

The HILLS HOWLER

June 2011



www.hillskennelandtrainingclub.com

2011 MEETING DATES

June 8

July 13

August 10

September 14

October 12

November 9

December 14

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Rally Night for Club Members:

For those interested in learning about the new sport of Rally we are holding a lecture night with Judy & Darryl Turley on **Wednesday 29th June** at the Club House. Start time is 6.30pm. It will be free to all club members but you will need to book in. Please email me to book your seat.

Dianne Atkins

diatkins@bigpond.net.au

Dogs NSW are opening their gates to the general public on **Saturday, June 11** between 9.00am to 5.00pm and inviting you to attend, 'Dogs on Show', not just a Championship Dog Show but a public Open Day, which will feature special events, activities and demonstrations. For further information go to the following link:

<http://www.dogsnsw.org.au/activities-a-events/events/237-dogs-on-show.html>

Gordon Fenbow was nominated and seconded for the position of President and accepted. Congratulations Gordon.

We still have a vacant position for Trial Secretary. If anyone is interested in taking on the position our outgoing Trial Secretary Anne Small is willing to train and help you.

It should also be noted that the election of show judges was postponed from May and will take place at the June meeting.



HILLS DISTRICT KENNEL & TRAINING CLUB INC—2011 Office Bearers & Committee

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Mrs. Janice Lyons

Hills District Kennel & Training Club Inc have adopted an extreme weather policy whereby the Chief Instructor or in his/her absence the co-ordinators, will decide to halt or cancel training classes if the temperature reaches 35degrees or higher.

If the forecast is to be 35degrees or higher please err on the side of caution in deciding whether to come to training or not especially if you have to travel a long distance.

Our next Club Instructors Course will start late 2011

Many dog owners want to improve their relationship with their dogs and teach them basic good manners. Local councils are also now promoting the importance of training classes in achieving responsible pet ownership in the community. As a training club we have both a duty and a wish to provide this service to the community. The reward-based, positive training methods we use help owners to teach their dogs all the basic exercises as well as helping them to manage their dogs' behaviour.

To provide this service to as many dog owners as possible, the Club needs a large number of enthusiastic, capable and committed instructors. By participating in this course you will learn the skills you need to be an instructor and, on completion, you will be able to help many other dog owners in the community. Instructing is an enjoyable, rewarding way to give something back to your Club and to your local community.

This course in positive reinforcement dog training involves attending monthly lectures and also practical work assisting in training classes. Students who successfully complete the course will be accredited as Hills District Kennel & Training Club Instructors, having demonstrated knowledge of current methods of reward-based dog training and management, practical skills in training dogs and competence in instructing a class of dog owners and their dogs. The course will run for approximately 12 months and lectures will be monthly on the 3rd Wed of the month unless otherwise advised. There will also be a couple of 2 day weekend lectures that must be attended.

Course Outline

- Understanding dog behaviour
- How dogs learn
- Basic class exercises
- Operant conditioning
- The correct use of rewards
- Class Instruction
- Canine Health and fitness
- Behavioural problems

Practical

- Assist various instructors with their classes
- Written assignments on monthly lectures.
- A Major assignment on Behaviour

Please fill out the form below if you are interested in becoming an Instructor and return it to me at the Club or email it to Diatkins@bigpond.net.au . If you would like to know more about the course I am happy to chat to you about the Course also any of our Club Instructors can give you more details.

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

PHONE _____ EMAIL _____

Notice is given of the **General Meeting** of the Hills District Kennel & Training Club Inc. to be held on **Wednesday 8 June 2011** in the New Meeting Rooms, Castle Hill Showground commencing at 7:30 p.m. Everyone is welcome to attend.

