

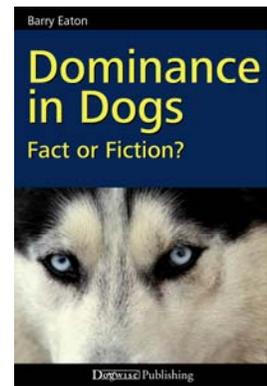
An excerpt from

Dominance in Dogs. Fact or Fiction?

Introduction

by Barry Eaton, Dogwise Publishing. 800-776-2665, www.dogwise.com

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If you only take one fact away after reading this book, I would like it to be the fact that a dog is a dog and *not* a domesticated wolf and, therefore, should *not* be treated as such.

Since the early 1960s, as professional pet dog training developed as an industry, many dog training instructors have based their methods on the theory that an owner must ‘dominate’ his or her dog, including the use of ‘pack rules’ to reinforce a dominant position. This was because, back then, many people in the field did indeed view a dog as simply a domesticated wolf. An owner was told he had to train his tame, domesticated dog as though he was a wolf—a theory that was perpetuated by a number of dog training books published during this time. Even today, books, DVDs and television shows based on this theory are still popular and, in my view, cause confusion among pet dog owners as they attempt to ensure their ‘dominance’ over their pet dogs by being the alpha in their dog/family pack.

The premise that pack rules should apply to modern day pet dogs is incorrect despite the dog being a direct descendent of the wolf. This results in the following *misleading* assumptions:

- A dog’s behavior closely mimics that of the wolf.
- Grey wolves form packs based on a structured hierarchy and compete to become alpha by aggressively asserting their dominance over other wolves and, therefore, dogs will do the same.
- Even though the domestic dog lives with humans, he will act as though he is a member of a pack, therefore the owner and family have to be alpha.

Nobody stopped to question this line of thinking until recently. Over the last few years, however,

researchers in dog behavior have begun to question the relevance of treating pet dogs as though they are wolves and members of a pack. At the same time, researchers studying wolves in the wild have learned that wolf packs function quite differently than had previously been thought. Many books have now been written (some of which I refer to in the following pages) that dispel the myth that a dog, given the chance, will try to raise his status or become dominant over his human family. Current knowledge and thinking are questioning whether we were ever right to equate a dog’s behavior to that of his distant cousin, the wolf.

The purpose of this book is to pull together an overview of the recent arguments that have been put forward by eminent authorities on dogs and wolves as to why the dog is *not* simply a domesticated wolf and, therefore, should *not* be treated as such. It will provide an alternative training and behavioral model to one that insists that the owner must assert his authority over his dog(s) by acting as though he is the dominant pack leader. I believe it’s time to open our minds and consider the concept of pack rules as a thing of the past and recognize that dogs are not constantly trying to dominate their owners.

Barry Eaton lives in England where he is an Affiliate of the Centre of Applied Pet Ethology (COAPE) and a Member of the COAPE Association of Pet Behaviourists and Trainers. He is an expert on training deaf dogs and is the author of the popular book *Hear, Hear*. He is the former chair of the Wessex Sheepdog Society and enjoyed participating in sheep dog trials.