

PET PEEVES PERIODICAL

A newsletter dedicated to preserving the human-animal bond through behavior counseling.

HERE PUPPY, PUPPY!



November 2010

Volume 3, Issue 4

Teaching a dog to come to you when called is one of the most important commands you can teach your dog. A dog with a reliable "come" recall can prevent many unfortunate accidents from happening. Consistency and a lot of practice is the only way to get a dependable recall.

Before you even begin, make sure you have lots of treats and even a favorite toy handy. Some dogs like the sound of a squeaker and will come to that noise alone. Be prepared before training begins, that way your puppy isn't waiting for his reward. And remember, that a puppy's attention span is only 1/2 to 2 seconds, so if you reward after the fact, you're probably rewarding him for some other behavior all together.

When starting to train "come" or "here", you want to make sure you don't set your dog up for failure. You want to start out in a controlled environment with no distractions. Until that recall becomes reliable, the more distractions there are, the more likely your dog isn't going to come to you. Once your dog comes to you every time you call for him, then you can gradually increase distractions. Do not call your dog to come if you are unwilling to enforce it. There are some instances that you may say that it's not crucial for him to come to you, but you have just taught your dog that it is ok to ignore you.

The best time to start using the "come" command is when your dog is looking at you, or better yet, has already begun walking toward you. When he takes that

first step towards you, say his name and then whatever command you desire (usually "come" or "here", but since dogs don't know English you can use any word you want). When you say your command, you want to say it in a fun, upbeat tone. Dog's are very perceptive in tone changes, and usually know that a stern voice is not a happy one, and are less apt to come to you.

When your dog gets to you, give him a treat and praise the heck out of him. Saying "good puppy" and a lot of ear rubs will go a long way in getting a behavior to repeat itself. You will want to do about 20 or so recalls a day, split up into numerous training sessions throughout the day. You only want to do 4-5 at a time, and *always* end on a positive recall. You also don't want the command to be associated with the end of fun, so let the puppy play for a minute or two afterwards.

Now some tips for when a dog doesn't want to come towards you. One of the best ways is to make it a game. Call your puppy to come, and then run away from him. He will think it's a big game of chase. When you stop and he keeps coming, always give him his reward and praise. Clapping your hands or whistling while you're running backwards also will get their attention to come towards you. You always want to start close and gradually add distance in your recalls. The more dependable they become the more distance you can add. Sometimes adding a long leash or light weight tether to trail behind him is beneficial, too. This

In this issue:

Teaching "Come"	1
Did You Know?	2

RESOURCES

Overall, Karen L. *Clinical Behavioral Medicine for Small Animals*. Mosby, Inc, 1997

Landsberg, G., W. Hunthausen, and L. Ackerman. *Handbook of Behavior Problems of the Dog and Cat*. 2nd ed. Elsevier Science Limited, 2003

Horwitz, Debra F. and Jacqueline C. Neilson. *Blackwell's Five Minute Veterinary Consult Canine & Feline Behavior*. Blackwell Publishing, 2007

Janesville Animal Medical Center
5021 N. State Rd. 26
Janesville, WI 53546

Tel: 608-868-1761

Fax: 608-868-1764

Website:

www.janesvillevet.com

E-mail:

amandacvt@centurytel.net

Teaching "Come" continued



way, if he's not listening to you, you can keep him from running away by hanging on to the line. This will get the attention focused back on you, and get him to come to you.

Now for the don'ts for training a reliable recall. Don't ever scold your dog, even if he doesn't come. Dogs learn very quickly that they don't want to come to someone who scolds or yells, because some sort of punishment always follows. I don't know about you, but if someone were yelling at me I wouldn't get closer to them. I would get as far away as possible. Don't ever chase your dog, either. Being chased is a great game for dogs, but you will never get a reliable recall out of your dog if you start playing that game with him. Always reverse it and get him to chase you. Also, don't ask your dog to come for baths, nail trims, or anything they may deem undesirable. Always keep the experience positive.

Whether it's running out in the road into oncoming traffic, or running towards another dog that may not be so friendly, a reliable recall could save your dog's life. A reliable recall only comes with hard work, consistency, and practice, practice, practice!!

DID YOU KNOW?



- Puppies & Kittens should remain with their littermates until at least 8 weeks of age. They learn so much from "Mom" and siblings in their first couple of months of life, like appropriate play and bite inhibition.
- The staff at JAMC love to see puppies and kittens come in just for the heck of it visits. If you are out and about, or have some free time, bring your pet in for a treat. We like to see our patients happy to come see us. These visits help us become friends, instead of the bad guys with the needles all of the time!!



I am always looking for new ideas for things to write about! If you have any behavior questions that would make a great newsletter topic, please don't hesitate to let me know!! Your feedback is greatly appreciated.

Amanda