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Fact or fiction? Tribune sets out to debunk 10 rural legends

By Kristen Inbody, Tribune Staff Writer

THE LEGEND

You can't teach an old dog new tricks.

THE TRUTH

"Absolutely, old dogs can learn new tricks, and they enjoy it," says Prairie Lee, a certified professional dog trainer and owner of Rocking K9 Companions in Choteau.

"As dogs age, they travel less, so the best thing a handler can do to keep their old dog entertained is to teach them tricks that don't require much movement, but do require them to think," Lee said. "Tricks such as 'touch' or 'watch me' are great focus games, while tricks like 'spin', 'twirl' and 'bow,' are all action behaviors that are actually great for stretching."

Lee said old dogs can learn just as fast as young dogs — if they are food or toy motivated.

"Both are very likely in most old dogs," she said. "Using toys and food to capture, shape or lure, any breed of dog at any age can learn something new."

