**Diet is very important as it affects dogs’ health and behaviour**

Every dog is different; therefore what is ideal for one may have a different effect on behaviour and health of another:

* Sensitive stomachs
* Hyperactive behaviour
* Coat condition
* Dental health
* Weight consistency
* Flatulence
* Poop quality and quantity

Many types of dietary options are available, all with criticisms and praises:

* Complete dry kibble
* Complete wet food
* Mixer biscuit and wet food
* BARF (Bones and raw food)
* Frozen/Freeze dried
* Dehydrated
* Fresh
* Semi-moist

Artificial colours and preservatives make children hyperactive – it’s the same with dogs.

Low quality wet and dry food has high sugar, caramels and colours content.

Low quality, cheaper plant protein rather than high quality meat protein is used. Also low quality foods are bulked out by carbohydrates and fat rather than protein.

**The Important Bit!**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| * ***Top Quality Brands:*** * Orijen * Arden Grange * James Wellbeloved * Burns * Wainwrights * Bob & Lush * Canine Cook * Applaws * Autarky * Barking Heads * Fish 4 Dogs * Vets Kitchen * Taste of the Wild * Nature Diet * Natures Menu | * ***Mid-Range Brands:*** * Eukanuba * Royal Canin * Harringtons * Hills Science Plan * Almo Nature * Alpha * Butchers * Chappie * Chudleys * Burgess Supadog * Pro Plan * Skinners * Trophy Pet Foods | * ***Low Quality Brands:*** * Pedigree * Bakers * Wagg * Frolic * Supermarket Brands * Arkwrights * Cesar * Winalot * Gusto |

**How dogs learn**

***Positive and Negative Attention: Reward the good, ignore the bad***

Dogs will repeat any behaviour that gets them attention. *ANY ATTENTION*. So, the first thing to think about is, what is attention? Attention is petting your dog, talking to your dog, looking at your dog, chasing your dog, yelling at your dog, throwing something at your dog, and so on and so forth. Notice, I did not say dogs will repeat any behaviour that gets them positive attention; I said dogs will repeat any behaviour that gets them ANY attention.

Here is an example:-

Betty is running around the house like a maniac, carrying Dad’s best socks in her mouth and generally making a complete nuisance of herself. Dad, in turn, runs around the house chasing after her and yelling at her, cursing the day he ever thought getting a dog was a good idea.

Then, tired from her great game of chase and make-daddy-crazy, Betty lies down nicely on her bed. Dad, frustrated and angry at the demise of his socks, ignores Betty, and gets on the phone with Aunt Becky to bemoan Betty’s existence. What behaviour will get repeated?

**You got it! Running around like a maniac with Dad’s sock. That’s the behaviour that got attention.**

Lying down nicely on the bed got Betty ignored. She becomes less and less likely to lie down nicely and more and more likely to grab socks and play chase.

If a dog has a choice between a behaviour that gets ignored and a behaviour that gets attention, it will choose the behaviour that gets attention, even if its get them negative attention.

**Here’s the good news. If a dog has a choice between behaviour that gets it positive attention and behaviour that gets it negative attention, it will choose the behaviour that gets positive attention.**

This means, there is a ready-made solution to the problem of Betty and the socks. To the extent a behaviour that is attention seeking, can be ignored. If you always ignore it then your puppy will stop doing it. If you can’t ignore it, and let’s be realistic, a lot of it you can’t ignore, make sure you find a way to minimize the behaviours you don’t want with minimal attention, and to emphasize the behaviours you do want with positive attention. When Betty lies down and is behaving how Dad wants her to, he needs to reward her for that. “Good girl to settle.”

Try not to leave things lying around that your puppy can steal. If they do steal something and you can’t ignore it, i.e. you want it back incase it gets chewed.

Then pretend you haven’t seen your dog and go and pick up their favourite toy, start interacting with the toy and sooner or later your puppy will wonder what all the fuss is about, they will drop the object you don’t want them to have and come and see what you are doing. At this point throw your toy in the opposite direction and go and retrieve the stolen article. making sure you don’t leave it somewhere your puppy can get it next time.

Think about the things you give your dog attention for; make sure you include subtle kinds of attention such as looking at your dog and negative attention such as yelling at your dog. Think about the things you don’t give your dog attention for, including lying down nicely on his bed. Now, think about ways of giving your dog positive attention for the behaviours you want. I promise you will see a difference in your dog’s behaviour.

**Reinforcement (usually a reward) is anything that encourages the dog to perform the behaviour again.**

**Punishment (usually something the dog dislikes) is anything that discourages the dog from performing the behaviour again.**

* Types of reinforcement:
* Food – a survival resource and usually the best motivator. Dogs have 2000 taste buds compared to our 10000, leading their sense of smell to be 1000 times more sensitive than ours. So good smelly treats (such as our garlic sausage) are far more effective than treats that taste nice.
* Praise - Although dogs’ communication systems are not as verbal as ours, praise such as ‘good dog’ can become a learned reward. This occurs by association: as a puppy, ‘good dog’ is often coupled with a fuss and pat on the head. Then the dog learns to associate the praise with a natural reward (which is touch)
* Touch - domestic dogs will often seek physical contact as a reward (when they are brought up well socialised with people and contact)
* Eye contact - dogs will look up at us to make eye contact for our attention, to give theirs and for reassurance. ‘Checking in’ is the regular giving of eye contact that well trained dogs will give their bonded owners to basically ask: “Am I doing this right? What do you want me to do next?”
* Play – positive fun is sometimes a more effective motivator and reinforcement than food for younger, active dogs

These are types of reinforcement we can use practically in a training class environment. But remember, reinforcement is anything that makes the dog more likely to do it again, therefore it is anything the dog wants.

