The Canine Conference 2026

Presentation Summary: Managing Aggression in Dogs

Presenters: Coach Carlos and Coach Caroline (Coaching 4 Paws) | Moderator: Jonas Black

Source: COACH CARLOS - CAROLINE – JONAS SESSION AT THE CANINE CONFERENCE NOV 8, 2026

The session examined managing canine aggression, setting realistic expectations, public safety, and maintaining improvement after training. Its central message: effective management is not the same as eliminating the underlying problem, and management should not automatically be viewed as failure.

Section I — Formal Presentation

1. Managing Aggression vs. Rehabilitation

Carlos distinguished rehabilitation, which seeks to change a dog's emotional response to a trigger, from management, which primarily changes how the dog behaves around that trigger. He estimated that approximately 90% of the aggression cases his business handles involve management rather than fully eliminating the problem. Caroline noted that management can be more feasible for owners facing time or cost constraints, while allowing continued efforts to change the emotional response.

2. Honest Evaluations and Realistic Expectations

The speakers advised against guaranteeing outcomes before assessing a dog. An initial consultation should address bite history, triggers, family circumstances, other pets, and the owner's goals, followed by direct evaluation. Caroline emphasized ruling out possible medical causes when aggressive behavior develops suddenly. Trainers should decline or refer cases beyond their competence or where necessary safety expectations cannot be met.

3. Training Must Include the Owner

Caroline criticized board-and-train programs that return a dog without ensuring its owner can apply the training. What a dog does for a professional trainer may not transfer automatically to the home. Owners need ongoing lessons, clearly explained protocols, and practice handling challenging situations.

4. Safety Protocols and Muzzle Conditioning

The speakers recommended individualized safety measures, potentially including controlled environments, structured interactions, indoor leash management, and muzzle conditioning. Carlos supported proactively teaching dogs to accept a muzzle, including as preparation for injuries or veterinary handling. They warned that improved outward behavior is not a reason to discard necessary precautions.

5. Documentation and Professional Accountability

Carlos stressed documenting agreements, conversations, updates, limitations, and recommendations in writing. This supports accountability during disagreements and gives owners a reliable reference. Their program also uses video updates to demonstrate progress and explain methods.

6. Preventing Regression After Training

Both speakers expected some regression when dogs returned home from board-and-train programs. They advised clear, step-by-step written guidance, gradual progression, meaningful practice in controlled conditions,

and returning to earlier protocols when needed. Caroline warned against removing precautions prematurely because a dog appears improved.

7. Continuing Education and Professional Growth

Carlos and Caroline closed by urging trainers to remain students, pursue mentorship, and learn from differing approaches. They described the field as evolving and encouraged professional humility and ongoing education.

Core Distinction

Rehabilitation	Management
Seeks to change emotional response to a trigger	Seeks safer behavior around a trigger
May require prolonged behavior modification	May offer more immediately practical control
Aims to reduce the underlying stress response	Underlying emotional response may remain
Requires individualized assessment	Requires individualized precautions and owner follow-through

Section II — Questions, Answers, and Open Discussion

The formal lecture gives way to audience questions and a less structured conversation. This section separates that discussion from the prepared presentation.

1. Does Managing Aggression Mean a Dog Is Still Dangerous?

The speakers reiterated that behavior may improve without eliminating the dog's underlying response. Jonas argued that some behavior histories continue to require management and cautioned against universal promises of a complete cure.

2. Why Work With Aggressive Dogs?

Caroline discussed the satisfaction of assisting dogs and families with limited options and potentially preventing surrender or euthanasia. Carlos acknowledged the extra complexity and risk of aggression cases.

3. Safety and Liability

The conversation addressed bite incidents, litigation risk, staff preparedness, safety equipment, and professional responsibility. Caroline emphasized staying within a handler's capabilities and protecting personal safety.

4. Can One Method Work for Every Dog?

The group discussed differences among dogs in history, stress, temperament, environment, and motivation. Training tools, reinforcement, and consequences were debated as professional viewpoints, not definitive research findings.

5. Communication Versus Technical Language

Carlos argued that owners primarily want solutions to practical problems; trainers must explain clear, achievable actions instead of relying on jargon. Jonas underscored the importance of meeting individual client goals.

6. Decompression and Shelter Assessments

Jonas discussed how shelter stress can change observable behavior. Some dogs may become calmer in a stable environment, while others may reveal additional concerns after initial inhibition fades. Decompression can reveal behavior rather than necessarily resolve it.

7. Shelter Euthanasia and Resource Decisions

The speakers acknowledged the difficulty of behavioral evaluations and the consequences of euthanasia decisions. They also debated whether limited rescue resources should focus on intensive rehabilitation of a few difficult cases or on helping more dogs with less intensive needs. These were opinions, not findings concerning a particular shelter.

8. Social Media and the Profession

Jonas criticized personal attacks and engagement-driven online disputes. Carlos described how social media expanded his professional reach. Both saw educational value but cautioned against controversy and oversimplification.

9. Closing Advice

Caroline stressed safety, listening to clients, and ongoing support. Carlos returned to communication and accountability. Jonas thanked the presenters and concluded the conference weekend.

Principal Takeaways

1. Managing aggression can improve welfare and reduce risk even when the underlying response is not eliminated.
2. Responsible training includes direct evaluation, owner education, documentation, safety measures, and sustained follow-up.
3. Shelter behaviors should be interpreted with attention to environmental stress and the limitations of isolated observations.

Relevance to Shelters and Rescues

The most relevant themes are the distinction between behavior and emotional state, the effects of shelter stress on assessment, and the need to differentiate rehabilitation from management. The discussion did not establish universal criteria for rehoming decisions or behavioral euthanasia; these require individualized professional assessment.