



# Behavior News



The Newsletter from the Animal Behavior Program

**Welcome** to the fourteenth edition of *Behavior News*, the newsletter designed to keep veterinary staff and other animal handlers up to date on current behavior recommendations for companion animals. In this issue we will introduce new members of our team, discuss the pros and cons of getting a new puppy as a gift, and some added tips. We also offer insight from a few of our Behavior Club student contributors. For additional resources on animal behavior at The Ohio State University, please visit: [vet.osu.edu/Behavior](http://vet.osu.edu/Behavior) and [vet.osu.edu/CommunityPractice](http://vet.osu.edu/CommunityPractice).

## Animal Behavior in Social Media

Social media is rapidly becoming the front-runner for disseminating information and knowledge. Check out the following online veterinary behavior articles:

Trisha's Blog

[patriciamcconnell.com/theotherendoftheleash/](http://patriciamcconnell.com/theotherendoftheleash/)

Animal Community Talks offers educational videos for pet owner – Dr. Chris Pachel and other behaviorists are featured.

[vimeo.com/animalcommunitytalks/videos](http://vimeo.com/animalcommunitytalks/videos)

Dr. Andy Roark posted an interesting article on behavior for veterinarians by guest author, Dawn Crandell, DVM, DVSc, DACVECC

[drandyroark.com/this-one-major-way-we-are-failing-our-patients/](http://drandyroark.com/this-one-major-way-we-are-failing-our-patients/)

## Hot off the press!

Check out this month's *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association* to read about how trazodone may help alleviate signs of anxiety in hospitalized dogs. Authors Mary Rose Rice, Shana Gilbert-Gregory, Jason Shull and Meghan Herron published their manuscript entitled "Effects of trazodone on behavioral signs of stress in hospitalized dogs" on December 1, 2016.

[Click here to read more.](#)



## New Additions

### Welcome Dr. M. Leanne Lilly



The Behavioral Medicine Clinic welcomed a new resident in July, Dr. M. Leanne Lilly. Dr. Lilly is a native of Colorado and received her DVM from University of Wisconsin-Madison. She returned

to Colorado where she practiced preventive and urgent care for four years.

Afterwards, Dr. Lilly completed an internship at the University of Pennsylvania School of Veterinary Medicine. There she split her time between hospital cases and a partnership with Francisville Home for Smaller Animals. Her background in preventive care service has driven an interest in preventive behavior learning, as well as education for students, clients, shelters, volunteers and the public.

### Congratulations are in order!



Congratulations to senior student, Mary Rose Rice, for achieving the first place Whitney Engler Award for Student Excellence in Applied Animal Behavior Research. Mary Rose presented her research

on anxiety in hospitalized dogs at the Animal Behavior Symposium this past August in San Antonio.



Congratulations to outgoing resident, Dr. Shana Gilbert-Gregory, for achieving the first place R.K. Anderson Resident Award for research in anxiety scales for hospitalized dogs.

She also presented her research at the Animal Behavior Symposium this past August in San Antonio. This study aimed to develop an objective scoring system to assess anxiety and stress levels in hospitalized dogs in order to better identify animals that might benefit from antianxiety medication during their hospital stay. She is currently working to further validate her data and to publish this scoring system.

### Behavioral Medicine welcomes a new student clerical associate

Ms. Emily Grabau joined the team in August. Emily is a second-year undergraduate student, with a double major in animal science and psychology, with a minor in human-animal interactions. She is also attending the veterinary technician program at Columbus State Community College and The Ohio State University.

Emily is from Westerville, Ohio, where she lives with her adorable and rotten long-haired miniature Dachshunds, Maggie and Elliot. Growing up, she had another long-haired miniature Dachshund, Amber, and a short-haired miniature Dachshund, Cole. Amber and Cole both passed away tragically at very young ages and this experience inspired Emily to study animal behavior.

