

Throw me a

bone

Critical commands your dog should know before coming to the barn

By DANIELLE DUMAIS with JESSICA HEIN
Photography by JESSICA HEIN

Many horsemen and –women love to include their dogs in around-the-barn activities; however, an unruly or uncontrollable dog can quickly turn a relaxing day with your Paint Horse into an unsafe situation.

Because my horses are basically kept in the city, I have to teach my dogs to have more control. We have chickens, peacocks, cats, squirrels, other dogs and more—and the dogs are not allowed to chase anything. All of my dogs learn to be tied at first when they're at the barn or arena—puppies especially are too young to run around at the barn, and I can't watch them all the time. This also helps teach them patience. I don't let any dog off of the leash or longe line until they learn a few basic commands.



1. Names and the “Come” command

Teaching the dog to know their name is a great asset. If I say my dog's name, I want instant eye contact. Again, with so many things going on at the barn, it may save your dog's life.

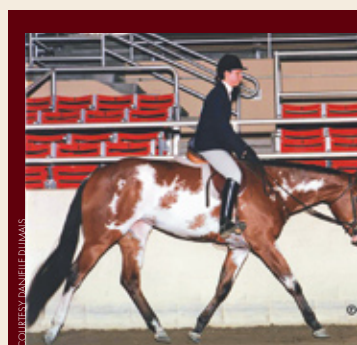
“Come” goes hand-in-hand with the dog's name, and he must react instantly. I don't abuse or overuse either word. With a pup, you have a sponge just waiting to soak up new things. I will keep dry treats, maybe some kibble, in my pocket so I can take advantage of any opportunity to treat my pup for eye contact when I say his name.

Have the pup on a leash, say the pup's name and give the leash a short tug—the pup will look up to see why he got a tug on his leash. Immediately say “good,” and give a treat. You can teach “come” the same way. When you are training, you want to make sure the desired action is going to happen, so keep the pup on a leash while training.

One thing you should always keep in mind is that the dog is always good when he comes to you. I never call my dog to me and then scold him. Why would my dog come to me if he is going to get in trouble? If I have to scold my dog, I will not call him—I go get him.



Your dog should instantly respond to its name with eye contact. When training a pup, use positive reinforcement to encourage this response.



MEET
DANIELLE
DUMAIS

A longtime owner of dogs and Paint Horses, Danielle Dumais of Lomita, California, has firsthand experience about how to keep dogs safe while working around horses. In addition to teaching dog agility classes three times per week at the West Los Angeles Obedience Training Club, Dumais also teaches riding lessons—her own dogs spend a lot of time at the barn, as a result. She's owned Paint Horses since 1980 and Australian Shepherds since 1992.

Currently, Dumais' four-footed critters include Tymes Fancy Jewell, a 2005 black overo mare, and her Australian Shepherds: 6-year-old agility champion Kiss and 3-year-old Miley, who is working on her agility championship as well.



Above: Teach your dog to lay down using a treat that you lower toward the ground, combined with a verbal command.

Bottom left: Use the “settle” command when you want your dog to lie down, relax and not engage in barnyard distractions.

Bottom right: When your dog enters a potentially dangerous area, like an arena, use the “out” command to relocate the pup in a safer location.



Be fair—a dog can’t get in trouble for something he doesn’t know. If I call my trained dog—a dog that I know understands what is being asked—and he doesn’t come, I will start to walk toward him. He will usually come running to me when he sees I am not calling him. He knows that if he didn’t respond, he will be scolded. It only takes once or twice. The dog wants to please you, wants to be your companion and wants a job. I like a dog who enjoys his work. If he is always worried he is going to be in trouble, he is not going to be a good companion and he is not going to be a good thinker.

2. “Down” command

I first teach “down”—as in lay down, not to be confused with “off,” like get off the sofa. I kneel in front of the pup, with the collar in one hand and a treat in the other, and move my hands down and back, toward the dog’s chest/floor. The pup will lay down like a sphinx. As the pup gets good at it, you will not have to hold the collar and you won’t have to hold a treat.

Then, you work on how long the pup stays laying down. Always use a release word, like “OK” or “free” to indicate when he can move. The pup needs to know how long to stay in any position. I do like to use the word “good” so the pup will know you like what he is doing. “Good” is not a release, but it’s a great reward so you don’t always have to give the dog treats. A dog likes to know you are happy with what he is doing.

3. “Settle” command

Once the pup will lay down on command, I start adding “settle” when I’d like the pup to just find a place to relax that’s out of my way—it just means “lie



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down and relax, you might be there for awhile.” I will say “settle down.” As the dog gets used to it, I can just say “settle.” I still use “down” when I want a sphinx-type down.

Once my dog understands the settle, it comes in handy at the barn when I don’t want them under foot or in someone’s space. I also use it if there is something going on, like a strange dog or person, and I don’t want the dog to engage with them.

4. “Out” command

“Out” is a great command to teach the pups. If my pup starts to go somewhere I don’t want them, like a corral or stall I’m in, I will say “out” and walk toward them until they backup. Then I say “good” when they exit the area. If they come right back in, I repeat it. If it keeps happening, I may tie up the pup—this helps to teach the pup consequences.

I also keep a crate at the barn when I have a new puppy. They get tired and need a safe place to go that’s away from horses and high-traffic areas. **PHC**

Thanks to Pete Lichau of Rose Gate Farm in Argyle, Texas, and his 9-month-old Border Collie Albert for demonstrating these tips.

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Right: Short training sessions that feature repetition and praise—verbal or via treat (inset)—are the keys to mastering commands that will help keeps everyone safe at the barn.

Below: Give your dog a safe space of his own at the barn.



KEYS TO SUCCESSFUL TRAINING

Professional dog trainer Danielle Dumais shares a few tips that will help make your training attempts successful.

- Praise the dog when it does something correct, and never comfort a dog when it is doing something you don’t like.
- Set the dog up for success.
- Keep training sessions short.
- Socialize your pup with lots of strangers and other good dogs before bringing him to the barn.

