



April 21, 2018

From time to time even the most hound-savvy of us are baffled by the behavior of our Irish Wolfhounds. I've learned to simply ask Oona, my loving four-year-old, diva. Like most wolfhounds, Oona's quirky and opinionated, but she always tells it like it is.

Got a question? Send it to bob@thewildstare.com and Oona will get back to you as soon as she gets her nails done or she can prod the old guy to take dictation.

Why Do They Watch Me Go To The Bathroom?

Dear Oona:

I monitor my dog's pee and poop so I'll know when they need to go out. Will I get cataracts?

— Lucille

Dear Lucille:

I don't think you'll get cataracts but you'll have a lot fewer messes inside if you let us out a lot to do our business.

It kinda freaked me out how much my mom and dad watched me go to the bathroom when I was little. They practically kept flow charts and pie graphs, studied the tides and watched the clock like maniacs. I guess that's because I just went when I felt like it and when I was little, I felt like it a *lot*. I couldn't hold it.

So they used a lot of Crate Training. Then when I *could* hold it, if it was raining outside or a cold wind was blowing, I thought, what the heck, there's nice warm dark corner right over there. Who'll know? Wrongo! Talk about a fuss. OUT came the smelly cleaner stuff and the towels. The dirty looks and the disappointment. "OUTside, Oona, go OUTside." They called them "accidents" but, yeaah, they were pretty much intentionals.

And I noticed the other dogs always waited to pee and poop. They just shook their heads at me like I was a skunk or something. Sully started whispering, "Stinky Girl" at me whenever I walked by and of course I had to put The Fear in him to get him to shut up. That took about two seconds and he still sorta twitches when I walk by but...it got to be embarrassing.

By the time I was old enough to start grooming myself, I realized, hey, dogs really do *prefer* to go out and water the

grass or fertilize the begonias. We don't like to soil our dens. And my parents didn't give me a lot of choice. Whenever they were away, they kept me in my X-pen and I didn't want to stink up the place. I knew they'd let me out the first thing when they got home so I learned to hold it. Now, at least once an hour they ask if we want to go out. Sometimes I do. Sometimes I roll over and go back to sleep.

Some parents train us to ring a bell when we need to go out. This is a very good idea because it gives us the choice of when to go and choice is a very big deal with us. Think about it. Humans control just about everything — when we eat, *what* we eat, when we go for walks, what rooms we get to go in...it's endless. And wolfhounds are a pretty independent bunch. But any living thing needs the freedom to make choices if it's going to not get stressed and go squirrely.

I think the reason my parents didn't use the bell was they knew me pretty well and figured I'd choose to start ringing it just to get a rise out of them. Finn uses his clobber paw to let them know when he's ready to go out. Or eat. Or just to see them jump to their feet. Life's a little boring sometimes. You take your fun where you can find it.

Other parents install doggy doors as a solution. Then we can go in and out (and in and out) whenever we want to. But, depending on where you live, sometimes we get new playmates this way, too. Snakes. Raccoons. Bobcats. I'd love to have a doggy door just to see who comes through it next in the middle of the night when things are quiet and boring. Plus, it'd be kinda fun to sneak out at 2 a.m. and howl at the

moon and see how many dogs I can talk to in the neighborhood. I guess this is why humans lock their doggy door at night.

So, it's back to square one. My humans say they can't afford a doggy door until they win The Lottery. Next time? I'm getting rich parents.

Meanwhile, you are on the right track. Keep learning about us and we'll keep learning about you. We work it out together. Probably before you go blind, even.

— **Oona**