

THE RIGHT REWARDS

GOAL: To determine which reward our dogs most enjoy and use rewards which motivate dogs to learn new behaviors and interact with us.

GENERAL RULES:

- Training dogs begins with determining what motivates each individual dog; what 'currency' do you need to motivate the dog to do what you want him to do? Some dogs will happily 'work' for dog kibble, other dogs are less food motivated and/or more stressed. Less motivated and stressed dogs require stronger smelling and tastier treats, such as jerky treats or people food, to motivate them.
- Occasionally fearful dogs won't eat treats from your hand. With these dogs, reward them by tossing the treat on the ground. If they are willing to eat the treat off the ground, reward them this way until they are confident enough to take treats from your hand.
- Dogs that are not interested in ANY type of food for training must be evaluated; this may be a sign of a medical problem, that the dog is highly stressed, or that the dog is getting too much 'free' food and has no motivation to 'work' in order to earn it.
- When training a new behavior or a very important behavior (ie, 'come' ... reliably coming when called can save a dog's life), always use TASTY treats that are very motivating.
- Once the dog performs the behavior reliably and consistently 95% of the time, with most dogs you can start using a lower value treat.
- Using a mixture of low and high value treats often works well for behaviors that the dog already knows. An occasional 'surprise' of a special treat can be very motivating.
- Treats should always be small- i.e., the size of an eraser head. Your dog should be able to swallow the treat VERY quickly, and be ready for the next training opportunity..

Always remember that the most appropriate reward is what the dog desires, providing you are able to give it to them and it can be delivered rapidly after the behavior occurs. For example, in training a dog to sit when people enter the kennel, the dog is often more interested in exiting the kennel than in getting a food treat. Using the opening of the kennel door (which provides access to the outdoors, and is what the dog REALLY wants) as the reward instead of a food treat, is the best choice of reward for this do

