



How To Shoot Your Dog (with a camera, of course) By: Barry Levine

A picture is worth a thousand words. Trite expression, maybe but absolutely true when it comes to that crucial first impression of our dogs. Over the next few issues we are going to share some simple pointers each month that should enable you to improve your photos considerably. Here are a few tips on improving your pictures:

- 1. Get Down On Their Level** – Dogs, like babies, never look good staring up into a camera. Instead, kneel down, or better yet, get the dog up on something stable, like a bench or a platform of some sort. The top of a staircase works well, then you can just move down a few steps and get a level shot, often with the dog giving you that nice, curious, tilted-head look.
- 2. Turn Off The Flash** – Dogs HATE flashes, and tend to bolt the other way. Can you blame them? They look scared and it makes their eyes look awful. Everyone loves a retriever's sweet, warm eyes, but you can't get that with a flash. So take your photos *outside*, in natural light. It will be less intimidating for the dog, and they will be much more accommodating.
- 3. Tight Shot** – We don't need to see background. Digital cameras turn on at a wide-angle setting, which is not flattering for a portrait. So use the ZOOM, get back about six to eight feet, no more, and keep the composition tight. Unless the animal has a really attractive physique, a close head shot is usually more appealing, especially for the small, website photo.
- 4. Focus** – Sounds easy, and is, yet so many photos are needlessly out of focus. Digital cameras focus by aiming, holding the shutter HALFWAY DOWN for an instant, and *then* shooting. Don't just push it down hard. Experiment both ways and you'll see the difference.
- 5. Patience** – Don't force things. Instead, set the stage and let things happen. If need be, tire the dog out somewhat by exercising it. That will calm it down. Have the camera ready, and the lens zoomed for close up. Talk to the dog. Keep it calm, but curious. Wait for the shot: with the smile, or the ears perked, or the head cocked. Gently bring up the camera. Keep talking as you focus (shutter halfway down) and then, at the right moment, squeeze.
- 6. Take Lots Of Shots** – With digital cameras your photos don't cost anything, so take a bunch of pictures then simply get rid of all but the good ones. If you take enough shots, and follow these basic hints, you are bound to get some good photos.

Keep these simple things in mind and your photos should improve significantly.