Animal Behavior is a new and growing field of study and there are not many classes or programs offered to undergraduate students. As an alternative, Emily realized she could gain experience in this field by working for a practicing animal behaviorist. She feels this job is the perfect start for her career aspirations and is grateful for the opportunity start her career working at the Veterinary Medical Center.

Emily aspires to be an animal behaviorist, working work with military dogs that experience PTSD. She hopes to open her own practice to work with a domestic violence shelter and a local humane society, to bring the two together to work through psychological issues and bring growth and healing.



## A Puppy for the Holidays

by Denise Blough

Little can outweigh the joy of getting a new puppy during the holidays. That being said, there are several matters to consider if you plan on welcoming a furry friend into your home this season.

“If you’re giving a puppy as a present, one of the first considerations would be to know if the recipient is actually interested in owning a dog,” says Dr. Meghan Herron, veterinary behavior specialist at The Ohio State University Veterinary Medical Center.

“Giving a puppy is giving the gift of a lot of responsibility in a cute package,” she said. If they’re interested, try to involve them in the selection process. “You want a breed that’s going to match their lifestyle; try not to base your selection on looks.”

“Another crucial concept is to socialize your puppy with as many people and animals as possible before the socialization window closes at 12 weeks of age,” Herron said. She stresses the importance of prioritizing the puppy’s age over the date of a holiday.

“If someone plans on getting a puppy on Christmas Eve, even though they’ll be at 12 weeks, they might be better off getting that puppy a few weeks earlier so as to not miss the socialization period.”

Separation anxiety development is an additional area of concern with puppies. Around the holidays, an animal can begin its life surrounded by friends and family who want to cuddle and play. As people get back into their non-holiday routines, a puppy can feel lost and upset with too much alone time, resorting to destructive behaviors.

A simple way to prevent separation anxiety and teach your puppy independence is crate training. An owner should put a new puppy in its crate every day, even when the family is home.

“Start with how long they can tolerate, and the maximum would be months-of-age plus one,” Herron said. “So if they’re 2 months old, never leave them in a crate for longer than three hours without a break.”

This training should begin right away, along with:

1. House training,
2. Socialization,
3. Teaching them to sit  
(as a polite default behavior)

Behavioral problems are the number one reason owners give their dogs to animal shelters, according to the *Journal of the American Veterinary Medicine Association*. But luckily, most of these problems can be avoided through proper training and socialization as a puppy.

For a more detailed outline of these recommendations, see Herron’s “Behavior Guide for Your New Puppy.” Also be sure to schedule a wellness check with your family veterinarian, and consider the benefits of a “puppy kindergarten” socialization class.





## Already planning on that new puppy? Here are some housetraining tips from Dr. Herron

Housetraining your dog will be quicker and easier if you keep two principals in mind:

#1: reward your dog every time she eliminates in the right place;

#2: prevent her from making mistakes.

### The Basics

During your dog's waking hours, take her outdoors on a schedule. How often she needs to go out depends on her age. Even young puppies can be expected to "hold it" for at least a short period of time. As a general rule, that can translate to one hour for each month of age, give or take an hour. For example, your three-month old puppy might resist urination for three to four hours. Assume that puppies may need to eliminate after eating, naps, strenuous play, or whenever there is a change of activity. Adult dogs should be given an opportunity to go out about every four hours when possible, but can reasonably be expected to hold their urine for eight hours or longer. Some medical conditions can make it necessary for an adult dog to urinate more frequently.

You should take your dog to the same place to eliminate every time. Not only will your dog make a visual association with that location and the reason why they are being taken there, but in time there will also be an olfactory cue (odor) as well. Dogs generally like to eliminate where they have done so before. Unless your dog has already shown a preference for eliminating in a certain spot, choose a potty area to your liking. Chances are that even after your dog is house-trained and going out on her own, she will continue to use this spot. If you do not have

a yard and need to walk your dog to relieve herself, consider establishing a toilet area directly adjacent to your home. Take your dog to the toilet area as soon as you exit the house, and remain there until the dog urinates and defecates.

