

## **THE NAME GAME**

(Getting Your Dog's Attention)

When you call your dog's name, does he ignore you? We will change that by showing him that when he hears his name, something good follows.

If you have been using your dog's name as a warning or correction when he has done something wrong, he will stop responding to his name. Don't waste the power and importance of your dog's name.

Phase one: Say your dog's name in a pleasant voice and immediately reward him with a small bit of food. *We are not asking the dog to do anything at this point.* Give him the food whether he is looking at you or not. Say "GOOD" as you give the treat. Repeat until you are getting a response as soon as the dog hears his name, in many different places. Start at home, then go down the street, near a park, in a friend's yard, etc.

Phase two: Now if you say the name (once only please) and the dog does not look at you, NO REWARD. You will have to do something to get him to look in your direction. If necessary, try moving a bit to attract the dog's attention, go up and touch him, or move the food close to allow the smell to attract the dog. Once the dog looks at you, REWARD with the food. At first you may have to be quick to reward even a slight glance toward you. Then consider that this place might be too big a step for him right now – find a place that is less distracting for now.

Phase three: Once the dog is giving you his attention reliably, try moving backward a step before you give the food treat. Now hold the food close to your body instead of reaching out, so the dog comes in close to you to get the treat. Say "GOOD" as you give the treat.

The word "GOOD" becomes a reward by association, and later can be used instead of the food. We use food to start, since food is a powerful motivator for most dogs.

There may be times when you need to back up temporarily and go through phase one again-- don't worry, you will still make progress.

If other members of the family are still using the dog's name in a negative way, try to get them to change. If necessary, you can establish a secret "code word" or nickname to use instead of the dog's "old" name. When the other family members see how powerful this is, they might be motivated to follow your good example.

The Name Game is very easy, especially when we show you in class, instead of having to read all this! The main points are:

1. Good Things happen when your dog responds to his name.
2. If your dog does not respond, do NOT chant the name over and over.

The Name Game is only a beginning. It is a place to start, then we will go from there.

Tip: When you work around new distractions, be sure to use a really high value food reward – something your dog never gets at home – usually a bit of people food such as leftover roast beef. Make your dog guess "What does she have this time?"

Pat Scott