



## Pet Tips 'n' Tales

by Mary Ellen "Angel Scribe"

### "I Don't Want a Dog!"

Chris had never had a dog, and with her wildly busy household's two loud, active sons involved in multiple sports, the last thing she needed was a dog. Her husband insisted on a dog "being good for the boys", but the last thing she needed was a big dog! Enter, Cedar. Now she can't even imagine life BBD (Before Big Dog).

Cedar was born in California and found in an Oregon foster home on Craigslist. They named her Cedar because her fur's unique color matches a cedar tree.

"I wanted a well-mannered dog," admitted Chris, "so we had a dog trainer teach us how to raise Cedar. She taught me how to be 'lovingly' firm. Our younger son was submissive,

so he had to learn how to be in charge and be a teacher to Cedar. Our older son played too rough, so he was taught a gentler form of play. My husband's discipline was strict, so he was taught to be gentler. The results were worth the investment of time and money. My husband now declares that Cedar is "The most perfect dog in the world", and we all agree!

Cedar makes friends wherever she goes and everyone is impressed with her good manners. She especially adores little girls and the feeling is mutual; the children are always asking to pet and cuddle her.

Cedar is an important part of our family, so she's involved in everything we do. She loves joining us on hikes. The boys run up ahead on the trails and hide behind tree stumps/bushes and call out, "Ceedar hee-er-ee". She races like a wild horse

to them because she knows her favorite cheese treat is waiting. Then one of us, behind them, hides and calls her back. All five of us love this joy-filled game.

Sometimes, for no apparent reason, Cedar makes us laugh by going 'crackers', and running crazily in circles. Possibly the laughter is exactly what she is trying to create! Also, she's hysterical when she lies on her back and wiggles, wriggles and squiggles for a good back scratch.

All this activity contrasts to when Cedar is at home where she's a professional 'napper'. She curls up with whoever she can, wherever she can, for a nap. Some mornings she gets out of bed, stretches, and then heads to her favorite chair to start her morning nap!

Our family loves creating a pretend 'human voice' for Cedar. We use it to explain her perspective on how she's feeling about things. Like on a school morning, she 'asks' to go to school with the boys, 'to learn her ABCs, so she can spell CAT'. We also do it when she stares at us in the kitchen letting us know that she's there, asking us if we 'need any help?' making her dinner. She sometimes writes us letters with its letters all mixed up, remember she can't go to school, asking us to "... please buy me a pet duck to



Photo by Mary Ellen "Angel Scribe"

Chris and Burton with their two sons, Cole and Lucas, and three-year-old Boxer/Staffordshire mix dog, Cedar. Chris had never wanted a dog, but Cedar has turned her home and life upside down for the better! She's now a bone-a-fide dog lover!

play with." Having Cedar in our life expands our imaginations, humor and bonds our family.

In our loud busy household, Cedar oddly brings a sense of calmness to it; whether for cuddles or quiet walks, her cuddles always make us feel better. Everyone in our family has crazy quirks, including Cedar, so she fits in purr-fectly - and she loves us for who we are!

Cedar is a hoot! She patiently lets the boys dress her up in wigs, hats and necklaces - all the time! To date, she's been Yoda, Superdog, and a cowgirl. On Halloween she rocked a rainbow tutu!

Cedar is not 'just a dog'. The depth of love my boys have for her is a blessing. Cedar is our boys' best furry friend (BFF), who unconditionally loves them when they are having difficult days or when they're sad. She has a sense for when her comfort is needed.

She is clever beyond words

and opens lever doors and lets herself outside if she sees one of her friends, so we are careful to keep our doors locked.

Once, at my sister's Ontario farm, we tied Cedar to a tree outside the house while we made a quick trip to town. Cedar-Houdini escaped and we feared the worst. She was alone, thousands of miles from home. Before our devastation sank in too deep, we discovered that she had opened their back patio door, let herself inside, and was taking a nap in my bed!"

### TIPS

"Cedar is whistle trained," said Chris. "When she wanders off we blow her whistle and she comes racing back for a cheese treat.

