You never know what creature will come through the doors of Bonaire, GA's Critter Fixer Veterinary Hospital. "This morning I saw a duck, and this afternoon I have an appointment with a turtle," says Dr. Vernard Hodges, who runs the practice with longtime friend Dr. Terrence Ferguson. The duo also stars in Nat Geo Wild's *Critter Fixers: Country Vets* (disneyplus.com), which follows their adventures both in the clinic and out in the field, all with a big dose of Southern charm.

Ask a Country Vet

Dr. Tricia Earley offers these anxiety-reducing tips.

Q.

How can I help my dog stay calm and happy during the daily disruptions of home renovations?

A.

Start by introducing your pet to any worker who will be spending time in your home. Have them offer treats and kneel down to pet your dog so they're no longer strangers. Place a crate in the quietest part of the house with a familiar toy or blanket to create a safe, cozy pet refuge. Be sure to take your pooch on daily walks or park visits to help them decompress and, if your pet is too stressed for comfort, consider doggie daycare, which is great for socialization, too.

You can also talk to your vet about a calming supplement to help with noisy days. Zylkene, for example, contains a natural protein that has a safe, soothing effect.

NOW TRENDING

Cow Cuddling

Looking to unwind? If goat yoga's not your thing, Suzanne Vullers, owner of Mountain Horse Farm and B&B in Naples, NY, suggests wrapping your arms around a big, beautiful bovine. During her guided "cow cuddling" sessions, guests can brush, pet, and hug the sanctuary's highly sociable cows. "Snuggling up to such a large at-ease animal can focus and relax people," she says. "And it will definitely make you smile!" mountainhorsefarm.com



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SPINES OF THE TIMES

Meet the Newest Micro-Influencers

Hedgehogs have been bringing pint-sized doses of joy to Instagram feeds lately, but they're more than just a prickly filtered face. Their diminutive size and sweet nature also make them excellent pets. Here, a few feeds that will inspire you to live life on the hedge.

@cinnamon.hodgepodge

Audrianna Martin Del Campo creates charming country scenes for 1-year-old Cinnamon, from camping to cooking to canoeing.

*Quill You
Be Mine?*

Dr. Tricia Earley on what to keep in mind before adopting a hedgehog

They're quite social.

They love interaction, so be sure you'll have plenty of time to socialize.

They have short life spans.

Pet hedgehogs usually live four to seven years.

They require minimal space.

An eight-square-foot enclosure will do, and an exercise wheel and a hiding spot, such as a log or a snuggle sack, are musts. Be prepared for daily cleaning.



@lionelthehog

Charleston, SC-based Anna Caroline Mathias shares snaps of happy hedges Lionel and Lilo out on the town and cozy at home.



@hedgeinahedge

Tootie, an African Pygmy Hedgehog, road-trips with hog-mom Sarah Slusarick to scenic spots around the country.



DOG-EAR THIS!

Pet Portraits

In his new book *Good Dog: A Collection of Portraits*, photographer Randal Ford shares 150 charming images of canine companions, from handsome mutts to stately show dogs. Proceeds from sales benefit Emancipet, which aims to make veterinary care affordable and accessible for all.

\$40; bookshop.org



Gus's Corner

Here's what *Country Living's* office dog is currently eyeing for himself and his owner.



» A soft buffalo plaid fleece makes frigid morning walks more tolerable.
\$20; llbean.com



« This clever coffee cup is actually a well-disguised bag dispenser. \$11; petco.com



» Furry family members can hibernate inside this soft burrower blanket.
\$45; orvis.com



» Dogsled-motif slippers keep humans warm on winter mornings.
\$64; llbean.com



« This bacon-and-eggs dog toy serves up a hearty helping of fun.
\$12; barkshop.com

DOG DAYS OF WINTER

Our resident country vet, Dr. Tricia Earley, shares her tips for protecting your pooch from the elements.



MONITOR DIET

Like many of us, dogs tend to get less exercise when the temperature drops. If your pooch is spending more hours snoozing by the fireplace and less time running around the yard, consult with your vet about the possibility of reducing their food intake by 10 to 20 percent for the season. Be on the lookout for weight changes anytime you lower the amount of food your pet is eating, and adjust accordingly.



LAYER UP

Some dog breeds are suited to freezing temperatures, while others wish they lived in Florida during the winter. Dogs with short, thin coats (like Chihuahuas, dachshunds, greyhounds, whippets, and even pit bulls) benefit from wearing a jacket or sweater. Regardless of coat, no dog should be left outdoors in freezing weather, especially damp cold. Inside, lay a blanket down as a barrier to cold floors.



PROTECT PAWS

Salty ice can cause pads to become red and irritated. Some dogs tolerate protective boots, but for those who don't, try a balm on their paws, such as Musher's Secret (\$22 for 7 oz.; amazon.com), which acts as a barrier. Always wipe paws and clean between toes once inside. To decrease your dog's exposure to rock salt in your own environment, try a salt-free deicer, such as Safe Paw (\$20 for 8 lb.; chewy.com).



CHECK COATS

Monitor your pet's coat throughout the winter season. If your pet puts on a thick coat during winter months, groom it regularly with a slicker brush like FURminator's version (\$12; amazon.com). The brush's wire removes dead fur, prevents matting, and has coated tips to protect skin. In very cold weather, short, frequent outdoor play is preferable to long periods outdoors, where exposure to cold may be harmful.