Agenda:

1. Open Meeting
2. Apologies
3. Confirmation of minutes of the previous meeting
4. Business Arising from the minutes
5. Correspondence
6. Business Arising from the Correspondence
7. Treasurer's Report
8. New Members
9. Chief Instructor's Report
10. Show Secretary's Report
11. Trial Secretary's Report
12. Publicity Report
13. **Election of Show Judges for Nov. 2012**
14. General Business

FREE MEMBERS BOARD

The Club has decided to include in future Newsletters a FREE notice board column each month for club members. This will be a maximum of 3 lines for one (1) month and will be non commercial.

So, if you have anything want to sell or give away please email me your details.



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\$25.00 for half page per month

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All advertising must be addressed to the Secretary for approval at a General Meeting.

The Club reserves the right to refuse any advertisement submitted for consideration.

All correspondence to:

The Secretary,
Hills District Kennel & Training Club Inc.
56/159 Ridgescrop Drive,
Castle Hill NSW 2154

Election of Judges

To take place at the following meetings

Show: May and October

Trial: September and November

NOTICE BOARD:

Leave your dog "on lead" at all times unless your instructor requests otherwise.

Please bring correct money to training for ground fees.

No thongs or bare feet in class. Closed shoes are preferable and safer.

Please wear your membership card at all times. It makes everyone's life easier!

All dogs on the training grounds must be vaccinated under Club rules.

Bitches in season are not permitted to attend class.

You may still come and watch but she may not.

Yes training is on when it rains. Bring a raincoat and wear boots. If it is very wet we will train under the covered ring.

Treats

4 **LAMB, BEEF and LIVER for Sale**
at the office, all at \$5

FROM PET SHOP TO GRAND OBEDIENCE CHAMPION

When I first saw Bob, he was the last little puppy in a pet shop cage. My son talked me into buying him, and Bob and I became the greatest of mates with a special bond between us that I have never had with any of my other pets over the years.

We lived in the inner city and, for the first four years of his life, Bob was a pet of the usual kind.... walked every day, slept on the bed, and loved by us all.

Then I moved to Winmalee and one day we visited a Glenbrook park and saw a local dog club performing an obedience demonstration. I said to my little mate, "hey, we could do that", and from that day on our lives changed. He was no longer the little pet asleep in his basket by the fire; we joined the dog club and tramped around the ovals in all kinds of weather I was saying such words as "heel" "sit" "drop" "stay" etc. More advanced lessons like retrieving, scent work and jumping were added as we progressed along our training journey

From the beginning, Bob seemed to really enjoy it. Nowadays, the most effective way to train a dog involves using rewards and positive reinforcement rather than using the harsher negative methods.

We joined Dogs NSW to be able to enter trials and compete against like minded people. The classes were Community Companion Dog, Novice, Open Dog, Utility Dog and Utility Dog Excellent. Along the way, a special title of Obedience Champion was the ultimate to achieve. This year however, a new title was introduced into the competition world, that of Grand Obedience Champion. To obtain this, Bob had to achieve a further 5 passes in Utility Dog Excellent notwithstanding that as at December last year, he already had 15 passes in this very difficult class.

However, last weekend at the Canberra Royal Show, my very special little mate Bob became only the second dog in Australia to gain the coveted title of Grand Obedience Champion.

I think it is even more special because as Bob is a cross breed competing in an Association that was set up for pure bred dogs. In fact it is only the past 10 years or so that cross breed dogs have been allowed to compete in the same class as a pure bred dog!

Our journey has been a great one and we have both learnt from each other. We have enjoyed our time, both the training sessions and the trials. We have meeting lots of friends, human and canine along the way.

It's been a great journey with my mate Bob by my side.

Sandy O'Neill



Target Training

Before we can teach Targeting we need to understand what it means. Targeting means teaching a dog to touch some part of its body to another object.

Targeting is not only one of the easiest and simplest behaviours for a dog to learn but it's also one of the most practical. Instead of using food as the lure, we need a target that can't be eaten. That's where a "target stick" or your "hand" comes in handy. The dog learns to follow the target like its nose is a magnet giving you a "hands off" way to teach positioning behaviours very quickly without needing to use a food lure.

