

Q&A with Dr. Julie Buzby, Grey Muzzle Advisory Board Member

Julie Buzby, DVM, CAVCA, CVA is a South Carolina-based veterinarian who integrates Western medicine, holistic therapies, and creative tools to achieve maximum wellness. She is an advocate for senior and special needs dogs with mobility issues, and her mission is to restore levels of lost mobility and reduce the risk of slip/fall injuries.

We are honored that Dr. Buzby has joined The Grey Muzzle Advisory Board and excited about the range of expertise she can share with us.

Q: Dr. Buzby, how has The Grey Muzzle Organization inspired you to join us in our mission?

I love so much about The Grey Muzzle Organization! When I first learned of the organization, I went to the website and read the “Vision and Mission” page. By the time I’d scanned the first few points, I was fully committed to the team! Here are some of the reasons I was so impressed. Grey Muzzle:

- Is run strictly by volunteers who are passionate about the physical and psychological wellbeing of homeless senior dogs.
- Partners with shelters, rescues, and sanctuaries all over the US. By supporting just one organization, I’m able to help senior dogs nationwide.
- Provides educational support in addition to funding.
- Runs creative programs to help older dogs in a very practical way.
- Changes lives—at both ends of the leash!

Q: I understand you have a large family with seven children! Are you also a pet parent?

A: Indeed! We adopted our dog, a pit bull mix named Luke, from the Savannah Animal Control. He had been found running down a highway in Savannah. He’s the most prayed-for dog in the world! My children all begin their prayers, “Thank you, God, for Luke...”

Q: As a veterinarian, you treat a lot of older dogs. What personality traits do you admire most in the seniors?

A: When people move into their golden years, some become cranky and cantankerous, while others are so sunny-hearted that you just want to squeeze them! Virtually all the senior dogs I’ve ever known are like the human senior citizens in the latter category. They live in the moment. They don’t complain about their pain. They bring such joy to the people who love them, and seem to exude wisdom, grace, and a zest for life that doesn’t fade until the very end.

Q: To complement traditional medicine, what alternative therapies can help improve mobility in senior dogs?

A: I like the way you worded the question, because I believe in integrative veterinary medicine—combining the best Western medicine has to offer with alternative therapies for maximum wellness in each patient. The list is long, but I personally recommend animal chiropractic, veterinary acupuncture, Chinese herbs, food therapy, supplements, and physical rehabilitative therapy—one of the fastest growing segments of veterinary medicine. A key point I'd like to make is that treatment of a senior dog's pain and mobility issues should be multimodal. This means that best results are usually obtained with a combination of therapies.

Q: You developed a product, ToeGrips, that senior and special needs dogs can wear to help regain mobility. What are ToeGrips?

ToeGrips are natural rubber rings which fit snugly onto dogs' toenails, enabling instant traction on floors and stairs. They are designed for dogs who have been weakened by age, arthritis, injury, and degenerative spinal, bone, or muscular diseases. It's important to note that ToeGrips are not intended for active, healthy dogs.

Q: What are the advantages of ToeGrips over booties?

A: Dogs use their toenails to gain traction. In the wild, dogs will flex their paws and use their nails like cleats, digging into the earthen terrain. Unfortunately, when our domestic dogs instinctively attempt to “dig” their hard nails into hard floors to get a grip, the slipping just gets worse.

ToeGrips are more convenient and practical than booties in that they allow the paws to breathe, they don't cover skin or paw pads so the dogs don't mind them, and they are designed for semi-continuous indoor-outdoor use. The real advantage is that ToeGrips are the only biomechanically-correct solution for slipping dogs.

Q: Have you found that many dogs will chew off the ToeGrips?

A: This is the most common question I get about ToeGrips. The vast majority of dogs (greater than 95%) don't ever bother with the ToeGrips on their nails. Since ToeGrips don't contact sensitive tissue and just rest on the nail, it appears that most dogs don't even notice them.

Q: Do ToeGrips really work?

A: They really work, or I wouldn't have put my name on them! They may not be the right solution for every dog, but they have been life-changing for many of my senior and special needs patients.

Find out more about Dr. Buzby at www.toegrips.com.