If you want your dog to eventually signal to you when she needs to go out, you should always take her out and back in through the same exit door. However, it is important to be aware that not all dogs learn automatically to signal the need to eliminate in a way that their owners understand (such as by barking or scratching at a door).



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## Puppy Housetraining Tips - continued

### Principle #1

As your dog finishes eliminating (but not before she has finished), immediately praise her verbally and give her an extra special food treat. In order for your dog to understand that the treat is for the elimination behavior, it must be delivered immediately following that behavior. Always take your dog out to eliminate on a leash during the housetraining process in order to be able to deliver her reward in a timely manner.

It may also be helpful to withhold a play session or walk until after your dog has eliminated, so that she learns that eliminating must always occur before other fun activities begin. If you reward both generously with high value food treats and with a walk, the walk actually becomes a reward for elimination. This way, you do not need to walk with your dog for an indeterminate length of time until she eliminates, thereby allowing the dog to set the length of the walk.

It's easiest to establish this routine at times when you know your dog really has to go, like first thing in the morning and when you return home from work. Urination may be easier to train in this way than defecation, as some dogs need to move around in order to defecate (e.g., walk a little bit), and some do not defecate at regular times (e.g., once in the morning and once in the evening, every day).

### Principal #2

Avoid allowing your dog to make mistakes by:

- 1) taking your dog out with adequate frequency (see [The Basics](#) on page 4),
- 2) taking her out on a regular schedule, and
- 3) directly supervising or confining her when she can't be outdoors.

Unless your dog was previously confined for long periods in dirty living conditions, she will naturally tend to avoid eliminating in places where she must sleep or eat. This instinct is important when it comes to housetraining and one of the reasons why the use of a crate as well as other long-term confinement areas can be helpful for puppies.

#### Use of a crate to aid in housetraining

Begin by acclimating your dog to the crate. You may then use this as a tool for confining her at night, when you are gone for short periods, and when you are home and unable to supervise her.

If your dog is eliminating in the crate, even after short periods of time, this may be an indication of separation or confinement anxiety. Please contact your veterinarian and/or a behavior specialist. It may also be helpful to obtain video footage of your dog when home alone in her crate to assess for anxiety problems. If she must be unattended for longer than the general rules stated above, your dog shouldn't be crated. Instead, consider the use of an exercise pen or a baby gate to confine her to a slightly larger area, such as the kitchen, bath, or laundry room. This will still allow her to maintain a natural cleanliness because she can eat and sleep away from the areas where she has soiled.

Make sure the long-term confinement area that you have chosen is thoroughly dog-proofed. Remove all mats and throw rugs, wastepaper baskets and trash cans, clear all counters, pick up all shoes, children's toys, etc., tuck shower curtains into the tub, etc. Alternatively, you can hire a dog walker or have a neighbor take your puppy out as needed during the work week or whenever you are unavailable to do it yourself.

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## Puppy Housetraining tips - continued

### To paper train or not to paper train?

To ease cleanup and to train your dog to urinate and defecate on a specific surface, you may place newspapers or wee-wee pads in the previously soiled area. The dog can then be rewarded for eliminating on these surfaces. She will eventually need to be taught to make the transition from eliminating on the papers or pads to voiding outside, on grass, dirt, mulch, etc.

It is important to remember that the dog will not necessarily make this change easily (particularly if the weather, etc., make it more comfortable to eliminate indoors). The use of newspapers, so-called paper training, can be avoided altogether if you can take your dog outdoors frequently from the beginning.

Very small dogs can be trained to use a litter box. This is done by moving the newspapers to a shallow box once the dog has learned to eliminate

on them, and over the course of days to weeks, gradually add some form of litter on top of the papers. Once the dog is eliminating regularly on the litter, the paper or pads can be removed. The dog will need to be rewarded for appropriate elimination frequently throughout this process.