You can use targeting for many other behaviours...have you ever wanted to teach your dog to ring a bell to go outside? Teaching this skill is targeting, pushing a trolley, agility skills using targets to teach the contact zones, dancing with your dog in Canine Freestyle, almost any trick you would like to have in your routine can be taught by Targeting.

You don't need anything special to begin; you can make a target stick by using a wooden dowel and a styrofoam ball although there are any number of wonderful target sticks available commercially. I use quite a few props as targets; they can be an extended finger or fist, a hand, a target stick, a mark on a wall, a yoghurt lid, a pencil -- whatever you want. I use a fly swat for a paw target; it is quite easy to teach, hide biscuits underneath the fly swat and mark the paw movement towards it.....just like the steps for the nose to hand target that I describe further on in the article

How you use your hand as a target depends on what you wish to teach. Teaching the dog to target the palm of the hand MAY be confusing if you intend to train Competition Obedience so the back of the hand could be a safer alternative. I have found that some dogs may confuse the open palm target hand signal with the Stay Signal if they are similar.

HOW TO TEACH TARGETING:

In this article I am going to concentrate on teaching how to use your hand as a target.

1. Extend the palm or the back of your hand towards your dog about 6 to 8 inches away from his face. As soon as your dog moves towards your hand mark this movement and treat. If you are having problems try step **2**.

2. You can lure the behaviour by placing a treat between the middle and ring fingers at the base, Hold your hand out and present the back of your hand to the dog,

When he sniffs the back of your hand to smell the food, use your marker word and put the treat in the palm of your hand. We can use the lure as a temporary method to get the behaviour we want then eliminate it as soon as possible.

3. Change from a lure to a target. Mimic exactly the same routine of placing of the food but this time leave the food out, hold out the hand in exactly the same way and offer it to the dog. Mark the sniff and get the reward from your pocket or elsewhere. Well done - you have changed from a lure to targeting, rewarding your dog for the excellent decision it just made. This food is now a reward!

4. Switch hands and repeat the previous step.

5. Go back to your original hand and put it closer to the ground about three inches below the dog's nose. Mark and treat when the dog touches the hand.

6. Repeat step 5 with your other hand.
7. Use your original hand holding it about three inches higher than the dog's nose, mark and treat when your dog touches the hand.
8. Repeat step 7 using your other hand and continue to alternate. Now the criterion is tightening, count out five treats and ask for five touches. When the dog can get 4 out of 5 touches correct in two consecutive trials **touching that same hand**, then alternate with the other hand.
9. Start to vary where you put your hand but keep it roughly the same distance away from the dog's nose for each touch. Training works well if you change only one thing at a time in each session. We are working on the ***Location of the hand*** that increases in difficulty but the ***Distance from the nose*** remains the same. Gradually make the **Location** harder and harder by moving your hand behind his head or in-between his legs etc.
10. The truth now, can your dog do this for 4 out of 5 touches correctly in two consecutive trials?
11. Okay...but only change the ***Distance from the nose*** as it is getting progressively harder. I don't want the dog to quit on me so I introduce *** Bouncing around the average***. We haven't asked for more than 12 inches from the nose Right? If unsure Read Pointers below.
12. Begin to add your verbal cue as written in Pointers. For example cue "Touch" then bring out your hand. We will begin to vary the distance and location of the hand *** Bouncing around the average*** because at this point he should have a pretty solid idea of what to do. However, if your dog is not sure go back to step 11.
13. Now is the time to change training locations ***and repeat step 12***. Yes that's right, repeat it all over again. At each new location back up to step 12 as dogs don't generalise well. You will find it won't take all that long.
14. If you want to - hold your hand oriented differently.
15. Put your hand on to different objects at different heights.
16. For those who want the dog to touch the hand **only when they ask** for this behaviour, **now** is the time to cement it in properly. Teach your dog they will only be rewarded when you ask for a 'Touch'. If they target your hand when not asked then withhold the reward. Have Fun

~Pat Robards



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Treibball - The “New Dog Sport”

Ball herding is a new dog sport that originated in Germany and has taken on in Australia. Marion Brand (club member) has a team called the “Tryball Tryhards” and runs an email list on the sport.

