

Dominating Dominance



Is your dog plotting to usurp your household to be the pack leader? Is your dog watching your every move for signs of weakness? Should you be asserting your position as alpha on a daily basis?

The “alpha” or dominance theory has been believed by many dog owners and even trainers for decades. And I’ll tell you a secret, even I believed some of the ideas that stemmed from these theories when I first started out as a trainer. But the more I studied animal behaviour and observed how dogs learn, the more I realized not only how flawed these ideas are, but that these beliefs can actually cause unwanted behavior responses.

Dominance Theory Explained

Where did these theories come from? Mainly through studies conducted by

biologists and animal researchers decades ago. One famous study, published in 1947, was conducted by Rudolf Schenkel, who observed a pack of wolves over a number of years. This study contributed many concepts to dominance theory.

However, Schenkel’s study was later discredited because a) the wolves he was observing were not in their natural habitat; b) the wolves were all adolescents or close to adolescence; and c) the pack was made up of “outcasts” that Schenkel hand-picked and gathered in a zoo setting for the specific purpose of observing them. In other words, Schenkel created his own wolf pack that was akin to Lord of the Flies and much wolf – and domestic dog – behaviour was somehow based on this study.

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OCTOBER 2020

THE OFFICIAL SPEAKING OF DOGS MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

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About Speaking of Dogs

Speaking of Dogs is a Toronto-based organization that launched in 2001 and is dedicated to educating and enlightening people about dogs through seminars, workshop forums, outreach and rescue. Our goal is to end cruelty, abandonment, mistreatment and homelessness of man’s best friend.

Speaking of Dogs Rescue is the operating name of Speaking of Dogs Rescue Program, a Canada Revenue Agency–registered charity based in Ontario.

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Newsletters

If you no longer want to receive our newsletter, email newsletter@speakingofdogs.com, with “unsubscribe” written in the subject line.

Dogs Looking for Homes

A friend in need is a friend indeed

Without a doubt, a dog is a real friend. Our dogs come in all shapes and sizes, but they have one thing in common—they all need loving forever homes. Open your heart and your home to a rescue dog. You'll be glad you did. For complete information about the adoption process, please visit www.speakingofdogs.com/adoption-process. For more information on each dog, simply click on their name.

Zak

MALTESE / POODLE MIX
SMALL, SENIOR, MALE

FEATURED DOG:

Zak is a Maltese who was surrendered to the rescue when his owner passed away. He is about 13 years old and neutered, and he recently had a dental cleaning and is up to date on his shots. Zak also had a low-grade mass removed from his front right leg, which requires no further treatment. We're just waiting for that fur to grow back!

Zak was a bit of a fussy eater when he first came into the rescue. We weren't sure if it was because of the changes in his life, the state of his teeth, or perhaps a combination of

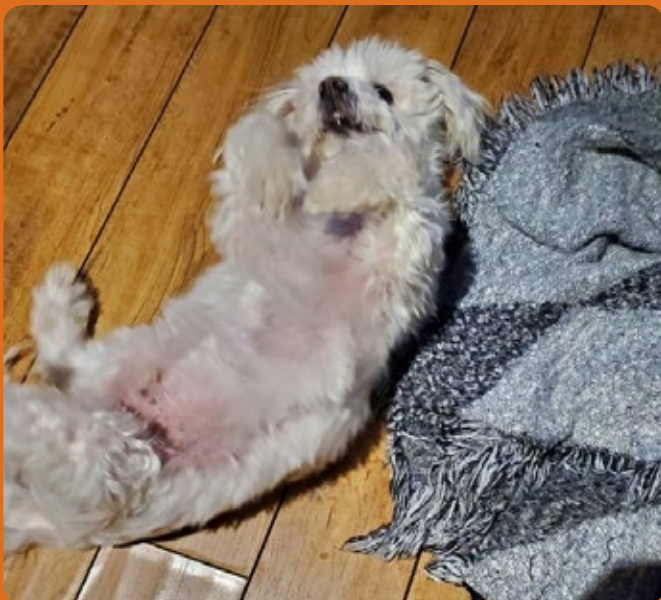
both. Now that he's had dental surgery and settled into his foster home, his appetite is back on track – and sprinkling a few chicken pieces as a topper always helps! He also loves treats and waits patiently to get them.