If your dog had been closely confined in the past for longer than she was able to hold her urine and feces, you may not be able to use a crate for housetraining. Dogs forced to eliminate where they eat and sleep tend to adapt to those living conditions, usually making housetraining a more difficult proposition.

In this situation, you may need to tether your dog to you with a light line about six feet in length ("umbilical cord"), to keep her close to you so that you will be alerted by her preparations to eliminate (e.g., sniffing, circling, squatting), and be able to distract her and take her outside immediately. If this is not feasible, the dog can be confined with you wherever you are. You will have to be alert to the above behaviors. The idea is to prevent her from eliminating "in private" in another part of the house.

Some dogs who have been scolded or punished for eliminating indoors in their owner's presence will avoid eliminating if any person is present. It can be a challenge to convince such dogs that it is "safe" and desirable to eliminate when you take them outside; they may resist eliminating until they can get away from you, even for a short time. You may also leave your dog in a larger area, such as the long-term confinement area mentioned under crate-training, when you cannot supervise her.

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## Puppy Housetraining tips - continued

### Teach Your Dog to Eliminate on Cue

Sometimes a dog that is house-trained will need to eliminate on a new surface (such as concrete rather than grass, after moving from the country to the city), or in a new location (such as just outside the door, for instance, if you are unable to take her for a long walk). In these circumstances, it can be very useful to teach the dog to eliminate in response to a verbal cue.



*Follow the instructions below to teach your dog to eliminate on cue:*

- a. Take your dog out on a schedule each day, on a leash.
- b. Take our dog to the same spot.
- c. Stay in that location with her until she eliminates. When she starts to, say, "Go pee" (or whatever your cue word is). Wait until she has finished, and reward her with food.
- d. Make sure that you are rewarding her when she is completely done so that she does not stop urinating to get the treat.
- e. After she urinates, she may go for her long walk, if you are taking her on one. Whenever your dog starts to eliminate, say, "Go pee", wait until she has finished, and give her a reward.
- f. For the first week or two, do **NOT** say, "Go pee", to her unless she is actually in the process of eliminating. The cue will only work later if it is strongly associated with the desired behavior.
- g. Once your dog is eliminating consistently with this routine, watch her for signs that she is about to eliminate, and say, "Go pee". When she does, give her a treat. If you were mistaken and she does not go after your cue words, go back to saying the cue only while she is in the process of eliminating for a couple of days.
- h. When you are saying, "Go pee" as you see your dog start to look as though she is about to eliminate, and she is reliably doing so, you can start to move the cue earlier in the sequence, i.e., when you first take her outside. Eventually, this cue should work even when you are in an unusual location (for instance, visiting friends or family). Remember that your dog can't defecate on cue in the same way that she can urinate.



## Recognizing and Managing Patient Stress in Lobbies

by Dr. M. Leanne Lilly

As low-stress and fear-free veterinary visits become increasingly popular with clients and valued for the welfare of our patients, much of the focus is on the veterinary portion of the visit itself: the exam room and the examination. While most veterinary activity occurs during the examination, most of the patient's time and experience may not always be in the exam room. Although we know that our clients do not like to wait any more than we like to run behind in our appointments, the lobby may provide a greater opportunity to evaluate our patients and educate clients about canine stress than previously thought.

A pilot study in Italy recorded dogs, not during veterinary examination, but in the lobby. Clients and their dogs were in a quiet lobby without any other pets in it and with only the camera operator present - presumably the least stressful lobby experience possible. During a three-minute period - a minimal lobby wait time - the clients were asked to keep their dogs on leash and fill out a questionnaire about their dog's stress. They were then moved to an exam room. The videos were scored by a veterinary behaviorist and their ratings were compared to client ratings.