Anybody wishing to join the email list can do so on this URL.

<http://pets.groups.yahoo.com/group/OzTreibball/?guide=623521>

Description

The dog gathers and moves a flock of large balls . one at a time. Typically the balls are those heavy duty inflatable exercise or yoga balls. Similar to herding livestock, the human part of the team directs the dog in pushing each of the balls to or through the course into a goal.

What Skills Does My Dog Need to Herd Balls?

Dogs may be of any breed, size and age (within reason) to play Treibball. Both handler and dog will have far more fun and success, if, they have learnt basic obedience before embarking on any sport. Good basic obedience and being a member of Hills District Kennel and Training Club Inc. are the two requirements necessary to join us on the first Monday of each month at 8pm at The Castle Hill Showgrounds for Treibball training.

Guidelines For The Game

Below is a very brief outline of the current international rules. At some stage these rules will be modified to suit Australian conditions and measurements.

The Playing Field

The playing field is the size of half a soccer ball field (100-165 feet) and a regular goal width (8 yards/24 feet wide) but it could also be a hobby sized goal (smaller). At the start, the eight coloured gym balls are arranged in a triangle shape (similar to snooker) in a 4, 3, 1 pattern with the single ball on the side farthest from the handler.

The dog is sent out to go around the triangle of 8 balls (without crossing in front of the handler) to sit behind the "point or single ball" of the triangle facing towards the handler in the goal, waiting for the next command

Balls: Eight coloured gym balls are arranged in a triangle shape with the tip pointed **AWAY** from the goal pen. The size of the ball is measured from the dogs shoulder to the ground.

Rules of the Game

The dog's task is to push the balls into the goal as quickly as possible (15 min. time limit). In advanced classes to make it more challenging, the dog has to drive the balls in a given sequence. For example, first the blue, then the red, etc. are to be driven into the goal. Typically, the single ball on the far side of the pattern must be the first ball into the goal. After that, it may be handler's choice or the judge may select an order of retrieval.

Scoring: Scoring is based on form as well as time. . A dog that brings the ball straight into the goal in a shorter time period will score better than a dog that takes the ball around the field or takes more time to bring the ball in . A clean run with no penalties will always win over a run with penalties.

Bonus Points

Bonus points are added to the total time score.

These are for sending the dog out on the one cue.

The dog stops on the one cue.

Is given an additional signal to go beyond the ball triangle.

Penalty Points

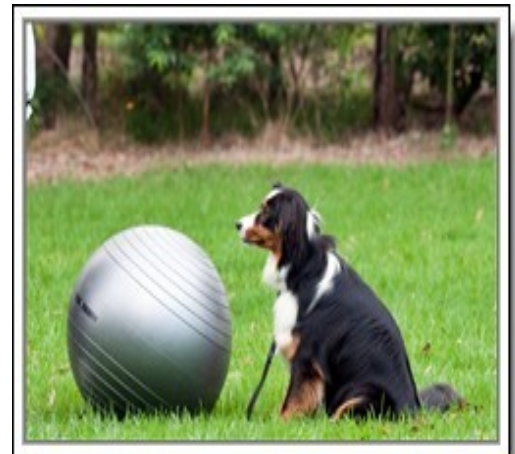
Penalties will be given for unwanted behaviour.

The handler leaves the radius of the goal post

Constant barking of the dog when not working.

The handler puts undue pressure on the dog.

The dog begins to drive the ball on the wrong side of the triangle.



Disqualifications

The handler physically punishes the dog.

The dog destroys the ball.

The handler forces or causes physical or psychological discomfort for the dog.

The team goes over the course time to bring the balls in

Class Levels

Pre-novice Foundation Level. The order in which the balls are driven into the goal is not required. The colour of the balls has no relevance.

