

Recommended *Training Resources* for Lagotto Families

A curated reading list, organised by life stage, drawn from the books and programmes that hold up under scrutiny.

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A note on this *list*

These are the books, courses, and programmes that hold up under scrutiny — meaning they are consistent with current behavioural science, written or built by people with verifiable credentials, and broadly endorsed across the force-free professional community.

Recommendations are organised by life stage. Each entry includes a brief summary, why it earns the recommendation, and any caveats worth noting before you read it. The list is not exhaustive; it is curated. We have chosen the resources we would put into our own buyer's hands rather than the longest possible reading list.

A WORD ON PHILOSOPHY

Every resource on this list operates within the positive reinforcement, force-free, LIMA framework — Least Intrusive, Minimally Aversive. This is the standard endorsed by the American Veterinary Society of Animal Behavior, which has issued formal position statements against dominance-based and aversive training methods.

We do not recommend resources outside this framework, regardless of how popular the trainer or how charismatic the presentation. The science is settled, and we believe families deserve clarity rather than a balanced selection of conflicting advice.

Two foundational books appear before the staged list. They are not training manuals — they teach you how to read your dog and understand why training works as it does. Reading either one before you begin will make every other resource on this list more useful.

The lens before the *method*

Two books that belong on every shelf. Neither is a step-by-step training manual — they are how you build the lens through which all the other resources make sense.

BOOK · FOUNDATIONAL

The Other End of the Leash

Patricia McConnell, PhD, CAAB

The single most important book on this list for understanding *why* training works the way it does. McConnell is an applied animal behaviourist who spent twenty-five years as a certified behaviourist specialising in canine aggression. The book reframes the human–dog relationship by examining what humans (primates) do unconsciously around dogs (canids), and how those primate behaviours are routinely misread by our dogs. Translated into fourteen languages.

WHY WE RECOMMEND IT Reading this before training any dog reduces frustration on both ends of the leash. Owners who understand that hugging is a primate gesture rather than a canine one, that staring is confrontational in dog culture, and that humans naturally lean forward when calling — and that dogs read forward pressure as a signal to retreat — train better dogs.

CAVEAT Not a how-to manual. It is the philosophy beneath the manual. Pair it with one of the stage-specific resources that follow.

BOOK · FOUNDATIONAL

Meet Your Dog

Kim Brophey, CDBC, CPDT-KA

Brophey is an applied ethologist who developed the L.E.G.S. framework — Learning, Environment, Genetics, Self — for understanding why a dog does what it does. The argument is that pure behaviourism is incomplete; a Lagotto's water-sport ancestry and truffle-hunting genetics matter, and ignoring them creates training plans that fight against the dog rather than work with it. Endorsed by the late Raymond Coppinger and embraced by professional behaviourists worldwide.

WHY WE RECOMMEND IT This is the single best book for understanding how breed history shapes behaviour, which is directly relevant for Lagotto families. The truffle-hunting drive, the alertness, the water attraction, the velcro nature — these are not accidents and they are not trainable away. Brophey gives owners a framework for working *with* their dog's nature.

CAVEAT Brophey's work is a lens, not a training programme. Use it alongside one of the curriculum-based resources below.

Before the puppy *arrives*

The work that happens before pickup — and the work the breeder has already done — sets the trajectory for everything that follows.

PROGRAMME · DVD & STREAMING

Puppy Culture

Jane Killion

This is the programme our puppies are raised on, so it earns the lead. Killion is a Bull Terrier breeder and professional trainer who developed Puppy Culture as a comprehensive twelve-week protocol for breeders, covering Early Neurological Stimulation (days 3–16), the critical socialisation window, the seven goals of socialisation — communication, emotional stability, habituation, enrichment, health, skills, love — and developmental-milestone-based protocols rather than rigid calendar schedules.

WHY WE RECOMMEND IT Buyers who watch Puppy Culture before pickup understand precisely what their puppy has already experienced — manding instead of jumping, startle-recovery work, the Communication Trinity (clicker conditioning, box game, manding), Conditioned Emotional Responses, and so on. They arrive home knowing how to continue the work rather than restart it.

CAVEAT Some content is breeder-focused (whelping, ENS) and can be skimmed. The buyer-facing companion resources from Madcap University at shoppuppyculture.com are the more efficient option for puppy parents specifically.

BOOK

Before and After Getting Your Puppy

Dr Ian Dunbar, BVetMed, PhD

Dunbar is a foundational figure in modern dog training. He designed and taught the world's first off-leash puppy socialisation classes — SIRIUS Puppy Training, San Francisco Bay Area, 1982 — founded the Association of Pet Dog Trainers in 1993, and effectively created the modern puppy-

class field. The book combines two of his earlier manuals into one volume organised around six developmental milestones, from “before you choose a puppy” through ongoing adult training.