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## Recognizing and Managing Patient Stress in Lobbies - continued

Over half of the dogs showed four or more behavioral indicators of stress during just three minutes in the lobby, with two-thirds of them exhibiting signs of stress for more than 30 seconds. Unfortunately, the client rating of their dog's stress level did not correlate with either time spent showing signs of stress, or number of signs of stress shown, such as lip licking, trembling or ear pinning. Clients were most likely to rate their dog as highly stressed if the dog attempted to hide. Furthermore, the clients' ratings had poor agreement with the veterinary behaviorist's ratings, suggesting that the clients were less able to recognize more subtle signs of stress or to quantify them. Only the behaviorist's rating of "highly stressed" was likely to predict resistance to going in to the exam room.

Previous hospitalization experience, or experience of a procedure recognized by the client as painful, did not predict stress ratings, either. This suggests that either the lobby itself is sufficiently stressful - even in its minimally occupied state - or that the lobby experience is predictive of a stressful experience in the exam room. The most prudent option is to address both features of our patients' visit to the veterinary clinic.

Low-stress handling and fear-free techniques recommend minimizing lobby time, separating cats and dogs, and providing sufficient space and separation between dogs. Active enrichment steps, such as use of species-specific pheromones, and sound blocking and sound enrichment, may also improve the quality of experience while in the lobby. Animals may show

signs of stress at sounds over 60dB, which is easily reached in normal conversation, while the sound of dogs barking may reach levels of 108 dB or louder. Sound dampening should be considered in lobby design where possible, without compromising the ability to properly clean or disinfect. In addition, non-slip surfaces in lobbies, and places to elevate cats or small dogs, may also be of use.

Recognizing and managing patient stress in veterinary lobbies could be an important component of low-stress and fear-free veterinary visits. Observation of pets' behavior in the lobby may help veterinarians identify which pets are exhibiting elevated signs of stress, allowing veterinary staff to target their behavior education to the clients whose dogs may be in the most urgent need of stress-recognition. These pets may benefit from changes in appointment routine, such as skipping the lobby all together to decrease anxiety based on anticipation of the exam, as well as special handling during the examination to promote a more positive experience. A positive veterinary visit benefits clients, patients and veterinarians.

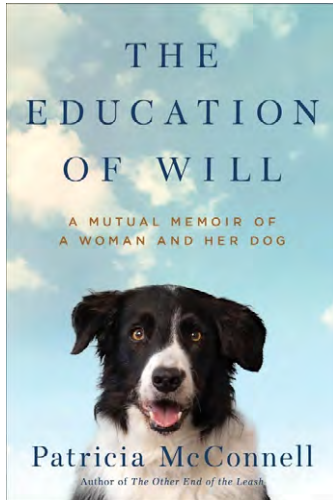


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## Upcoming Events

### Patricia McConnell, PhD and The Emotional Life of Dogs



Award-winning author and animal behaviorist, Dr. Patricia McConnell, is coming to Ohio State! She will give a talk on the emotions of dogs and how they influence and affect behavior and their interactions with their human counterparts.

This event is open to the public and seating in the VMC Hospital Auditorium

will be on a first-come, first-served basis. Additional seating with webinar presentation will be offered in our other auditoriums, pending the number of attendees. We are expecting a crowd for this wildly popular author, so plan to arrive early!

Copies of her new book *The Education of Will*, set to release on February 21, 2017, will be available for sale and she will offer book signing at the conclusion of her talk. Previous works by Dr. McConnell include *The Other End of the Leash*, *Puppy Primer*, *The Cautious Canine*, and *Feisty Fido*.

**When:** Thursday, February 23, 2017  
5:30 - 6:30 p.m.

**Where:** Veterinary Medical Center Auditorium  
601 Vernon L. Tharp Street  
Columbus, OH 43210

**Entrance Fee (donation):** \$5.00  
(free for Ohio State students, faculty and staff)

**Register here**



### Continuing Education at the MidWest Veterinary Conference

The 2017 MidWest Veterinary Conference will be offering a range of topics on animal behavior, including canine behavior, feline behavior and equine behavior! Dr. Patricia McConnell will be giving a special talk on Friday afternoon and offering a book signing from noon - 1 p.m. at the Ohio State College of Veterinary Medicine student organization merchandise table in the exhibit hall.

