



UVHS Behavior Tips
Upper Valley Humane Society
www.uvhs.org
training@uvhs.org
603-448-6888

Guidelines for Finding a Good Dog Trainer

from the American Humane Association

contributed by Suzanne Hetts, PhD, certified applied animal behaviorist

1. Look for trainers who use positive reinforcement for good behavior rather than punishment for unacceptable behavior.
2. Observe an obedience class without your pet. Are the animals and people having a good time? Talk with some participants after the class. If someone won't let you sit in on a class, don't enroll.
3. Don't allow trainers to work your dog unless they tell you beforehand exactly what they plan to do.
4. Don't be afraid to tell a trainer to stop if she or he is doing something to your dog you don't feel comfortable with.
5. If a trainer tells you to do something you don't feel good about, don't do it. Don't be intimidated, bullied, or shamed into doing something that you believe is not in your dog's best interest.
6. Avoid trainers that offer guarantees. That trainer is either ignoring or doesn't understand the complexity of animal behavior.
7. Avoid trainers who object to using food as a training reward. Food is an acceptable positive reinforcement training tool.
8. Avoid trainers who won't let you use any training collar other than a choke chain. Head collars are humane alternative to choke chains and pinch collars.
9. If you believe your dog has been subjected to cruel treatment by a trainer, get the names and phone numbers of witnesses. Take your dog to the veterinarian immediately for a complete physical. Tell them that the results of the exam may be used as evidence in a court case so that they will document the procedures with that in mind.
10. If you witness a cruelty, don't be afraid to file charges. Talk to your local humane officers or animal control officers about what you saw. They can help determine if abuse occurred and what next steps should be taken.