

Keep your dog fit, toned - & out of trouble!

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WITH THE DOG days of summer upon us, even the four-legged set deserves to look great and feel fabulous.

But even if winter inertia — or a hearty appetite for home-cooked gourmet pet food — has left Fluffy and Fido with a few extra pounds to spare, the city is abuzz with summer activities to keep your pets active and fit.

"Dogs need physical and mental exercise to keep them healthy," said Mike Rueb, Bide-A-Wee manager of behavior and training.

That's why the humane organization recently launched "Fitness With Fido," a free weekly group walk in Central Park for dogs and their human companions that leaves every Saturday morning at 9:30 a.m. from 66th St. and Fifth Ave.

The 45-minute, leisurely stroll, accompanied by trainers, behaviorists and some adoptable shelter dogs, provides the pets and their owners with stress-free exercise, plus an opportunity to socialize, which is crucial for a dog's — and a human's — well-being.

Research shows that many dogs are turned into shelters due to behavioral problems, which animals often develop because of lack of exercise and stimulation.

"Walking provides the physical and mental exercise dogs need," Rueb said, and helps work off pentup energy while burning calories. "They'll be tired and sleep at home instead of chewing up the furniture."

If your pooch prefers a more rigorous workout, you can have one of 25 endurance runners at Running Paws pick him up and take him on a 20- to 45-minute run or light jog, depending on the dog.

Seth Chodosh, founder of the Manhattan-based service (www.runningpaws.com), said daily workouts have helped many of his canine clients overcome issues like separation anxiety, weight loss and behavioral prob-



Running Paws' Leah Scott takes Lab P-Bay for a spin (r.). Mixed breed Andy works out on treadmill. Photo by Linda Obuchoska

lems.

"Ninety-five percent of my dogs love to run," Chodosh said. "Five percent don't like it, but they need the exercise."

This week, the five-year-old company spawned the Running Paws Athletic Club, a full-service facility located on E. 61st St. Services at the 4,500-square-foot club range from grooming and doggy day care to overnight boarding, puppy training, agility training and fitness classes, including a treadmill.

Animal Haven SoHo also offers agility classes, where dogs and their companions get a hefty workout, hosted by dog trainer Andrea Arden (www.animalhavenshelter.org).

If adventure hiking is more your thing, pick up a copy of "Best Hikes With Dogs: New York City & Beyond" (Mountaineers Books) for a list of 55 hikes across the five boroughs, Hudson Valley and Long Island. Author Tammy McCarley, founder of Blue Sky Dogs canine-friendly travel service, offers outdoor enthusiasts day and overnight outings featuring rolling hills, rocky paths, lakes and sandy beaches.



While finding a swimming spot isn't easy for any urban dweller, several options exist right here within city limits.

Brooklyn's famed Dog Beach in Prospect Park continues to provide city dogs a place to splash, paddle and retrieve soggy balls. The Dog Run at 18th St. and Ninth Ave., Manhattan's only indoor pool for dogs, offers private swim therapy (\$40) and a weekend "open" swim. A list of dog-friendly beaches can be found at www.urbanhound.com.

For cats, if they agree, fetching a studded rubber ball or chasing a bird on a string toy for 15 minutes each day will keep them alert and trim.

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