



## **Training Tip Sheet: Using Treats for Training Your Adult Dog**

### ***Why use treats?***

Training requires repetition; a dog can eat a treat quickly and be ready to go again. All dogs must eat to live. If your dog has picky eating habits or doesn't seem motivated by food, using her regular food mixed with tasty training treats for training, while you control her mealtimes, will actually help her learn to eat better .

### ***Shouldn't my dog do what I want just to please me?***

As much as we love dogs and believe that they love, it's very difficult for us to let them know what we want them to do since they don't use language to communicate like we do. Giving a dog a treat when he's doing a behavior we like has been scientifically shown to cause that behavior to be repeated. The more you reward it, the more you see it, so you are clearly letting him know what you want him to do.

### ***Will my dog get fat?***

As long as you give her healthy treats, your dog will remain physically healthy while improving her behavior. When you're giving lots of food throughout the day for training, you can decrease the amount she gets at meals to keep her diet balanced. Training for active behaviors as well as those that use brain power uses up calories.

### ***What if I don't have treats with me? Will I always have to carry treats?***

During the early stages of training, make sure you have treats with you at all times. Get a belt pack or keep them in a plastic bag in your pocket, and keep sealed containers of non-perishable treats around the house for easy access. As training progresses, you will be asking for more behavior per treat, but even in old age, your dog deserves to be paid for his efforts with a small treat! Owners of highly-trained performance dogs almost always have treats with them. Think of a treat as your dog's paycheck for a job well-done.

### ***Will my dog really be trained if I train with treats?***

You can train well or train poorly, with treats or without. By giving your dog a treat when you like what he's doing, you ensure he'll do that behavior again. By doing many repetitions of this every day, he will be volunteering to do that behavior regularly. When you add a cue word or hand signal to the behavior, you can reward only when you ask for the behavior and control when the dog does it. At that point, he's trained to do the behavior on cue or "command."

### ***What is a "Training Treat?"***

Because we want to do many repetitions of a behavior during training, training treats must be small, easily swallowed, and tasty. The size of a piece of dry dog food is best – ¼ to ½ inch, depending on the size of the dog. You can use the dog's regular food, bits of cheese or meat, pieces of fruits or vegetables, purchased small training treats, or even make your own training treats, as long as your dog likes them. It's your dog's reward, so he has to like it enough to work for it.