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Advice To Using Positive Reinforcement And Rewards To Train Your Dog

By Jonathan Cheong

Training dogs using positive reinforcement and reward training has long been recognized as both highly effective for the owner and a positive experience for the dog. Positive reinforcement training is so important that it is the only method used to train dangerous animals like lions and tigers for work in circuses and in the movie and television industry.

Proponents of positive reinforcement swear by the effectiveness of their techniques, and it is true that the vast majority of dogs respond well to these training methods.

One reason that positive reinforcement training is so effective is that it uses rewards to teach the dog what is expected of it. When the dog performs the desired behavior, he is provided with a reward, most often in the form of a food treat, but it could be a scratch behind the ears, a rub under the chin or a pat on the head as well. The important thing is that the dog is rewarded consistently for doing the right thing.

Reward training has become increasingly popular in recent years, but chances are some sort of reward training between humans and dogs has been going on for hundreds if not thousands of years.

When understanding what makes reward training so effective, some knowledge of the history of humans and dogs is very helpful. The earliest dogs were probably wolf pups that were tamed and used by early humans for protection from predators, as alarm systems and later for guarding and herding livestock.

It is possible that the wolf pups that made the best companions were the most easily trained, or it is possible that these early dogs were orphaned or abandoned wolf pups. Whatever their origin, there is little doubt today that the vast variety of dogs we see today have their origin in the humble wolf.

Wolf packs, like packs of wild dogs, operate on a strict pack hierarchy. Since wolf and dog packs hunt as a group, this type of hierarchy, and the cooperation it brings, is essential to the survival of the species. Every dog in the pack knows his or her place in the pack, and except in the event of death or injury, the hierarchy, once established, rarely changes.

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Every dog, therefore, is hard wired by nature to look to the pack leader for guidance. The basis of all good dog training, including reward based training, is for the handler to set him or herself up as the pack leader. The pack leader is more than just the dominant dog, or the one who tells all the subordinates what to do. More importantly, the pack leader provides leadership and protection, and his or her leadership is vital to the success and survival of the pack.

It is important for the dog to see itself as part of a pack, to recognize the human as the leader of that pack, and to respect his or her authority. Some dogs are much easier to dominate than others. If you watch a group of puppies playing for a little while, you will quickly recognize the dominant and submissive personalities.

A dog with a more submissive personality will generally be easier to train using positive reinforcement, since he or she will not want to challenge the handler for leadership. Even dominant dogs, however,

respond very well to positive reinforcement. There are, in fact, few dogs that do not respond well to positive reinforcement, also known as reward training.

Positive reinforcement is also the best way to retrain a dog that has behavior problems, especially one that has been abused in the past. Getting the respect and trust of an abused dog can be very difficult, and positive reinforcement is better than any other training method at creating this important bond.

No matter what type of dog you are working with, chances are it can be helped with positive reinforcement training methods. Based training methods on respect and trust, rather than on intimidation and fear, is the best way to get the most from any dog.

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When Dog Training Really Matters

By Jack Russell

Dogs can be very sociable. In fact, they sometimes get too sociable and get aggressive. That is why it is important to train the dogs to control their behavior.

Moreover, dog trainings are important to avoid dog biting incidents. Statistics show that 77% of dog biting cases are mostly those that are within the family.

Hence, with dog training, bad habits are removed and dogs have better control with their feelings and behavior towards environmental and social variables.

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However, implementing dog training is not that easy. Certain things must be employed to have positive results. The thing needed in dog training is what most experts define as "positive reinforcement." This refers to the way people reward their dogs with treats, praises, or both whenever their dogs show positive behavior.

Through positive reinforcements, dogs will be able to comprehend that treats and praises will come whenever he shows good behavior. For example, when the owner gives his dog some treats for obediently obeying his commands, the dog will think that obeying commands when told equals treats.

But this does not necessarily mean that when the dog did not obey the owner's commands, punishment is needed as counter-reinforcement. This should not be the case because punishments will only make the matter worst.

What will happen is that the dog will be confused and it will begin to doubt your feelings.

The next thing that humans must remember when training their dogs is that people should avoid training their dogs into bad habit. Actually, many people are not aware they are doing this but there are instances wherein the people's reaction towards some behavior of the dogs will inadvertently train the dog in a bad way.

For example, when dogs bark, it is common especially when they do that because they see something strange or unfamiliar things. But, when dogs continue to bark, even if it includes a familiar person, that becomes a problem.

In this case, most people have the inclination to yell and tell their dogs to shut up. This particular reaction of dog owners will confuse their dogs and will only make them understand that the reason why their owners are yelling is because they are also enjoying the shouting scene and that they are "barking" along with their dogs.

The key point here is to avoid paying attention to the dog. In time, he will stop. It's when the owners should reward their dogs.

Boiled down, dog training is all about positive reinforcements. And, as they say, positive reinforcements reap positive results.

Jack Russell is a a long time dog fancier, visit his Dog Resources Blog and download his Free Dog Owners Handbook – it's Dog Gone Good!

<http://www.daveshealthbuzz.com/dogcare/>



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