

The Alpha Roll, What is it, REALLY?

By Tawni McBee PDTI

This article was inspired by a conversation with a person who owns and rescues Akitas. She wanted to know how to discipline her young, male Akita when he was being pushy. Specifically she was wondering about scruff shakes and alpha rolls. Since I get this inquiry a lot, I thought an article on the subject might help. What many call the alpha roll, which, in reality, is done BY a dog, not TO a dog, is a reaction to body language from the Alpha and is not really a correction. It's a call to arms. It's a start of a fight. It's aggression on the part of the human "alpha-wanna' be". My challenge to anyone wishing to do what many people consider an alpha roll is whether they really, really want to start a fight with their dog. That's a fight you most likely will not win. A dog is genetically an "enhanced fighter". We don't have the teeth, claws, muscle strength and tenacity to fight like a dog.

A true alpha roll is done by the submitting dog in response to the body language and aggression of the alpha. The dog simply rolls over, looks away and pants. Now, if the dog rolls over like this in response to your leadership role THAT is an alpha roll. True leaders do not start fights they cannot finish because they will no longer be the leader when the fight's over.

Thoughts on Being a Leader of the Pack

By Tawni McBee PDTI

- True leaders may be scared, but they hold the line in spite of it.
- Leaders go through doors first, control food and environment, give direction and keep the pack safe.
- Leaders make the rest of the pack feel safe.
- Leaders are in charge.
- Leaders earn respect.
- Leaders give praise and strokes when the other members of the pack earn them, not just because they ask for them.
- Leaders do not issue challenges unless they must.
- Leaders have the best bed and the best food and they expect it.
- Leaders are not mean or cruel, they are fair, disciplined and in charge.
- Leaders require pack members to follow the rules or accept the consequences.
- Leaders decide when it's play time and when play time stops.
- Leaders lead.

