



Sept. 3, 2017

When weather keeps your crew cooped up inside and they start mobbing in corners and growling in discontent, this tells you two

things: It's time to step in and retake the ship and....you could have too many dogs.

After devastating the Texas coast last week, the remnants of Hurricane Harvey sailed across Tennessee and our mountain home over the long Labor Day weekend, sending waves of rain so persistent that we lashed lines to everyone before darting out for bathroom breaks. Stuff happens. You improvise. And we learned that Sully floats like a stone...

Here are some games we came up with to take the edge off and boost our chances of survival:

- **Find the cheese.**

Is it in Oona's ear? Could it be in the bookcase? Is there cheese in the telephone? This is a sleight of hand game since in a small house like ours with four dogs diving for the cheese like demented ninjas, you won't have a chance to actually *hide* anything. The point is to keep them busy and under *your* control. And, for godsakes, keep moving. Otherwise *they'll* have the cheese and thus total control of the household.

It works like this: Palm a piece of cheese. Wait until they're restless and you sense trouble is about to break out. In our case, it's any time two of the four are conscious. If all four are up and staggering about, get a bigger bag of cheese.

Ask excitedly, "Where's the cheese???" Then reveal it's right behind one of their ears. Don't let that one see the cheese. Pick the slowest, drowsiest one. When the others pounce, quickly ask again, "Where's the cheese???" and reveal it's at the end of the hall behind the bookcase. Brace for a stampede. Don't pick a bookcase with any heirlooms on it. Sidestep the melee as best you can and hustle the cheese to the kitchen, ask the question and reveal it behind the

pantry door. Keep this up for hours or until they snatch all your cheese. Hopefully they'll sleep while you drive in the storm to get more.

*** Who's a GOOD boy?**

Just asking this question in our household leads to our dogs dubiously looking at each other in confusion. They know what the words mean. They're just pretty sure none of them remotely qualifies. That's okay! It gets their attention and stops Oisín from leaping up the walls. When Oisín stops spinning, I announce, "OISÍN's a good boy!" and give him cheese. Two pieces if he sits.

Ask again, "Who's a GOOD boy?" Chances are, at least one will plop his rear end down because he saw Oisín hitting the jackpot. Pop that one a piece of cheese. If you get *all* your dogs sitting at the same time, reward *yourself* with cheese, too. Either way, you've passed another 15 minutes without bloodshed.

Here are some games which failed miserably:

• Let sleeping dogs lie

You'd think that eventually on a gloomy, rainy day, they'd all lie down and sleep. Not so if you have a wired juvenile like Oisín. The other dogs know if they sleep, Oisín will step on them pacing through the house. Since he's the biggest of the lot, we can track him by the angry yips in his wake. By the time *he's* ready to curl up and sleep, the others are dragging out the tar and feathers. Don't let this proceed. You'll never get the carpet clean.

• The drinking game

Okay, this one was for me. Every time one of the four howled randomly for no apparent reason, I knocked one back. It went fine until I woke up on the floor with my credit card missing and found

the phone off the hook and empty pizza boxes stashed in odd places.
A couple of days later, boxes of meat began arriving in the mail.
Don't play this game without adult supervision.