We are very careful about leaving dangerous things out that Cedar might chew on. We've taught the boys that safe

things for people are poisonous to dogs; like xylitol, onions, chocolate and grapes. We have also taught them the dangers of overfeeding a dog. Cedar is such a good dog; our investment of teaching her to have good manners pays off every day. But in reality, it was us that were trained on how to live with a dog!"

Toxic food for dogs: <http://dogs.about.com/od/dogandpuppyhealth/tp/toxicfood.htm>

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### ODA Food Safety Program explains the various expiration dates found on products

It's very likely that many Oregonians who observe various expiration dates on products throw away food that may have lost some freshness and quality but is still perfectly safe to consume. Welcome to the world of food product dating, in which terms such as "sell by", "use by", and "expires" all mean different things but collectively tend to muddle consumers as they decide whether or not to toss that product out. The Oregon Department of Agriculture wants to offer some clarity.

"These dates are something for consumers to look at and be aware of, but they are typically a quality issue that could affect the taste, odor or appearance of the product," says ODA food safety retail specialist Brian Hawkins. "For most products, it shouldn't be a food safety concern."

Most people have food products in their refrigerator, freezer or in the pantry with dates that have long since passed. Depending on the product, the term accompanying the date, and how that product is stored, consumers can determine what to do with the food - eat it or delete it.

First, it's important to know these dates are generally recommendations voluntarily offered by the food manufacturer. It's an educated guess as to how long the product will last. In most cases, there is no requirement

for these dates to be placed on products and no universal food dating system used by manufacturers or retailers. However, these dates are helpful and useful as long as the people reading them know their meaning.

"We do require that certain potentially hazardous food products past their date marking—best by, sell by, use by date—are identified or segregated so that a customer knows it's past date," says Hawkins. "These are items like meats and dairy products pre-packaged by the food manufacturer. The store can still sell the product, people can still buy it and consume it. But once the dates on these products have passed, they may be past their prime and food safety related issues may not be far behind."

It is perfectly understandable for a food product to be discarded because it is no longer fresh. But an unexpired product should not be confused with an unsafe product.

"Sell by" is a date that is most instructive to retailers and is found on perishable foods such as fish, poultry, meat, bread and dairy products. This date gives retailers a guide for how long the product should be displayed. Again, stores may offer products for sale after the "sell by" date has passed, which is perfectly legal. Consumers will usually want to purchase the product before its "sell by" date but they don't have to wor-

ry about consuming it by that date as long as the food is properly stored. Generally, fresh meat, fish, and poultry should be cooked within two days of refrigeration after purchase. If those products have been placed in the freezer, there should no longer be any concern of the "sell by" date.

Terms such as "use by", "best if used by", and "best before" are also associated with freshness and quality of the food product. These terms and dates are generally found on shelf-stable products such as snack foods, cereals, and various canned products. The dates used indicate how long the product will likely remain at its best quality when unopened. The food is safe to eat even after the date has passed, although the product will gradually lose some of its original texture, color and taste over time. How the product is stored is always a factor, especially for products that should be refrigerated after opening. A person's eyes and nose are good tools to determine the quality of a shelf-stable food product. Upon opening the container, consumers should look and smell the product. Anything that has developed an odor or questionable appearance should be discarded. The same holds true for products that have been opened and sitting in the refrigerator for a long period of time. Again, it's

generally a quality issue, not a food safety issue.

There are some mandated expiration dates on specific products that consumers may notice. Infant formula and some baby foods contain the terms "expires on" or "use by" with a date that should be strictly adhered to by consumers. Several states also have requirements for date marking, including Oregon, where food-borne pathogens such as Listeria are a concern for certain foods.

Date marking is required in Oregon for ready-to-eat potentially hazardous food that is prepared in the store and held refrigerated for more than 24 hours. Examples include sliced deli meats, cut tomatoes, some salad dressings, soft cheeses such as brie, cut melons, raw seed sprouts and sushi. Date marking ensures foods are discarded before bacteria reproduce to levels that can cause foodborne illness.

"Our food code requires anything ready-to-eat that is potentially hazardous - products that need refrigeration - to have a seven-day date mark when it is stored at 41 degrees or below," says Hawkins. "These foods need to be consumed within seven days or be discarded."

One other specific food item of note is eggs. A "sell by" or

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