Zak loves to go for walks and walks well on a leash. Busy streets and noises don't bother him, and he ignores people that walk by him. He can be slightly reactive to other dogs at first, but he quickly stops when asked to "leave it." Zak gets along well with his foster siblings, but he does like to be number one with his foster mom. He will issue a warning to the

other dogs when they come near but quickly stops when asked.

He takes a while to trust people and needed a month in his foster home before letting them cuddle with him. He sleeps in his own bed with a blanket and will stay there until his person gets up in the morning. It is not known if Zak is good around children or cats, as he has not been exposed to them.

Zak would make an excellent companion to someone who is looking for a small and loyal pup who just wants to be loved.





Bear

LABRADOR RETRIEVER MIX
LARGE, YOUNG, FEMALE



Mavis

LABRADOR RETRIEVER MIX
LARGE, BABY, FEMALE



Mitzi

WESTHIGHLAND TERRIER MIX
SMALL, ADULT, FEMALE



JR (Junior)

SHEPHERD MIX
MEDIUM, SENIOR, MALE



Zeus and Zena

BORDER COLLIE / CATTLE DOG / AUSTRALIAN CATTLE DOG MIX
MEDIUM, SENIOR, MALE AND FEMALE



Lexi

YORKSHIRE TERRIER
SMALL, SENIOR, FEMALE

HELP US FUNDRAISE THROUGH BARKBOX!

What is BarkBox? It's a monthly box of dog goodies that arrives on your doorstep!

When you subscribe to BarkBox, every month you receive a box in the mail with four or more carefully selected products and presents for your dog – anything from toys and all-natural treats to hygiene products and the latest gadgets!

And when you give to your dog, you can give to our dogs too. Use code **SPEAKING OF DOGS** at checkout, and the rescue will receive a \$15 donation from BarkBox. Plus, you'll receive 10% off the price of your subscription!

Visit www.barkbox.com to find out more and get started.

Ask the Trainer

Continued from page 1...

Fast forward to today, and animal behaviour, ethology, and anthrozoology are popular areas of study in many academic institutions worldwide. Now that technological advances allow us to more closely observe animals in their natural habitats, we understand animal behavior much more comprehensively.

Modern studies have shown that dominance ideologies are very flawed. Researchers now know that wolf packs are remarkably similar to our nuclear family and that the “alpha” wolves are simply the natural leaders – the parents. Biologists now refer to the “breeding male” and “breeding female” rather than alphas.

But what impact does this have on our relationship with dogs and how we train them? New studies and research have demonstrated that, like wolves, dogs strive to be partners and look to us for guidance and safety. Historically, wild dogs came to live with us for food and safety. And then we bred them to be our partners. Just to name a couple of examples, think about toy and hunting breeds. The former are designed for human companionship, and the latter are designed to work directly with humans.

Dominance theories simply do not make sense from an evolutionary or behavioural point of view. Why fight with your partners when you have a better chance of survival by working with them?

Let's look at some dominance beliefs that you may have heard about. When viewed from the dog's perspective, it's easy to see they're not what you think.



“Put your hand in your dog's bowl while they are eating”

Dominance theory interpretation:
I own your food, so don't get aggressive.

The dog's interpretation:
At random times my food will be threatened, which scares me and makes me want to protect it.

Imagine you are dining in a restaurant and the chef comes out and randomly puts his hand in your plate. What would your reaction be? You'd probably want to swat that hand away. If you were a dog, you'd probably want to bite that hand. If you want to help your dog be comfortable with you around their food, wouldn't it make more sense to add something to their bowl rather than disturb it? I know I would be much happier with a chef coming by and adding some salt and pepper!

“Always eat before your dog eats”

Dominance theory interpretation:
I control the food, therefore I am the alpha and you are the beta.

The dog's interpretation:
You control the food.

Dogs became part of our lives because they know we control food, so this is a moot point. Looking at the wild side of dogs or wolves, mother dogs will eat first so they can regurgitate for their pups. Unless you plan on throwing up your food for your dog to eat, the eating order doesn't matter. In fact, if you eat first, chances of your dog begging at the table will increase, as it is a sign that their dinner is coming up next (and they are hungry and smelling your food).

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“Never let your dog walk in front of you during a walk or through a doorway”

Dominance theory interpretation:

You can't lead because I am the alpha, not you.