WHY WE RECOMMEND IT The structure is unmatched. Each milestone has clear deadlines, and the prevention-first framing avoids problems before they form rather than fixing them afterwards.

CAVEAT Dunbar’s tone is famously direct and can read as alarmist to first-time owners — the deadlines are framed as essential, and missing one is presented as a serious developmental setback. This is intentional motivational writing, not a literal scoring system. A puppy that meets ninety-five people instead of one hundred by twelve weeks is fine.

POSITION STATEMENT · FREE PDF

AVSAB Position Statement on Puppy Socialization

American Veterinary Society of Animal Behavior

Not a book — a four-page position paper from the certifying body for veterinary behaviourists. The statement establishes that the critical socialisation window is the first three months of life, that behavioural problems (not infectious disease) are the leading cause of death in dogs under three years, and that puppies should begin socialisation classes at seven to eight weeks *before* their vaccination series is complete, provided they have had at least one set of vaccines and a deworming.

WHY WE RECOMMEND IT When a well-meaning veterinarian advises a new owner to keep the puppy isolated until sixteen weeks, this is the document that politely overrules them. Free, authoritative, and citation-quality. Available at avsab.org under Position Statements.

CAVEAT None. This is the standard of care.

Eight weeks to *five months*

The active socialisation window and the foundation-skills period — the months when a few hours of work each week will return dividends for the next decade.

BOOK & CURRICULUM

Puppy Start Right

Kenneth Martin, DVM (DACVB) & Debbie Martin, RVT, VTS (Behavior), CPDT-KA, KPA-CTP

Co-authored by a board-certified veterinary behaviourist — Dr Martin holds Diplomate status with the American College of Veterinary Behaviorists, the highest credential in veterinary behaviour — and his wife, a Karen Pryor Academy faculty member. The book pairs with a structured curriculum (Puppy Start Right Preschool) taught at veterinary practices and training centres nationally. It covers socialisation, foundation training, problem prevention, and adolescent-stage behaviours including mouthing, jumping, chewing, and counter-surfing.

WHY WE RECOMMEND IT It is the most credentialed puppy book on the market. When you want a single, hand-it-to-them resource covering the first six months and endorsed by both the veterinary behaviour establishment and Karen Pryor Clicker Training, this is the one.

CAVEAT The book stands on its own; the in-person Puppy Start Right Preschool curriculum is even better if you can find a certified instructor locally.

BOOK · SIX-WEEK CURRICULUM

Family Friendly Dog Training

Patricia McConnell, PhD & Aimee Moore, CPDT

A six-week structured curriculum from McConnell and her co-instructor at Dog's Best Friend in Madison, Wisconsin. Used by progressive trainers and shelters across the country, reportedly by more than eighty thousand dogs and their owners. Teaches sit, down, come, heel, stay, wait, leave it, drop it, and no-jumping using positive reinforcement, with detailed troubleshooting throughout.

WHY WE RECOMMEND IT McConnell's writing is warm and clear. The six-week structure converts "I should train my puppy" into "this is what we are doing this week." An excellent companion to *The Other End of the Leash* — same author, same philosophy, with the practical exercises the foundational book deliberately omits.

CAVEAT Does not go deep on house-training or crate-training; assumes those are happening in parallel. Pair with Dunbar or Puppy Start Right for those topics.

BOOK · PRINCIPLES

Don't Shoot the Dog!

Karen Pryor

Pryor is the pioneer of clicker training in the companion-dog world; her background was actually marine mammal training — she shaped behaviour in dolphins long before dogs. This book is not species-specific. It explains the principles of operant conditioning — reinforcement, shaping, timing, the eight ways to change behaviour — in plain English. Most professional trainers consider it required background reading.

WHY WE RECOMMEND IT Once owners understand why a click works, the rest of training stops feeling like a series of memorised recipes and starts feeling like a system they can apply to anything. Particularly valuable for Lagotto owners who eventually want to do truffle hunting, scent work, or agility.

CAVEAT Not a puppy book. It is a principles book that happens to be useful for puppies. Pair it with a curriculum-based resource.

Five months to *eighteen months*

The stage where well-trained puppies often appear to forget everything, and where most training plans fall apart. Hormones, growth, fear periods, and the end of the easy-socialisation window all collide here.

