

The inmates utilize the "Work to Earn" method in the feeding of their dogs morning meal. Kibble is carried in a pouch and used to reward the dogs for desired behaviors during the day. Training the dog becomes almost effortless while a stronger dog/handler relationship is being established. The dog's evening meal is stuffed into kongs and other similar toys designed to hold food. The food stuffed toys keep the dogs occupied and mentally stimulated during the evening. We strongly recommend all owners continue to follow this practice for at least the first month after your dog comes home. It can be re-implemented anytime in the future as needed.

WORK TO EARN

***This basic premise prevents problems of picky eaters, counter thieves & bossy dogs.
It is the foundation of leadership!***

In order to make training fun and enjoyable, it must be rewarding. If your dog doesn't care one way or the other about treats, doesn't like to play with toys and won't bother to walk across the room for an ear scratch, how are you going to reward him? If he sees no reason to work for what he gets because it's always available, gets it on demand, or is easily stolen, restricting his food to scheduled feedings and giving attention only on your terms will elevate your pack status and increase his work ethic.

Free-feeding vs. regular mealtimes.

If it ain't broke don't fix it - but if:

- your dog is a picky eater or counter thief,
- if you have trouble keeping weight on or off,
- if your relationship with your dog could stand improvement

One of the single most effective changes you can make is to establish a regular meal time and a measured amount. This change is essential if you plan to use food as a reward for work well done! A dog who understands that offering proper behavior EARNs the things he wants and needs in life will have an improved respect for your leadership and will appreciate the food he gets and the person who provides it.

No bowl at all? Why hand feed?

If your dog is pushy, bossy, or rude, hard to motivate, disinterested, or has its own agenda, (or even if it isn't) hand feeding will improve your relationship with your dog.

From the day your puppy was born, his mother controlled a resource that kept him alive: food. When mom appeared, so did dinner. When mom left, so did dinner. It was critical that the pups knew where she was at all times and that the litter remained close to her. They would die if they didn't. Puppies are careful not to bite mom too hard or act disrespectfully to her, because if they did she would leave abruptly - and so would their life line.

Wouldn't you like to be THAT important to your dog? You can be!

Hand feeding will improve your dog's:

- Work ethic
- Manners around food
- Regard for your leadership
- Ability to drop everything and come when called

Rationing meals and making delivery contingent on a selected behavior increases value of the reward

and your importance in the dog's life. Suddenly your dog's world revolves around you - he's looking for ways to please you instead of demanding what he wants for free. He WANTS to work! He WISHES you'd call him!

Not forever, but to set the stage and get the training ball rolling ...

For the first week of training (or longer if you have a hard to motivate or bossy dog) stop feeding your dog from a bowl and use the dog's entire day's ration for short and frequent training sessions throughout the day. At the end of the day whatever is left in the container can be fed in the dog's bowl - but be aware that this amount reflects just how little training you did that day! In the weeks to come you will gradually use less food in training and will go back to regularly scheduled meals, but you must still deduct the amount of food that you will use in daily training sessions from what goes in your dog's bowl so you don't create a fat dog.

Measure out the day's ration each morning, put it in a container and leave it in plain view or put it in a fanny pack or pocket and carry it with you. This will:

Keep you from over or under feeding!
Make sure you make time to practice!

The following will upset the balance of your training and relationship - AVOID:

- Free feeding - a full bowl on the floor all the time
- Responding to begging or bossy barking - don't train when you are eating - no food from your plate!
- Doling out goodies just for being "cute"
- Letting the dog dictate when it needs fed, petted, played with - and when it's through. That's your job!

You control the food and hence the behavior that earns it. Food is not free.

Reward, don't bribe. The food appears AFTER the dog has earned it.

- Don't show the dog what you have to offer before giving a command. (You may show him what he missed if he doesn't and then leave or ignore him!)
- Always call the dog for a training session when he isn't bugging you - don't let him decide when it's time. Polite dogs get to work! Work will become reinforcing in itself!
- Sometimes call the dog when it is engaged in doing something else but only if you are sure he will respond. If he doesn't, don't bribe him. Run away, play with a toy, become more interesting than what he was doing at the time. NO NAGGING. Never call him to do something he finds unpleasant.
- Give a simple command or two and then dismiss him - don't respond to impolite pestering to continue. Gradually call him away from more interesting activities as his responses become more reliable. This is how you teach him to come no matter what!

VARY the types of rewards. Your dog should work for "real life" rewards.

Identify your dog's greatest motivators. Toys? Games? Touch? Ration them so you can use them as rewards. What does your dog want? A door opened? It's leash put on? A ball thrown? A ride in the car? ALL of these activities can be more valuable to your dog than a food treat. Don't give them for free. Ask your dog to do something to earn them. THIS is the answer to "how do I get rid of the food?" - replace it with real life rewards!