

## **The 'Gotcha game' and other exercises**

This will help to prepare your puppy for some of those unexpected situations that could otherwise be scary for him, for the occasional lunge and grab that we may need in an emergency, or for what your neighbours child may do while playing.

Once again we start a little at a time, with what puppy can cope with, we do not aim to scare or startle. If at any stage puppy seems worried go back to the beginning and start again, taking more time before moving on.

### **Tail pulling**

First reach out slowly to pat puppy, if there is no backwards inclination from puppy at all and he is still wagging his tail, say good boy and treat. Now we know he is not shy we can progress. Reach out a little faster and touch under chin, say good boy then treat. Then reach to side of face, good boy and treat. Then on top of head, good boy then treat. Touch tail, reward. Rub hand down tail, reward. Go back and do it all again with all the rewards. Light tug on tail, reward. Repeat. Lift tail up, reward. Slightly harder tug on tail, reward. Back 2 steps, repeat. Slightly harder tug on tail again, double reward followed by a game. Lift tail, reward. The idea is that if one day some untrained child pulls your adult 40kg bull mastiff's tail his response will be 'beauty, where's my reward?'

### **Grabbing collar**

And again for grabbing the collar which we may need to do in an emergency, and strangely enough this one does worry some dogs, so lets prepare puppy now to prevent a problem later. Again, pat, reward. Side of neck, reward. Touch collar, reward. Pat shoulder, reward. Hold collar fraction of second, reward. Touch collar, reward. Hold collar again, reward. Faster move towards collar, reward. Then faster and touch collar, reward. Back to pat, reward. Faster and hold collar fractionally, reward. Slowly building but notice that we don't always make the exercise harder every time, back track sometime so puppy doesn't think, 'oh no, it keep getting more and more difficult'.

### **Handling mouth and tablets**

Now for giving tablets and examining the mouth and teeth. Remember start with something easy and non threatening and build as puppy becomes desensitised to something that could be scary if it happens suddenly. Pat, reward. Under chin, reward. Top of head, down over eye, reward. Along muzzle, reward. Slight pressure on muzzle, reward. Up muzzle, over eye, reward. Around muzzle, finger under lip, reward. Back 2 steps and repeat. Finger inside mouth, reward. Place food treat on tongue, reward. Open mouth, reward. Open mouth, place in food treat, reward again. Back 3 steps, repeat, reward again.

Remember to always progress slowly, if at any stage you get a backward response then you have gone too far too fast and need to start again and go more slowly.

## **Nail Clipping**

This one can become a problem if not handled correctly with young pups. Again start easily with leg patting, reward. Lift leg, reward. Touch toe, reward. Pat leg, reward. Slight pressure on leg, reward. Lift leg and touch toe, reward. Back 2 steps and repeat. Second leg start from the beginning, this will still seem different as it is a different leg, and don't forget to do the hind legs too!

Lift leg and slight pressure on toe, reward. Back 3 steps and repeat again. Clip 1 nail and triple reward, then take puppy for a walk or play a game. Next session start 4 steps back on the same leg and still reward. Now leg 2, perhaps alternate legs now, and clip a second nail and reward, back 2 steps and repeat, then clip a third nail and end session with triple reward plus walk or game. Same again next session back 4 steps and repeat. Maybe this time clip 3 nails in a row if all is going well, then end session triple reward and game.

If at any stage you meet resistance then you have progressed too fast, so back 5 steps and start again and slower this time. Always end on an easier note if you do meet some resistance. Back 4 steps, more reward, progress 2 steps, then back 2 steps and end there at an easy stage for puppy to handle.

## **Children**

Especially important if you don't have any, but still important if you do, as puppies do learn to differentiate and recognise familiar children, but we want them to think that all children are nice and can benefit them.

Same approach as with all other exercises, don't start off throwing puppy into a 9yo boys birthday party, (that would be scary for anyone!).

See child in distance, reward. See child in distance laughing and playing, reward. Child of opposite sex, reward. Child in distance on skateboard, triple reward. Closer child, reward. When you have puppy spotting children and looking at you saying 'hey there's a child, where's my reward?', then decrease distance and reward. Then well trained quiet sensible child next to you, double reward. Then same child can reward puppy themselves. Best to do sit, reward from child.

Once puppy is doing sit with reward being given by sensible children, then change childrens shape, size, age, sex, volume etc. Triple reward for noisy children or scary young boys. Remember don't always increase the difficulty, sometimes go back a few paces and make it easy.

Always remember to get children to ask puppy to sit before rewarding, as this will save puppy going 'beauty, children' and doing flying leaps at them – this can quite frighten attached mothers as well as the children!

**Any other reach and grab type exercises or life preparation like hats, sunglasses, umbrellas, loud noises, vacuum cleaners, lawn mowers, see-saws, swings etc is only limited by your imagination.**