Intermediate Level. – The order in which the balls are driven into the goal, will be specified by a judge. In this level the colour of the balls are relevant.

Masters Level. The order in which the balls are driven into the goal may be specified by the judge. obstacles such as gates, tunnels and bridges that the dog must push the balls over, under around or through.)

Rules to Train by

Motivation is a great way to get enthusiasm. It can be trained and maintained or the dog can be born with it.

Food Rewards. Use food to reward a dog's stationary position, throw a toy for movement, speed or enthusiasm.

Rate of Reinforcement. Keep your reinforcement rate high when you are changing criteria or teaching new behaviours.

Train progressively. Do 3 to 5 successful repetitions and then move your criteria up to the next level. If the dog makes 2 errors in a row, STOP and make the exercise easier for next session.

Training Sessions. Keep them short, take a break then come back and work a bit more (a couple of minutes at a time) .

Training Time. Training time should be around 6 to 8 minutes once to three times a day.

Teaching the game:

STEP 1. For the purpose of this article I will be referring to a 'target/spot' simply as a **mat** . The first steps are to teach your dog to 'go to place and sit' on a mat until it can reach the distance of 3 meters taught in increments.

The below video link I suggest viewing doesn't include or describe targeting on a mat which is why I mention it.. "How to Teach The Basics of 'Treibball' or 'Push Ball': A Great New Game for Energetic Dogs!" http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qFpH_WLC4qs

Step 2. OUTFRAN - Once your dog can go to the mat at a distance of three metres it is time to teach the outrun " Go Bye" - sending your dog out clockwise around the mat from your left hand side to turn and sit on it -- and "Away" -- sending your dog out counter-clockwise around the mat from your right hand side to turn and sit on it.

STEP 3. NOSE TARGET - Teach a Nose target on your hand or use Dots – adhesive dots or tape for targeting your hand and then onto a hand held ball.

STEP 4. Add the “push” behaviour to the ball – You'll brace the ball between your legs and give your praise word only for the better nose pushes onto the adhesive dot if you use one.

STEP 5. Brace the ball - Use a rolled up towel under the ball or work in long grass to keep the ball from rolling around on its own encouraging your dog to push with energy to move it. Take frequent play or reward breaks while training

STEP 6. Push the ball towards you – When your dog is ready to roll the ball, step back from the ball a few centimetres at a time. Only when your dog is 100% reliable can you **INCREASE** the difficulty of the exercise and expand the amount of distance between you and the ball. For teaching speed a Shute can be erected or one can run backwards, I prefer to use a Shute and then fade it.

STEP 7. Orienting (also called balancing) towards the Handler. To teach this the dog is required to remain on the opposite side of the ball to the position of the handler. If the handler moves the dog must also move (balance) to remain opposite the handler and far enough away to see them.

STEP 8. Work through the above steps in different locations; your backyard, the park, training grounds etc. The dog needs to get in the habit/pattern of: Push – target – push – target – push – target towards you then a few more steps until you get to the next stage of your dog pushing the ball to you when you trot backwards. This will help the dog learn to stay straight and reposition itself on the side of the ball opposite you.

STEP 9. Continue to add distance, when the dog is successful 4 out of five times then increase the distance another 30 cms having the dog push farther and farther to reach you, rewarding only the pushes that come directly towards you.

STEP 10. Teach 'left and 'right' using modifier cues written by Chris Puls. http://www.dogscouts.org/Teaching_left_and_right.html

Place the balls with a width of about 2 metres between them putting a mat behind each ball. You'll direct the dog from one mat to the other behind the balls as described in Chris's article. Reward when the dog properly changes position as you direct.

STEP 11 Gradually add distance between the mat/balls and gradually increase your distance from the balls. But don't increase both at the same time. Increase one distance and then the other. As you practice, sometimes call the dog back to you and then send the dog out away from you to the mat behind a ball before starting to move the dog from mat/ball to mat/ball again.

