

Training for Calm Activity

By Karen Clouston

I can't help much with hyper-reactive dogs...I have one of those myself!

I have been able to channel his energy into a job and I think that has helped immensely. Having a job is very important...and I've heard from more than one source that a backpack on the dog can help with this. I haven't tried it myself, but to me it would have several effects on the dog.

One, with some weight added to it, will help tire an active dog out on a walk/hike/run.

Two, the dog will eventually cue the dog that when it goes on, it's time to work (even if that "work is a long walk)!

Three, I can see where it might act like a calming wrap...something I've heard of but haven't tried.

For my boy, his hyper activity is lower as he ages. He's three and a half now, and every once in a while I notice improvement in how he can control himself. Key to this is never giving up on obedience...do it all the time, every chance we get. In fact his life is quite regimented. I fully enforce sits before going through any doorway, heeling when he's not given the ok to sniff around and pee, etc. The only fun he gets (other than his tearing around the house and being silly on his own) is when we're training...and fun games like fetching and tug-of-war are his rewards for focusing and working for me for awhile. I haven't been very successful teaching him tricks, but we work on them nonetheless if we can't get outside for regular exercise.

I did do an agility course with him, but at the time he was too hyper to be off lead. Maybe he'll enjoy it more when he's older. So we stick to things he can concentrate on, and that concentration has been built up gradually since I got him.

So that is all I know about dealing with hyper and reactive dogs....channel the energy into a regularly scheduled activity, and be consistent with rules, and be firm with obedience. Eventually, it helps. Just try not to compare your dog to the neighbors Border Collie!

Where there may exist an herb that will help with hyper activity and a reactive nature, I still very much feel that training and massive amounts of exercise is a big factor.