The dog's interpretation:

I like going outside!

Dogs are almost always excited to get outside. Dogs generally lead with their nose, and when out on a walk, they want to gain information about their environment, not take you for a walk or try to dominate you in any way.

I actually don't let my dog go outdoors before me, especially into elevators, but this is a safety measure. You never know what is on the other side of a door, and your dog should start their walk off calm and focused.

“Dogs should not be allowed on beds, couches, or any furniture”

Dominance theory interpretation:

If I let you be on the same level as me, then you'll think you're equal to me and I'll lose my all-important alpha status.

The dog's interpretation:

I like you, why can't I get close to you?

Dogs love to be close to us, and many like to cuddle for the warmth and companionship. We created breeds for the specific purpose of getting close to us, such as toy breeds. It's natural for your dogs to want to be close to you. If your dog has an issue with getting off a bed or a couch, there are probably underlying reasons for this behaviour. These can range from pain to fear of being moved forcefully. Attributing this behavior to a desire to dominate and not realizing the real reason why your dog won't move off their spot is a recipe for a bite.

“Stare your dog in the eye until they look away”

Dominance theory interpretation:

I am establishing my dominance over you.

The dog's interpretation:

I thought we were partners. Why are you trying to start a fight?

Staring a dog down is extremely confrontational. You are basically asking for a fight. Imagine staring at a person and holding their gaze (whether you know them or not), and not letting them look away – it's uncomfortable and intimidating! If a dog feels threatened, more often than not it will lead to a warning such as baring teeth, growling, or even a snap. More importantly, it will damage the relationship between you and your dog.

“If your dog doesn't listen to your commands, they don't respect you”

Dominance theory interpretation:

I have lost my alpha status and must re-establish it through dominance.

The dog's interpretation:

Huh?

Your dog may simply not understand what you are trying to communicate to them. They may even be too distracted by something and can't actually hear you. Or you may have given them three commands in a row without giving them the time to respond, such as “Rover, come! Sit! Stop!” The dog can't know which command you actually want them to do. Remember, dogs don't speak our language, and some dogs aren't good with verbal commands.

Motivate, Don't Dominate

In summary, our dogs want to be our partners, but we do not speak the same language. More often than not, when we assume a dog is being “defiant” or “dominant,” they simply don't

understand what we're asking them to do. It's not a case of a dog seeking to dominate but rather a person giving inconsistent or obscure commands.

Understanding your dog's body language, fulfilling their basic needs, and being consistent in your training all help them navigate life with humans. By re-enforcing behaviours you like rather than seeking to simply dominate or punish, you avoid putting your dog in a situation where they feel they need to react in a way that appears threatening but to them is a natural way of communicating.

Rather than just dominating your dog, try to be their partner and learn to better speak their language. Rewards-based training doesn't just reward the dog – it rewards the owner with a wonderful human-dog relationship.

Further Reading

Want to learn more? There are some great books and articles on this topic:

- *Dog Sense* by John Bradshaw
- *The Other End of the Leash* by Patricia McConnell
- *Culture Clash* by Jean Donaldson
- drsophiayin.com/philosophy/dominance/
- whole-dog-journal.com/behavior/debunking-the-alpha-dog-theory/
- apdt.com/resource-center/dominance-and-dog-training/



Andrea Dinan, CPDT-KA, is also certified through Karen Pryor Foundations and Aggression in Dogs Master Course, member of the International Positive Dog Training Association, and founder of City Dogs Dog Training and EduCanine.

Bits & Bites

Simply click on a summary to be whisked away to the internet page where you can read the full story.

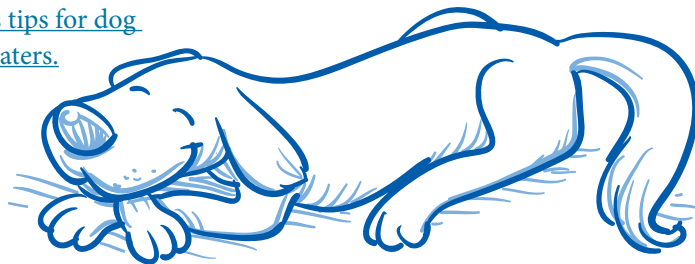
[Dogs love their people unconditionally and seem to forgive them automatically, but how quickly do they forgive other dogs? A team of researchers at Butler University researched the topic.](#)

[The Toronto Humane Society offers quick tips for calling your dog back to you.](#)

[Monica Segal shares tips for dog parents with picky eaters.](#)

[Every pet owner knows that a change of season usually means lots of shedding! The Ontario SPCA has tips to cope with fall shedding.](#)

[Find out about the miraculous and mysterious canine nose!](#)



THIS MONTH'S RECALLS:

Click on a recall to be directed to further information online.

