



UVHS Behavior Tips

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Retraining Marking Behavior in Dogs

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Boredom, lack of exercise, and being unaltered are usually the cause of this problem. DON'T PUNISH this behavior. It is quite fixable using a three-prong approach - management, "no free lunch" reinforcement and "the wrap" described at the end. As in all training, the success is directly proportionate to the handler's commitment to following through in all three areas consistently.

During the retraining period:

Management:

1. Don't allow the dog to be free without supervision for a second. He should be attached to someone in the house for the next month. Other wise the dog should be in a crate or put outside if he has a kennel. The dog should not be outside, free, and unsupervised. [When in the house, car, or crate the dog should also be wearing the "wrap"*.]

2. Neuter the dog. Whether a pet dog or working dog, he doesn't need these extra hormones running throughout his body providing distraction. (If breeding him is a very important consideration, then try all the management suggestions first or have Vet freeze some sperm for later use.)

"No Free Lunch"

The handler should put the dog on a "[Earn While you Learn -The No Free Lunch](#)" program combined with exercise. Have the handler measure out the dog's entire day's food ration each morning and then feed that daily ration in two ways:

1. Some of this food (about 1/2 of the day's ration) goes into a buster cube. Give the dog the food filled buster cube at his regular mealtimes if you wish. The buster cube uses energy and staves off boredom, challenges the dog to think and makes eating something he earns.
2. Use the rest of the day's ration as the reinforcement for games of cooperation (retrieve, obedience, scent work, etc.) and for anytime the dog urinates outside. Be sure to reinforce with food and praise appropriate urination.
3. Play games that exercise, reinforce cooperation, and eliminate boredom. Play the two-toy game with the dog (see bottom for description). Use cooperative play as a reinforcement for all good behavior. Reinforce the wanted behavior with food and if possible also jackpot with cooperative play which will also help exercise the dog.

In other words put the dog on a "no free lunch program". He has to earn every mouthful of food and attention. This is not a punishment to the dog. Working for something is what your dog wants. This is actually the cornerstone of a strong reinforcement relationship between handler and dog.

The Wrap:

When the dog is in the house, vehicle or crate he will be wearing "the wrap". You make the wrap by securing a piece of toweling around the dog's middle covering his sheath/penis. The wrap is only removed when the dog is anyplace where it is appropriate for him to urinate. To make the wrap, take a small towel cut lengthwise in half and wrap around dog's waist/groin area once or twice if you can). Then use Vet wrap to secure into place. (VET Wrap sticks to its self and works really well, it's cheap and can be bought through your vet or any Tack Shop.)

Only take the wrap off when dog needs to relieve himself. If the dog does mark with the wrap on he will soon realize that he isn't getting anywhere, and is only peeing on himself. Replace toweling but allow dog to live with soiled wrap for a little while. I have many clients who have used this method and the behavior usually goes away within a few weeks. It might look funny, but it sends a big message to the dog and even working dogs can wear it while they work.

Two-toy retrieve game: Use atleast two or three identical toys that your dog likes (kong, tennis ball, hose pieces). Stand in the middle of an open area. Tease your dog and throw one toy for the dog to chase. Just as the dog picks it up, make an attention getting noise and wave another identical toy in the air and run away from your dog. As soon as your dog comes toward you, stop running but continue to show your toy. As your dog approaches throw the toy you have in the exact opposite direction you threw the first toy. As your dog runs by you to get the newly thrown toy, pick up the toy he dropped. Repeat the above. Your goal is to keep your dog on a run the whole game, and eventually if you time it right, he will be dropping one toy right at your feet as he races off for the newly tossed toy. The game is a win-win for both dog and handler. It is a wonderful way to exercise your dog, teach a retrieve and out without ever forcing the dog to let go of a toy. By having other identical toys, the only way the dog can get the toy is to give up the toy.