BOOK

Control Unleashed: The Puppy Program

Leslie McDevitt, MLA, CDBC, CPDT-KA

McDevitt is a behaviour consultant trained under Dr Karen Overall, one of the world's foremost veterinary behaviourists. Originally written for the agility world but applicable to any dog who needs help focusing in stimulating environments. The Puppy Program edition is more user-friendly than the original 2007 *Control Unleashed* — better organised, one concept per chapter, building skills sequentially. Core games include “Look at That” (counter-conditioning the dog to environmental triggers), the relaxation protocol, and pattern games.

WHY WE RECOMMEND IT This is the resource for the puppy who is either wildly distractible and over-aroused, or anxious and shut down in busy environments. Both are common in the adolescent Lagotto. The “Look at That” game alone is worth the cost of the book.

CAVEAT Some examples reference agility training, which can lead pet-only owners to think the book does not apply. It does — substitute “going on walks” for “running an agility course” in the examples.

BOOK · CORNERSTONE — REACTIVITY

Behavior Adjustment Training 2.0

Grisha Stewart, MA, CPDT-KA, KPA-CTP

This is the cornerstone resource for any dog showing reactivity, and the lineage is worth knowing. Stewart founded Ahimsa Dog Training in Seattle in 2003, which became one of the most influential force-free training schools in the country, earning multiple “Best of Seattle” awards. She developed BAT — Behavior Adjustment Training — to address her own dog's reactivity, and the protocol has

spread internationally through her seminars and online academy. BAT 2.0 is the 2016 rewrite — essentially every sentence revised, roughly one hundred pages added — and it is the version to read; the original BAT 1.0 is now of historical interest only.

The premise: most reactivity is functionally the dog asking for distance from a trigger. BAT lets the dog get that distance through their own choices on a long line, in carefully arranged setups, with the handler acting as a safety net rather than a director. Roughly eighty per cent of BAT 2.0 is leash skills — using a long line as backup without interfering with the dog's choices.

WHY WE RECOMMEND IT It is the most respected protocol in the force-free world for genuine reactivity, fear, and frustration. Endorsed by Patricia McConnell, Victoria Stilwell, and Susan Friedman. The Seattle origin matters because there is an established teaching network — CBATI-certified trainers exist across the country, and the Ahimsa-trained community continues to produce strong instructors.

CAVEAT This is an intermediate-to-advanced resource, not a starter book. If your puppy occasionally barks at something on a walk, start with *Control Unleashed: Puppy Program*. BAT 2.0 is the right call when the dog has crossed into reactivity territory — sustained barking and lunging, fear-based behaviour, frustration-based reactivity. The leash-skills chapter takes practice, and most owners benefit from finding a CBATI-certified trainer locally rather than going it alone. Stewart sold Ahimsa in 2015 and now operates from Oregon; the Seattle school continues to teach BAT under new ownership.

ONLINE COURSE

Adolescent Minds and Manners (BH190)

Fenzi Dog Sports Academy · Sharon Carroll & Julie Daniels

Fenzi Dog Sports Academy is the largest online force-free training school for sport and pet dogs, founded by Denise Fenzi. BH190 is a six-week course covering the adolescent brain, hormone-driven behaviour changes, recall regression, habit formation, and reactivity that emerges during adolescence.

WHY WE RECOMMEND IT Most books underweight adolescence — there is a vast library on puppies and another on adult problems, but the six-to-eighteen-month gap is where families lose dogs to shelters and where well-built puppy training appears to evaporate. Carroll and Daniels treat adolescence as its own developmental stage with its own curriculum. The course also runs at Bronze level (audit-only) which makes it accessible.

CAVEAT Online video format with discussion forum, not a self-paced book. Best for owners who like structure and check-ins. Fenzi has many other relevant courses worth knowing about, including FF185 *Ready and Resilient: From Puppy to Awesome Adult*.

Eighteen months and *onward*

Past about eighteen months for a Lagotto, you are in adult-dog territory — though full social maturity is not usually reached until two-and-a-half to three years. Resources at this stage tend to be problem-specific or lifestyle-deepening rather than developmental.

BOOK · SIX-WEEK CURRICULUM

The Power of Positive Dog Training

Pat Miller, CPDT-KA, CBCC-KA

Miller has been training for thirty-five years, founded Peaceable Paws Dog & Puppy Training Center, served as past President of the APDT, and has been Training Editor for *Whole Dog Journal* for over two decades. The book is a six-week reward-based curriculum that works equally well for puppies, adolescents, and adult dogs needing a reset.

WHY WE RECOMMEND IT When a family adopts an adult Lagotto, takes in a rescue, or realises their two-year-old has gaps in foundation training, this is the book. It is structured as a workbook — planner-like layout, specific treat recommendations, troubleshooting sections. Miller's tone is patient and assumes nothing.

CAVEAT Some readers find the format dense; the upside is that everything you need is there.