[Billy + Margot Superfoods Recipe](#)

[Family Pets Meaty Cuts, Heartland Farms Grilled Favorites, and Paws Happy Life Butcher's Choice](#)

To: Speaking of Dogs Rescue
From: Antoinette and Margarer
Subject: Ella and Annie

Dear Speaking of Dogs Rescue,

Ella and Annie fit into our family beautifully! We can't ever imagine a day without them. Our deepest wish would be to reverse time and have them since their birth. We don't really know their individual birthdays, so in lieu we use the day we brought them home (September 19, 2019) as their celebratory B-days.

Annie was diagnosed with IMT in January 2020. Lorraine and foster mom Sue were both aware and were terrific emotional support throughout. She was getting blood tests every 2 weeks, but good news came when the clinic gave us the all-clear, albeit with the reminder that IMT could involve relapses throughout her life. But the news was still as great as the news could be!

So long story short, the journey has not always been easy, but we've loved her every second through all of it and would do it all again if needed. Other than that, both have acclimated extremely well into our community, but they had our hearts since the first second we met them.

We adore them both and are ever grateful to everyone at SOD for rescuing them!

All the best! One day we hope to be able to volunteer with Speaking of Dogs Rescue!





IF YOU LIKE US, CAN YOU LIKE US?

Speaking of Dogs Rescue is just a few “likes” away from 10,000, and we’d like to reach that milestone this month!

Our dedicated volunteer ensures our Facebook page is a fun and active community, and there’s always lots of news from the rescue. As an added – and amazing – bonus, we run regular auctions on our Facebook page! Whether you’re already thinking about holiday shopping or just looking to while away a few minutes (or hours), our Facebook auctions offer a variety of new and gently used items that are sure to catch your eye.

Please visit our [Facebook page](#) regularly to see what’s on the block and to place your bids. If you don’t already “like” us, please help us get to 10,000!

ARE YOU A PUPARAZZI?

You know your pup’s a star – show the world by entering the Puparazzi photo contest!

We’d love to see your favourite photos of your pooch with any kind of fall theme. Photos can include a four-legged pal, but no humans please. This contest is for pups only!

Not only can you make your best bud a star, there is not one but two amazing grand prizes and a fabulous runner-up prize to be won!

The entry fee is only \$10 per photo, or \$25 for three photo submissions.

Full contest details will be announced on October 2nd and will be available online at speakingofdogs.com as well as the Speaking of Dogs’ Facebook and Instagram pages. The contest will run until October 18, 2020.

All funds raised will go directly to Speaking of Dogs Rescue, supporting the wonderful dogs in our care and the special dogs we support through the Leg Up program.

Check online for details and get those cameras clicking!



Grand prize A is a one-hour dog portrait session in the GTA with Inline Design Photo, including an 11-inch x 14-inch lustre print.



Grand prize B is a personalized 80 cm x 60 cm or 60 cm x 80 cm acrylic on canvas pet portrait by Aga Silverthorne.



The runner-up prize is a Peggy Kry prize pack that includes two framed prints and two sets of handmade earrings.

SPEAKING OF DOGS RESCUE NEEDS YOUR VOTES!



We have some exciting news to share: Speaking of Dogs Rescue has been nominated as one of Toronto's best animal rescues by the *Toronto Star*!

We want to give it our best effort and perhaps even win, ***but we can't do that without your votes!*** Speaking of Dogs Rescue has been dedicated to the welfare of dogs for 20 years and has helped thousands of dogs find a second chance at love and life. We feel privileged to be in a position to help needy dogs, and we take their medical care, behaviour requirements, and placements very seriously.

To show your support for our dogs, simply vote for Speaking of Dogs Rescue at <https://bit.ly/2Zw400U>.

You'll need to register, but it's a very easy process.

Happy voting, and thank you on behalf of the dogs!

