

# Treibball—Not Just for Herding Breeds

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If you're interested in taking part in a low-cost and accessible activity with your dog, why not try the lesser-known dog sport of Treibball? Professional dog trainer Dianna Stearns is the President of the American Treibball Association (ATA). She explains that sport was first introduced in Germany by Jan Nibjoer, and then, in 2009, a video called "*Hund mit 8 Ballen*" went viral. "American dog trainers and dog owners soon took notice of the videos coming across the web. My friends and I found it very intriguing" she explains. "Why should European dogs have all the fun?"

Having only been around for about a decade, Treibball isn't as popular as some of the traditional dog sports, but interest is growing. The sport doesn't rely on lots of equipment, it's easy to do from home, and it's low-impact. This means it's suitable for dogs and handlers of all ages, sizes, and mobility levels.

## **Treibball is Suitable For All Breeds—Not Just Collies**

For energetic dogs that are ball-focused, have a herding drive, or that enjoy having a job to do, Treibball (sometimes called Urban Herding) will appeal. Although the sport has taken inspiration from herding trials and moving sheep towards a pen, you don't need a Collie or Shepherd to take part. Dianna has seen Labrador Retrievers, Papillons, Cairn Terriers, Rottweilers, and even a Pug participating.

She emphasizes that "while the herding breeds have a slight edge, pushing a ball with your nose or shoulder isn't naturally instinctive for dogs, like Barn Hunt or Nosework is. It has to be trained, and takes work, like training for Agility or Freestyle."

In competitive Treibball, your dog drives eight oversized, inflatable balls into a goal within a seven-minute time frame. The handler directs the dog to select the balls in a particular order. The more skilled they become, the more distance your dog drives the balls increases and the time they have to complete it gets shorter.

If you have a nervous dog, the Treibball setup caters for them too. Dianna advises that "one dog and one handler compete at a time. No dogs or food are allowed on the sidelines, to limit distractions and to allow reactive dogs to compete equally."

## **It's a Positive, Force-Free Sport**

Treibball is an off-leash activity, so, ideally, your dog will already have a reliable recall and respond well to basic cues from a distance. But don't worry if your dog doesn't have a 100% solid recall in a distracting environment. It's possible to train using a long line initially.

If you attend a class, your dog will gradually learn how to move the ball using targeting techniques. Initially, a clicker helps mark the desired behaviors consistently. You'll also teach hand signals and verbal directional cues, so your dog will understand where and when to move the balls. A positive sport, Treibball doesn't allow any physical or verbal

corrections. “It’s an excellent vehicle for encouraging reward-based training and creative play between owners and their dogs,” says Dianna.

### **Treibball Offers Lots of Benefits For Your Dog**

“We’ve been told, since the beginning, that participating in Treibball has enhanced owners’ relationships with their dogs,” says Dianna. Your dog’s reliability off-leash and focus will improve. It can also tighten up impulse control issues and help with body awareness.

The sport really tests your dog’s problem-solving skills, which is great for general enrichment and well-being. Regular Treibball sessions will keep your dog mentally and physically stimulated, and this can help prevent problem behaviors surfacing as a result of boredom. For senior dogs, studies have shown that problem-solving activities can even help to slow the cognitive aging process.

Dianna believes Treibball is a fantastic way to have fun and strengthen the bond you have with your dog. “What I most love about Treibball is the process of watching the dog and owner work through the process,” she says. “Since dogs can’t talk, it’s like in cartoons, where the lightbulb goes on when the character has an idea. When you see them get it, they really get it! After that, you can’t stop them from pushing the ball.”

### **How to Get Started with Treibball?**

Treibball can be a bit tricky to learn in the beginning, so it’s a good idea to find an ATA-certified trainer in your area. The instructor will break down the sports elements into easy-to-digest, bite-sized chunks for you and your dog.

The American Treibball Association is currently the only 501(c)3 non-profit governing body granting national titles in Treibball in the United States.

If you want to try Treibball at home or touch up on your skills, Dianna’s book “[\*Get the Ball Rolling: A Step by Step Guide to Training for Treibball\*](#)” is an excellent resource.