

# Training & Rewards

As dog trainers, we get asked a lot about the use of rewards in dog training and when is the best time to stop using them. The simple answer is:

**'If you want your dog to continue to perform a behaviour for you, then you must continue to reward them for it. The day you stop rewarding is the day your dog stops performing - simple!'**

## What is the difference between Motivation and Reward?

Motivation is what drives us all to behave in a certain way, and every one of us has something that motivates them (money, chocolate, food, holiday, new car etc). Motivation is what drives us to perform a behaviour, because we know that we will receive our reward after we perform that behaviour.

### Motivation

(before the action or behaviour)



### Perform Action or Behaviour



### Reward

(after the action or behaviour)

For example, let's say that you was highly motivated by money, but absolutely despised the thought of running. Now if someone left a bundle of £50 notes at the other end of a 100m track, your motivation for the money and the reward at the end would overshadow the fact that you absolutely detest running, and I bet you would run faster than your legs could carry you to reach your reward. If however, I said you to that I had left a £1 coin at the end of the 100m track, I bet your dislike for running would overshadow your desire for money, and this is because the £1 coin is not motivating enough for you to perform something you dislike for a reward that, in your eyes, is so little.

Our four legged friends live alongside us as true companions, and they learn to respect us through us earning their respect, but this still does not mean that our dogs will perform behaviours for us purely because they respect us. You may respect your Manager at work, and really enjoy working alongside them, but does this mean that you would be willing to work alongside them for free? It's probably unlikely.

We ask our dogs on a daily basis to respond to our every word and to ignore a lot of their natural instincts (hunting, chasing, socialising etc). It is okay to ask your dog to perform behaviours for you, but do not expect your dog to be able to ignore all of their natural urges on their love for us alone, there needs to be another motivator involved.

## How Will I Know What Motivates My Dog?

Just like us, every dog will have a different motivator. Some dogs are motivated by food, others by toys, and some dogs love the attention from their owners so much that this in itself is enough motivation to perform a behaviour.



The best thing to do is to start off with a variety of different treats (chicken, cheese, hot dog and dry kibble).



Start by asking your dog to perform a behaviour that they know well (such as a sit), and reward them with the dry kibble.



Then ask for the sit again and reward them with something of a higher value (such as the chicken) and see if you get a faster response (if the reward is higher then you should notice that your dogs motivation to perform the behaviour will increase).



If you do not find that your dog is motivated by treats then try the same exercise but this time use a variety of different toys to see if that is more motivating in your dogs eyes.



Keep experimenting until you find a reward that will motivate your dog, and once you have found it keep experimenting so you know how you can increase it (e.g. if food is your dogs motivator, then have some really amazing treats such as liver or hot dog available to keep your dog motivated whilst out on walks when there are other distractions).



Now that you have found your dogs motivator, never stop using it!

If you find that your dog loses interest during training, or ignores you whilst out on walks, then you need to increase your reward and this will increase your dogs motivation. If the value of the reward is not motivating enough to your dog, then they will find other things they can do that will be.

## Fancy a Chat?

**Us too! If you have any questions regarding this leaflet, then give us a call on 07538 032 508 or 07432 153 674. We are always here to help!**