**It's been a year unlike any other, but some things never change,
like the dedication of our supporters and volunteers.**

Thank you and happy Thanksgiving to all our four-legged and two-legged supporters!

SPEAKING OF DOGS RESCUE CALENDARS ARE COMING!

Did you send a photo of your favourite four-legged friend for the Speaking of Dogs Rescue calendar? Can't wait to show your two-legged friends and family members? The wait is almost over!

These beautiful calendars are a perfect holiday gift and a great way to support our dogs. They're only \$15 each or \$12 each for 10 or more. You can place your advance order by emailing Lorraine at lorraine@speakingofdogs.com.

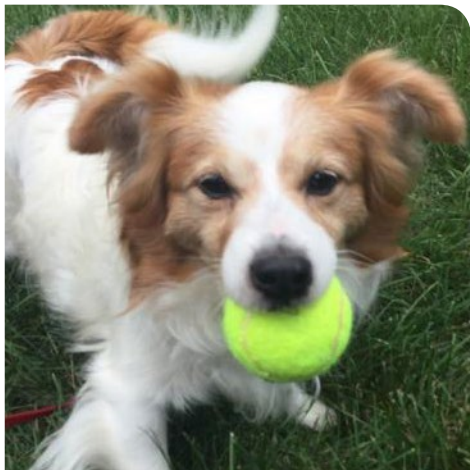
Many thanks to all who submitted photos.



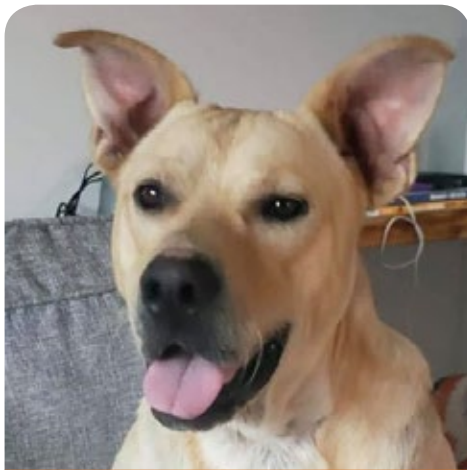
Happy Tails

SEPTEMBER ADOPTIONS:

A big thank you to our foster parents and our new adoptive guardians for helping give these loving dogs a second chance.



Biscuit



Chad Cooper



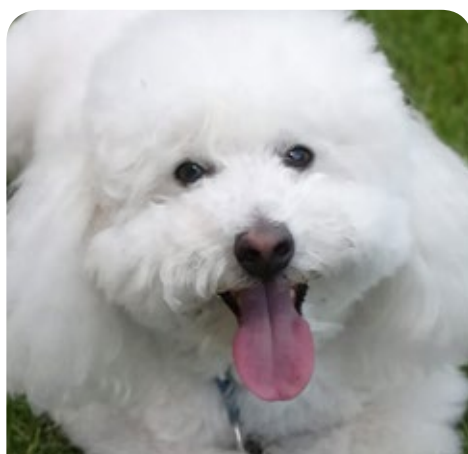
Chanel



Chase



Gemma



Hochi



Louie



Maggie Muffin



Maggy Yorkie

More Happy Tails



Nugget



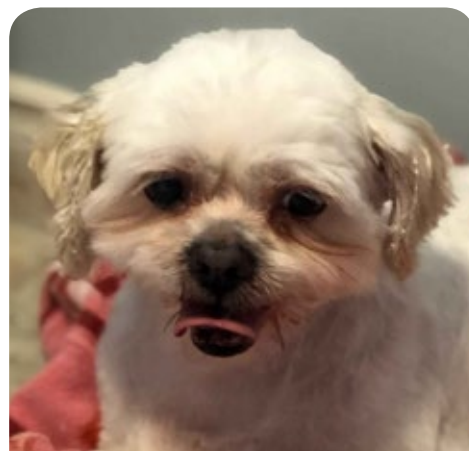
Princess



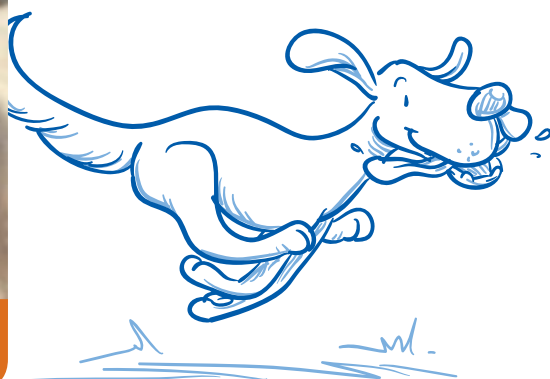
Sheba



Sweet Pea



Tito



WALK WITH RESQWALK!

