

FADING THE LURE

March 15, 2017

Sometimes I have a good excuse. Sometimes I just forget what day it is.

Training Tip Tuesday (on Wednesday): Fading the Lure

Using a lure can be crucial to help our dogs learn; but too often I see people who forget to train beyond the lure. They never fade it out, and the dog (and handler!) become completely dependent on it. Without the lure, neither can perform the task. In this case, the lure has become a bribe, and can lead to challenging situations when you don't have something 'good enough' for your dog to listen!

Fading the lure does not mean we stop encouraging and praising our dogs, or rewarding them for a job well done! It simply means that we have taken the time to educate them, and expect some level of understanding *before* the reward comes out.

Let's use Down as an example. We want our dog to lay on the floor when we cue 'down!'. Here are the steps I would use to teach it:

Step 1: With the dog in the sit, I use a lure (something the dog finds valuable) and move my hand from her nose, straight down to her front feet. I might have to adjust my hand position a little, depending on the dog. The moment her elbows touch the mat, I click, praise and reward. I do this until I know she will follow my hand to the ground.

Step 2: I repeat Step one, but this time I add the cue word 'down' as I begin to gesture to the floor. I repeat this step until it becomes fluid.

Step 3: The lure becomes the reward. I put it in my opposite hand. I still gesture and cue just as I did in step 2, but this time the treat comes from the opposite hand; she is no longer following food to the floor.

Step 4: Bending all the way to the ground is also a form of help; I want to fade this slowly as well. In steps 1-3, I went all the way to the floor. In step 4 I am going to decrease how far I go, only by an inch or two at a time. If I touched the floor in step 1, here I will stop an inch above the floor, then 2 inches, then 4 inches, etc.. if my dog gets stuck, I will bend a little more and as soon as my dog starts moving in the right direction, I return to the position I was in when I originally cued.

Step 5: I stop moving my hand down as well, and hold it up more like a stop sign. I am still praising and rewarding every time she does it right!

Step 6: Add a little distance; I take a step back from dog and cue.

Step 7: Test her understanding; ask from different positions (stand to down, sit to down.. walking to down) Ask verbally only, ask with only a hand signal, ask standing in front of her, next to her, behind her, etc..

Step 8: Proof her understanding; ask for the down in different scenarios with different distractions present, on different surfaces, in different environments etc.

Make sure your dog has a solid understanding of each step before moving on. If you get stuck; don't be afraid to regress a step and make sure there aren't any gaps. If we want our dog's to listen to us, we have to take the time to educate them and make sure they understand our requests. Some dogs go through the steps quickly, some take more time – don't rush your dog! There is no time limit to education. It's more important to get a solid foundation, and work together than to try to get it done quickly and jeopardize your relationship!

Any time something changes or you add something new - be ready to help again.. !

<https://youtu.be/u9pRglOq5oc>