STEP 12. Also increase the number of moves the dog is expected to do before you deliver the reward or toss a toy reward behind the dog. The rewards should happen with the dog on the mat and also when you recall the dog to you. You want both behaviours to be equally strong and rewarding.

STEP 13. When the dog is doing really well with this, you can add additional balls with mats placed behind them. Always go back to being close-by when you increase the difficulty!

Goal:

You should be able to get about 20 metres away from the balls/mats before you go on to the next steps. **DON'T** add pushing the balls till the dog is really solid on the directional control from ball to ball, the send out, the “wait” behind the ball and can do several moves from ball to ball before needing you to deliver a reward.

Putting it all together!

By now you should have the dog able to move from one ball to another (right/left, forward/back) at a considerable distance from you.

The dog should be able to be sent to the balls, go directly to a target spot (the mat) and wait for the next cue.

Fading of the mat: up to this stage there has been more than one criterion to work on so now work on fading out the mat behind the ball. You can however start using the mats again when warming up on directions and not wanting to go to the trouble of pumping up all the 8 balls.

Focus: Now you'll be combining the distance control with the ball pushing.

Set-up: Go back to using only 2 balls and set them close together with you near by.

Add the push: When the dog is calmly sitting behind one of the balls, cue the dog to push it to you. Alternate which ball you send your dog to push. Sometimes, you'll re-set the balls so they are both available, other times, keep the ball the dog just delivered with you and send the dog to the mat behind the other ball, have him wait, then cue the push.

Adding the wait on the mat will help pattern the dog to settle into the correct position before the push cue is given. It will also allow you the opportunity to change which ball the dog brings later when more balls are available.

Adding Difficulty:

Increase your distance from the 2 balls and the distance the balls are from each other gradually fading the mat over time. Some do this sooner, some later on.

Increase the number of balls (start closer to the balls each time you add a new one). Distance control and impulse control are two of the keys to the sport of Treibball Ball Herding.

Adding the Goal Pen. When the dog pushes the ball into the pen it is called "penning" the ball. Introduce the goal pen to the dog by standing in front of the pen adding more distance having the dog drive the ball into the pen from slightly longer distances. Build the dog's understanding of the task progressively

Goal:

8 balls in the proper pattern, 50 metres away from you. You are able to send the dog to the balls, direct the dog to exactly which one to bring and the dog knows how to push it directly to you.

Hope you enjoyed this article, please don't hesitate to ask Marion Brand, Karin Richardson or myself if you have any questions

Have Fun

~Pat Robards



Complex skills for a complex dog

When I bought my little Border Collie, I had plenty of plans for him. I'd taken my old dog to Level B obedience in New Zealand and I was looking forward to learning Australian obedience with this dog. My other Border Collie loved agility before arthritis struck, I couldn't wait to teach our little newcomer to use the agility equipment we had in the garden.

Unfortunately, our new addition, Hawkeye, was a great little dog who developed a huge problem. During the critical fear period, at 11 weeks old, Hawkeye was badly scared by an aggressive dog. Like many well-meaning owners, I tried to increase his confidence by introducing him to other dogs. Instead, he became more and more sensitized. Before I knew it, I had a major problem.

Lots of handlers have difficulties with their dogs. The Hills District Kennel Club and the Hills Agility Club were both extremely helpful and supportive. I did months of work with a behaviourist, I continued to train him in obedience, and I eventually took a dog behavior course myself to help him. In the end, though, after all the work, I had to admit the probability that Hawkeye would always be on edge with other dogs around, and a dog that is apprehensive is not a likely winner in the ring. I needed something that would build confidence in my dog, an activity that he would enjoy and which would occupy his busy Border Collie brain cells without fear and without fear aggression.

Dog obedience is the basis for other skills and absolutely essential with a problem dog. I would encourage anyone with a difficult dog to persevere with obedience for at least a year to gain basic skills. But then what? What is next for an active dog who is uncomfortable with other dogs? I found an answer with complex skills and clicker training.