Each day will offer 6-12 talks by internationally known speakers, including Dr. Lore Haug, Dr. Sally Foote, and Jane Killion.

**When:** February 23-26, 2016  
7 a.m. - 5 p.m.

**Where:** Greater Columbus Convention Center  
400 N. High St., Columbus, Ohio 43215

**Register now at:** [www.mvcinfo.org](http://www.mvcinfo.org)

Behavior News: The Newsletter from the Animal Behavior Program



## Student Section, brought to you by the Behavior Club

### Clicker Training Horses

by Chelsea Ruzzo, Behavior Club President, Ohio State College of Veterinary Medicine 2018

Horses are traditionally trained using negative reinforcement and positive punishment. Negative reinforcement means that something aversive is applied, such as pressure, and this aversive is removed once the desired behavior is achieved. This is the basis for riding. Positive punishment means adding an aversive, such as giving a sharp tug on the lead rope, hitting, or yelling, to decrease an undesired behavior.

The equine world is built upon deep-seated traditions and has been slower to move toward more humane training methods. Many people fear that if they use positive training methods they will have a horse that runs them over to get a treat and only listens if he feels like it. Done correctly, positive training can achieve desirable behaviors and eliminate undesirable behaviors.

If you don't want a horse to mug you for treats, don't reward pocket nudging - which is the first step for this behavior. When an animal is punished, there is a risk of increasing fear and anxiety in that animal. Positive training doesn't have this risk and if the horse does make a mistake, they simply aren't rewarded and get the chance to try again.

When a horse is punished for not cooperating or performing an undesirable behavior, a couple of consequences may result. The behavior may stop, at least for the moment, or the horse may become increasingly fearful. A fearful horse can quickly become a dangerous horse. In addition, the horse will remember this incident and be prepared next time. Instead of being a little fidgety because he is unsure of the situation, he may try to escape the area or act aggressively towards the handler.<sup>1</sup>

Clicker training is becoming increasingly popular in dog training because it allows the handler to break down tasks into manageable pieces and reward the dog for completing each piece, with the eventual goal of putting these pieces together. Contrary to the belief of many people, horses are incredibly intelligent. They can easily be clicker trained to perform a variety of tasks, just as dogs can.

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## Clicker Training Horses - continued

Alexandra Kurland, author of *Clicker Training for Your Horse*, suggests starting clicker training by teaching your horse to target an object with his nose, such as a cone. She recommends using a barrier - such as a stall guard - for safety as the horse learns the rules to this new, fun game. When the horse touches the cone with his nose, click and give a treat. Soon your horse will be eagerly targeting the cone and even offering new behaviors in hopes of earning a reward. If you don't want a behavior to continue, simply ignore it. In the event that the horse becomes very grabby, calmly take a step back out of his reach. He will quickly learn this behavior doesn't earn a reward.<sup>2</sup>

Clicker training can also be used to help horses that are fearful of the vet, farrier or other events that cause stress. Giving a treat while the horse is getting an injection, for example, can help make positive associations for the horse. This will cause him to be more cooperative in the future and help keep everyone safe. For horses that have a stronger fear response and already attempt to flee or fight, using targeting mentioned above is a great tool. Dr. Jeanine Berger, a veterinary behaviorist, describes situations where horses are taught to target a dot on the wall with their nose and to keep their nose on that dot. This provides the horse with a job to focus on instead of receiving a vaccine or having his hooves trimmed.

So before giving a correction with a lead shank or reaching for a twitch, take a step back and evaluate why the horse is acting the way he is. Can you change how he is feeling about the situation using food or break down the task into smaller steps so he feels more comfortable?