Think about it, what does your dog want more than anything?

* + Play with dogs
  + Chase a rabbit
  + Sniff in the bushes
  + Run off-lead

We can use these as rewards for good behaviour. If you dog walks on a loose lead to the park, the reward can be to run off lead. If your dog recalls away from a dog, the reward can be to go play with his doggy friends. If your dog does a nice sit and wait, the reward can be to go and sniff around.

* Types of punishment:
  + Yelling
  + Kicking
  + Hitting
  + Isolating
* Over the past 25 years, huge progress has been made in training methods, moved on from harsh corrections to more positive methods
* It must be far better to train your dog to behave well and do as you ask because they want to, and not out of fear – and far better for building a good relationship on as well
* How to get your dog to behave well? Reinforce EVERYTHING you want them to do when they do it.
* Use every opportunity to reinforce a good behaviour:
  + When they settle quietly on their bed
  + When they don’t beg for food
  + When they don’t jump on you
  + Sitting to have the lead put on/removed
  + Giving you attention/eye contact
* Don’t concentrate on correcting unwanted behaviours – just ignore them. Apart from self-rewarding behaviours (barking, fighting), behaviours without reinforcement will fade away and stop completely.
* This is extinction – however, before the behaviour completely stops, an ‘extinction burst’ may be seen, where the behaviour dramatically increases in intensity/frequency as a last attempt of the dog to gain reinforcement from it.

***Association***

Dogs learn by associating 2 or more things that occur simultaneously.

For example;

* The sound of the biscuit jar with a treat
* The sound of the doorbell with visitors
* The sight of the lead with going for a walk

For training obedience, we use the same pattern of association to teach behaviours on command. We pair a hand signal and/or word with a behaviour (e.g. sit).

***Repetition***

Lots of pairings of stimuli happen continuously throughout the day, but they need to be repeated in order to make an association. Just one, two or three occurrences of the phone ringing and the dog being fed his dinner, does not mean this happens every time. Approx, 350 repetitions are needed for a dog to form a solid association. This doesn’t mean however, that prior to this a dog can’t learn a sequence of events that are likely to result in a consequence. So if your dog knows how to sit, when you’re at home on your own, have a piece of sausage and guide it above the dog’s head, this is a pattern the dog is beginning to understand. It does not mean they know how to sit from 300m away when he’s got his head stuck down a rabbit hole and you have no treats.

Alongside the repetitions, generalisation to other contexts is crucial. For example, if you only ever practice recall in your garden at home, with no other animals about on a quiet evening, your dog is never going to effectively recall to the same standard in the park, whilst playing with other dogs. Everything you teach your dog you need to practice and repeat in different environments, with different and more difficult distractions around.

**Fulfilling Your Puppy’s Needs**

* Needs that you need to meet for your dog:
  + Good diet (as previously discussed)
  + Health and Condition – keep vaccinations up to date, grooming as appropriate for your breed, daily claw, dental, ear and eye care
  + Exercise – dependent upon breed, activity levels etc. As a general guide: 2 or 3 walks per day for at least 30 minutes, ideally off lead or running if possible
  + Mental Stimulation – working type dogs bred to do a job typically need more mental stimulation than others. Dogs that have had an active and stimulating puppyhood are more intelligent and brain active and so require more stimulation. Training, problem solving and working are good fulfillers of this
  + Play – dogs are social animals that carry play characteristics from puppyhood into and throughout their adult life. Dogs do not often play independently – play with other dogs and people, with or without toys is needed
  + Rest – when all the above needs have been fulfilled, rest is needed – particularly for young pups
* Most people can find a dog with needs that they can fulfil, and a dog who can fulfil their wants:
  + Pensioners may not be able to cope with and fulfil the exercise and stimulation needs of a young, working type dog, but can easily with an older rescue dog, content with a short walk each day and nights in front of the fire
  + Equally, a young active family may not be able to fulfil the resting needs of an old dog, and a younger active dog would be more suitable
  + People with allergies can get a hairless or non-shedding breed
  + A small dog or large but calm and quiet dog will suit people with small children or frail elders

**Training Techniques**

The simplest way to get your dog to perform behaviours (e.g. sit, recall) is the ‘Lure and Reward’ technique.

Take your ‘treat’ (something the dog wants, normally a treat/toy) and hold it in front of their nose to tempt them. Move it slowly around so they follow the treat with their head. Whilst they are following it, offer the reward. Build up the amount of time and distance they have to follow the lure before rewarding them with it. Use side-to-side and up-and-down head turns, turning in circles, walking towards etc.

When reliably following the treat to the end of the earth, you can use it to guide them into certain positions and to move in certain directions etc. before giving the reward. Once doing the behaviour reliably, you can add in the word/hand signal you want to associate with that behaviour.

The majority of training behaviours in class will be using this lure and reward technique.