ResQwalk is a free mobile app that allows you to raise money for Speaking of Dogs Rescue while out for your regular walks!

All you need to do is download the app to your iPhone or Android phone and track your walks (with or without your dog). It's free. It's easy. It can help the amazing dogs in our program find their second chance at life and love.

Once you've downloaded the app, please remember to mark Speaking of Dogs Rescue as your favourite rescue!

For more information, you can visit bestfriends.org/resqwalk/faq.

In Memoriam



Flora

LOVED BY CINDY, BRIAN AND FAMILY
ADOPTED OCTOBER 2012



Clifford

LOVED BY PATTY AND FAMILY
ADOPTED JULY 2016



Frank

LOVED BY VICKI AND BRIAN
ADOPTED MAY 2020



Joy

LOVED BY KATHERINE AND FAMILY
FOREVER IN FOSTER

In Memoriam



Stewie
LOVED BY NICOLE AND DARREL
ADOPTED DECEMBER 2017



Cooper
LOVED BY SUSAN AND JOHN
ADOPTED AUGUST 2020



Marshall
LOVED BY KATHY
ADOPTED JANUARY 2009



Max
LOVED BY CARLOS AND FAMILY
ADOPTED MAY 2017

In Memoriam



Toby
LOVED BY WILL AND BEN
ADOPTED OCTOBER 2016



Delta
LOVED BY TOM AND FAMILY
ADOPTED FEBRUARY 2015



Hannah
LOVED BY JIM AND FAMILY
ADOPTED SEPTEMBER 2018



Effie
LOVED BY MARY AND GRANT
ADOPTED JANUARY 2018

In Memoriam



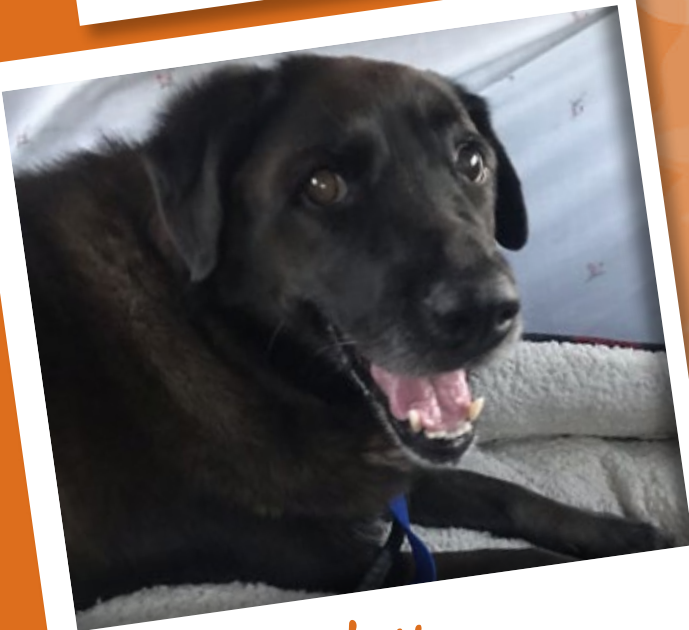
Stormy Bear

LOVED BY CEDARBRAE VET CLINIC AND
SPEAKING OF DOGS RESCUE
SORRY WE COULDN'T HELP YOU, BEAR. MAY YOU
REST IN PEACE, FREE OF PAIN AND SUFFERING.



Chooy

LOVED BY FRAZER AND ELAINE
ADOPTED MAY 2010



Ivy

LOVED BY LISA AND DAVE, SPEAKING OF DOGS
RESCUE, AND SIXTEEN MILE VETERINARY CLINIC
WE'RE SORRY WE COULDN'T HELP YOU, IVY, BUT WE
LOVED YOU SO MUCH – SO MUCH THAT WE HAD TO
LET YOU GO. RUN PAIN FREE, LOVELY LADY.