## References

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2. Kurland, Alexandra. "Clicker Training For Your Horse: First Clicker Lessons ..." Karen Pryor Clicker Training. N.p., 01 Apr. 2003. Web. 20 Oct. 2016. <http://www.clickertraining.com/node/608>



# Troubleshooting Clicker Training

by Rebecca Aguilar, Behavior Club Treasurer, Ohio State College of Veterinary Medicine 2018

Clicker training is a great way to teach new behaviors or reinforce old ones. It's also a great way to bond with our pets! But sometimes we run into some stumbling blocks in training. Here are some tips to help you overcome them and get back to having fun!

## My dog is afraid of the clicker noise

If your dog, cat, rabbit, etc. is afraid of the clicker noise, then a traditional clicker may not be the best tool. All you need for clicker training is a device that will produce a sound quickly and very consistently. You can use a Snapple bottle cap, the lid of a glass jar that pops out or the click of a pen (provided you don't use a pen often around them). You can also use a verbal marker like "Yes". Get creative and try it out! Don't try to force your pet to "work through" their fear of the clicker noise. Instead work on their noise sensitivities separate from clicker training.

## My dog is too distracted when we clicker train

Focusing in different environments is hard! First work on training in a distraction free environment like your living room; then you can start adding in distractions. Progress slowly like moving to your yard, a quiet park and a busier park. Practicing in a variety of situations can help your dog learn that paying attention to you even if there are distractions can be very rewarding and worthwhile!

Rewarding for attention on you will also help your dog focus on you when in distracting environments. You can first start by capturing attention and rewarding your dog when they look at you on their own. You can also make an interesting noise like a trill or kissing noise and reward for attention. "Reset" by throwing a treat on the floor and waiting for your dog to focus on you again. When he or she refocuses predictably and consistently, you can start adding a cue like "Watch me" or "Look".

## My dog isn't interested in my rewards

If your dog or cat isn't interested in your rewards, you need to up the value: the smellier the better! There are a variety of options you can try, like hotdogs, Braunschweiger, cheesesticks or boiled chicken. Try different things to see what your pet loves best!

## My dog is getting fat from all this clicker training!

Remember to use pea-sized treats; they don't need a whole mouthful! Try using your dog's kibble (instead of feeding them in a bowl) or low calorie options like cucumber or carrot pieces.

## I have two dogs, so it's hard to clicker train them

There are clickers that have two different clicks on the same device. These are useful for training two dogs together without them getting confused about who is being rewarded. Another option could be to teach your dogs to settle on a mat or towel. Train one dog at a time while the other is settling on the mat. Remember to periodically reward the settling dog (without a click). When it's time to switch, call the settling dog to work and ask the just-worked dog to settle. Creating a distinction between settling and working will give them a clear idea of what is expected of them. Lastly, you can always separate them in a different room for clicker training and give the non-working dog a Kong or long-lasting treat to work on.

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## Troubleshooting Clicker Training - continued

### I've tried it before and it just doesn't work

- Remember to give a treat for every click
- Use rewards that are worth it for YOUR dog
- Keep sessions short! 5-10 minutes at a time is enough. You can always increase the frequency and intersperse training throughout the day.
- Make sure you're clicking at the EXACT moment you see the behavior you want. Timing is crucial! And staying consistently will help better communicate what will earn a reward.
- Remember to keep appropriate criteria. If your criteria for a reward is set too high, your pet might become frustrated. Instead break down complicated tricks into tiny baby steps and reward for those initially. This helps you shape behaviors into what they will ultimately look like. Also consider lowering criteria in distracting environments or asking for behaviors they know really well.

### What if I want to give toys instead?

Developing verbal markers is fun and useful! Remember that consistency is key. Pick a word and stick to what it means! For example, you can use "Good" for great job, that was good and you're just going to get verbal praise for it. "Yes" can mean, I wanted that behavior and now I will give you a treat. "Great" can mean, I wanted that behavior and I want you to hold it while I deliver a treat directly to you. "Tug" or "Play" can mean, I wanted that behavior and now you'll get a toy/tug reward.

Using different words to mean different rewards can build expectations for that reward and avoid disappointments, if for example, they were expecting a treat but received a toy instead.

