Q. I will be travelling with my retriever Harold, to France and the Ferry has asked all dogs to be muzzled on deck, he isn’t used to wearing one, what would you advise?

Excellent, you are thinking ahead. It is important for Harold’s comfort and reduced stress that his muzzle is introduced slowly before expecting him to wear one longer term. Firstly, his muzzle needs to fit well and not interfere with his eyes or be loose where he can push it off. Harold needs to be able to pant, drink and take treats especially if travelling in hot weather so choose a Baskerville type. Introduce the idea that he needs to put his nose into something for a reward, so start his muzzle training with a paper cup big enough to fit his nose and mouth. Show him that you are dropping some treats into it and get him to put his nose inside for them. When he is happy with this over several practices start doing the same with his new muzzle. He needs to pair the muzzle with something good or fun. When you get the muzzle out he should be getting excited or at least be expecting treats! Do not fit the muzzle at this stage, build up to fitting it and then him wearing it for short periods, literally just a few minutes, you can also fit the muzzle and play with him. If you rush muzzle training, then he is likely to want to remove it as soon as it is fitted! Remember that when Harold is familiar with wearing his new muzzle, try taking him out to various locations to get him accustomed to varying situations. Often a muzzle can have negative associations such as at when the vets or when being groomed, if this is the case for these dogs then you will need to desensitise them and retrain them. There are also several other calming products you can buy ahead of traveling like an ADAPTIL Collar, and Zylkene, also train hm to learn commands that he may need like ‘muzzle on’, ‘close to me’, ‘look at me’ for example, and introduce him to the different sounds that he may experience, Ferries can be very noisy, you can purchase various sound effects through the internet. View the excellent Blue Cross training video- Muzzle training your dog, by Claire. Bon Voyage

Q. My elderly dog has arthritis, it has been suggested that hydrotherapy would help but he has never been swimming, should I try?

Yes, hydrotherapy works very well in helping with the pain and inflammation of arthritis, however choose your canine hydrotherapist well. All small animal hydrotherapists should possess an understanding of behaviour, especially animal learning theories in addition to being able to correctly physical assess and produce a suitable treatment plan for your special boy. With arthritis, treatment is long term, starting with frequent sessions and then managing pain and comfort by regular sessions that can be as little as once every three weeks. Your boy will need plenty of time and patience when introducing him to the water. He will most likely be nervous of losing his footing when first leaving the ramp, so the first sessions should be about teaching him how safe it is to be on so he should start with short sessions off and then strait back. He will most likely be motivated to swim back to the ramp and not away from it. The hydrotherapist should use this understanding to start to teach him to swim to safety. It would be best if you are involved in calling him back to the ramp too. If your dog loves any special toy or food treat this should only be available to him during swimming to help pair positive associations If he really does not take to swimming after three sessions then consider making use of a Canine Spa Treatment, (not to be confused with spa treatments offered by some dog groomers). A Canine Hydrotherapy Spa consists of hotter water than the pool, and uses air to create massage bubbles. Your boy will need to just be sitting in this at a suitable depth and the heat, water pressure and air bubbles will help reduce inflammation and increase pain management. He will still need to be given plenty of time to adjust to being put into water! For additional information on hydrotherapy visit the National Association of Registered Canine Hydrotherapists or the Canine Hydrotherapy Association. [www.narch.org.uk](http://www.narch.org.uk), [www.canine-hydrotherapy.org](http://www.canine-hydrotherapy.org)

Q. Should I consider sending my young Pointer away to be trained or attend local dog training classes?

In a nutshell - No! Animal learning takes place within context, find a local dog trainer that will work with you. See the next issue on finding an effective, and professional dog trainer.