A clicker is an acoustic device that emits an audible click when the dog does what is desired. It provides immediate feedback that the dog's action is correct. I discovered that I could click faster than I could say 'Yes' and the clicker could not be misunderstood. In her book, *Reaching the Animal Mind*, dog behaviourist Karen Pryor, uncovered research that revealed why the clicker works so much quicker than the spoken word and why it is so effective. She interviewed scientists who discovered that a conditioned reinforcer like a click goes directly through the amygdala in the primitive part of the brain, rather than through the 'thinking' areas of the brain. Therefore the clicker travels quicker. [This is a very basic summary of the research, reading the book is well worthwhile.]

The clicker trainer shapes behavior from early attempts to a complete action and it is heaps of fun for trainer and dog. It also uses positive reinforcement rather than aversive or compulsive techniques. Training is done in stages, gradually moving towards the desired final product. This is how I taught Hawkeye to skateboard:

1. Hawkeye sniffed the skateboard (click, reward).
2. Hawkeye touched the skateboard with his nose (click, reward).
3. Hawkeye touched the skateboard with his paw (click, reward).
4. Hawkeye put one paw on the skateboard (click, reward).
5. Hawkeye put both front feet on the skateboard (click, reward).
6. Hawkeye put both front feet on the skateboard and accidentally moved it (click and jackpot reward).
7. Introduce command 'Skate', Hawkeye pushes skateboard increasing distances for clicks and rewards.
8. Fade click and reward intermittently.

The whole process took 3 x 5 minute sessions for three days. As the dog progressed, each new achievement became the basis for the next stage of training. Once Hawkeye could skate, he did not receive reinforcement for just putting his paws on the board, he had to offer something more.

Both our dogs love the creativity of '101 things to do with a box'. It's a completely different clicker dog game. The dog is reinforced for every new behavior that they offer, but they are only clicked twice for each behavior. I have learned that my older Border Collie has a very creative little character, that was just waiting to come out. She loves playing the game and showing me what she can do with a washing basket, or a football.

The great thing about clicking is that there is very little negative reinforcement. The dog quickly learns that click = reward, but that no click = no reward, so they offer the behavior that gives the reward while the undesired behavior becomes extinct. There is no compulsion and very little luring involved. One of the hardest aspects is resisting the temptation to give the dog a hint, but hints are often counter-productive. My dog seems to enjoy working out the problem for himself and his excitement, when he gets it right, is infectious. We usually train for ten minutes two or three times a day and the dogs are always eager to work.

Of course, the trainer who uses luring is familiar with the criticism 'you're just bribing your dog'. It is a criticism usually leveled by those who use compulsion to train. With clicker training, the dog is working for his pay. The reward, whether a treat or a toy, must be earned: no click = no reward cannot be bribery. The rewards are gradually faded just as they are with the luring technique until they are given only for the best examples of behaviour.

Recently, Hawkeye has learnt to play the piano, jump through hand-held hoops, reverse around me, retrieve the dumb bell over the agility equipment and push the lawnmower. He can crawl, he can jump vertically on the trampoline and he plays with the large gym ball. He can also pick up keys and fetch the TV remote. Hawkeye is happy, he is fulfilled and he's about to start learning useful skills. I have just bought a DVD set on clicker-training dogs for assistance roles because we have a family member with a progressive disability. Hawkeye will be helping in the house and having fun at the same time.

If you have a dog with a problem, the first step to helping them is always obedience training. Obedience will help your dog to see you as leader and to look to you when he or she is uncomfortable. It will also give you control in tricky situations. In addition, if the problem persists, then experiment with different ways to bond with your dog and help him or her fulfill their doggie potential. Clicker training is just one of many solutions. Of course, your dog doesn't need to have a problem for this to be a fun activity for both of you. There is plenty of information on the internet to start you off. I particularly recommend Karen Pryor's site www.clickertraining.com. Give clicker training a go and have fun!

Alison Irving





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