BOOK · ADVANCED REACTIVITY

Control Unleashed: Reactive to Relaxed

Leslie McDevitt

The third book in the Control Unleashed series. Whereas the original 2007 book was for agility competitors with focus issues, and the 2012 *Puppy Program* was for prevention, *Reactive to Relaxed* (2019) is the mature work — focused on giving the dog a “voice” through start-button behaviours, yes/no questions, and conversational training. Aimed at dogs already showing reactivity, not as prevention.

WHY WE RECOMMEND IT For adult Lagotto owners working through established reactivity — leash-reactive, dog-reactive, environmentally anxious — this is the next step after BAT 2.0, or a companion to it. McDevitt's pattern games complement BAT setups beautifully.

CAVEAT Genuinely advanced. Most pet families will not need it. Reserve it for clients working through real reactivity, ideally with a trainer.

BOOKLET · COMMUNICATION

On Talking Terms with Dogs: Calming Signals

Turid Rugaas

A short, illustrated booklet by the Norwegian dog behaviourist who first catalogued and named the small de-escalation signals dogs use with each other — lip licks, yawns, head turns, ground sniffing, slow movement. Approximately thirty documented signals.

WHY WE RECOMMEND IT Once you can read calming signals, you stop misinterpreting your own dog's stress and you stop letting them be pushed past their threshold by other dogs or people. Particularly valuable for Lagotto owners because the breed tends to communicate subtly — a Lagotto offering you a head turn and a lip lick is a Lagotto telling you they need a break.

CAVEAT Brief. It is a booklet, not a comprehensive book. Best paired with *The Other End of the Leash*.

Situational *references*

A few additional resources worth knowing about for specific situations that may arise in your life with a Lagotto.

BOOK · ADOPTING AN OLDER DOG

Love Has No Age Limit: Welcoming an Adopted Dog into Your Home

Patricia McConnell & Karen B. London

The right book for families adopting an adolescent or adult Lagotto rather than starting with a puppy. Covers the decompression period, building trust, and addressing the gaps in unknown training history.

BOOKLET · SEPARATION ANXIETY

I'll Be Home Soon: How to Prevent and Treat Separation Anxiety

Patricia McConnell

A short, focused booklet on separation anxiety. Worth knowing about because Lagottos are velcro dogs by breed character, and the line between “naturally bonded” and “clinical separation anxiety” can be crossed without families noticing.

BOOK · RESOURCE GUARDING

Mine! A Practical Guide to Resource Guarding in Dogs

Jean Donaldson

Donaldson founded the Academy for Dog Trainers, and her 1996 book *The Culture Clash* helped establish the modern force-free movement. *Mine!* is the standard reference for resource guarding

— food, toys, locations. Worth recommending if a Lagotto puppy shows early possessive tendencies, even mild ones.

FREE ONLINE LIBRARY

SIRIUS Puppy Training Resources

siriuspup.com

Dunbar's organisation maintains a free resource library — house training, separation anxiety, chewing, the safe socialisation guide. Useful for owners who want quick answers without committing to a book.

Credentials worth *recognising*

Beyond the reading list, the most important resource a family will choose is their in-person trainer. Four credentials worth recognising:

CPDT-KA	Certified Professional Dog Trainer — Knowledge Assessed. The baseline professional certification from CCPDT, requiring three hundred or more training hours and a written examination.
KPA-CTP	Karen Pryor Academy Certified Training Partner. Six-month curriculum-based certification with an explicit force-free commitment.
CDBC	Certified Dog Behavior Consultant, IAABC. For behaviour consulting work; more advanced than the CPDT credential.
DACVB	Diplomate, American College of Veterinary Behaviorists. Board-certified veterinary behaviourist; the medical-grade credential. Reserved for cases involving serious aggression, anxiety disorders, or anything requiring medication.

The AVSAB also publishes a free position statement on *how to choose a trainer*, available alongside the Puppy Socialization statement at avsab.org. We recommend reading both before engaging a professional.

What is deliberately not on this list

We do not recommend resources that promote dominance theory, alpha rolls, leash corrections as a primary teaching tool, prong collars, electronic (shock) collars, or so-called “balanced” training as a philosophy. This is not an aesthetic preference — it is the position of the AVSAB, supported by long-term studies showing that aversive methods increase fear, anxiety, and aggression.

Some popular trainers and television personalities who continue to use these methods are deliberately omitted, regardless of their visibility. We believe the science is settled, and we do not ask families to sort through conflicting advice from sources that disagree on the fundamentals.

NORTHWEST LAGOTTO

Lynden, Washington · nwlagotto.com

This list is reviewed and updated periodically. Always consult the latest edition.