

Teaching Surf Instructors to Teach



National Surf Schools and Instructors Association Instructors and Coaches Training Manual



Methods Used in Surf Dog Training

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Methods Used in Surf Dog Training

Lure and reward training- The lure-and-reward method, a type of positive reinforcement training, uses a treat to lure your dog into different behaviors. Simply hold a delicious and motivating treat to your dog's nose, then slowly move it around to get him to move the way you want. The treat acts like a magnet for your dog's nose, and where his head goes, his body will follow. For example, if you want him to sit, move the treat up and slightly over his head. As he looks up at the treat, his rear will fall to the ground. If you want the dog to spin around, move the treat in a circle. After your dog completes the behavior, reward him so that he knows he did what you wanted. -AKC



Determine, by asking the owner, what the highest level reward their dog prefers. When using treats, always treat the dog ON the board. You want to reinforce the behavior of the dog being ON the board, not getting off the board.

It is preferable to not force the dog onto the board, and not pick them up to place them on the board. You want the dog to make the decision on their own. The treat will allow you to do this successfully.

Use the treat to lure the dog toward and onto the board, at first. But let the owner know they need to fade out luring with the treat in favor of directing the behavior without it. The goal is to get the dog on the board without depending on the treat every time you want them to get on the board.

You can use dog's natural curiosity to direct their behavior with a hand touch by putting your hand, palm out, where you want the dog to be on the board. They will follow your hand to the spot you indicate in order to touch the palm of your hand with their nose to see what they can find. As they do this, you then say "touch".

Next, treat them on the board, and then walk away and see if they follow you. Once they do, walk back toward the board to get them to follow you, and back onto the board. If not, hold your hand out again, and say "touch" in the direction of the board. This should trigger the behavior, as soon as it does, give treats, and each time thereafter that the dog goes on the board.

Within a short period of time, and by consistently doing this the dog quickly understands that being on the board is how they get



treats. Then each time they see the board they will initiate getting on the board by themselves, and you can then fade out the hand touch also. In addition, you can teach the owner to say "yes", "good" or use a clicker to mark the behavior of whenever they step onto the board.

Clicker Training - Clicker training is a type or technique of positive reinforcement training using a clicker. A clicker is a small mechanical noisemaker that fits in your hand in a grip with your thumb on top so you push it to make a click noise. This technique is based on the science of animal learning and the fact that behaviors that are rewarded are more likely to be repeated in the future. So rather than focusing on what your dog is doing wrong, and taking good behavior for granted, clicker training is the opposite and concentrates on what your dog is doing right. You are telling the dog what to do, instead of what not to do. You will see this can have an incredible effect on the dogs behavior, and the choices they make.



The Clicker

The clicker tells the dog exactly which behavior you're rewarding, because it happens instantly. By clicking at the right time, when you see the dog exhibit the behavior you want you "mark" the moment they do it. The dog doesn't have to guess what you like them to do, the click tells your dog precisely what they did correctly. For example, if you're training your dog to sit, you would click at the moment their haunches touch the ground. It takes careful observation and quick reactions.

The clicker marks the moment. There is nothing making that specific noise the clicker makes special, except for the fact you likely will never make it, around the dog, outside of training. Therefore, you can use other distinct noises or actions that have one meaning. Let the owner know they can substitute anything as a marker when working with the dog at home. It need only be distinct from other ways they communicate with their dog. For example, a snap of the fingers, a blow of a whistle, or a cluck of the tongue will work. Or many use a marker word like "Yes" or "Good." For hearing-impaired dogs, you could use a gentle tap on the shoulder.

Remember, the click or other marker by itself is meaningless until it's paired with a reward. The click simply indicates a reward is on the way. Although edible treats are the best incentive for most dogs, a reward is anything the dog values. So if the dog values or prefers a game of tug-of-war, or to play with a toy or ball, over a biscuit or other morsel, you can use that instead. What is most important is timing and consistency. The click must mark the correct moment and every click must be followed by a reward.