

the CANINE CORNER

by Kathleen Crisley, CSMT, CTMT, SCMT

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Canadian dog trainer and behaviour consultant Erin Jones is conducting research into how an owner's expectations of behaviour influence their choice of dog training methods.

She needs your help.

Jones, who is based in Christchurch with the New Zealand Centre for Human-Animal Studies at the University of Canterbury (www.canterbury.ac.nz/nzchas/), has just embarked on the data collection phase for her PhD thesis.

She's completed a series of in-home interviews. She now wants to survey "as many dog owners as I can get" and some may be asked to keep a journal to contribute further to the research. In research, data is king. The larger the data set, the stronger the analysis.

"I'm interested in the human-animal bond," says Erin.

"And in particular, I want to explore the impact we, as the caregivers and guardians, have on the emotional lives of our dogs. In my opinion, welfare is often considered only from the physical perspective and, as we know in humans, there is an emotional side to health, too.

"This is one reason why doggy day care is not my favourite place", says Erin. "Long exposures to over-stimulation are not healthy for dogs and, at best, I recommend day care as a step in the solution to solving separation anxiety. I prefer very small operations and half-day stay options."

Erin has adopted an exploratory, social science approach to her research. By the time the thesis is completed, she aims to have published several academic papers. She says, "I hope my work will be able to inform trainers, behaviourists and dog owners about

the things they should look for and ask from our dogs. It's about consent."

There are not many options for people who want to study the human-animal bond, adds Erin, and so the Centre's work attracted her here, along with the opportunity to explore this beautiful country with her husband. Jones deferred the start of her PhD studies so she could remain in her native Nova Scotia to care for her elderly dog.

She came to NZ just four months after her dog passed away and has spent the last year formulating her PhD study proposal and preparing the data collection strategy. In the meantime, she and her husband have adopted Juno, a Fox Terrier cross.

"I have approximately two years left to complete my PhD. After that, we are prepared to move Juno back to Canada with us if we are unable to stay in New Zealand."

Jones wears many hats. She continues to undertake animal behaviour consultations remotely through her business, Merit Dog Training, and in late 2019, she took on a part-time role with the International Association of Animal Behaviour Consultants to design new education initiatives.

She intends to keep her hand in the dog behaviour and training field after she obtains her doctorate but her career aspirations lie in research and teaching.

If you would like to help Erin in her research, please send her an email to erin.jones@pg.canterbury.ac.nz.

Everyone who contributes to the research will be sent a link to Erin's professional papers and her thesis. 🐾