

Dear Dog Lover,

Our monthly story at the end of this email: [Using Treats in Reward-Based Training](#)

If you receive this email in full html, you can just [click on the events underlined and in light blue](#) to get to the correct page on our web site!

**This newsletter also invites for the November classes** - they have already started filling!

**Thanks to you our 10-yr anniversary celebration was a full success!** The outdoor speaker system was a huge improvement, making it easier to demonstrate and explain the different dog sports and to talk about kid safety and emergency preparedness to everybody. Thanks to everyone who came out to celebrate with us; **thanks to all vendors, volunteers and visitors! Congratulations** to our winners of the anniversary drawing! Most have already claimed their prizes. You can already mark your calendar for **next year, September 7<sup>th</sup>, 2013**, the Saturday after Labor Day.

 **Last Treibball Beginner class of 2012**

**Treibball Beginner class starts Tuesday, Oct 9!!!**

Teach your dog **distance control** through this fun sport of “herding” exercise balls back to you. You’ll also work with your dog on **impulse control, handler focus** and **directional commands**. Call us to find out if this class is for you!

<http://www.bettercompanion.com/dogsports.html>

 **Weight Pulling Workshop**

**Sundays; Nov 4 and 11, 1-3pm.** We again offer our annual Weight Pulling Workshop. It’s a two-day workshops, held on two consecutive Sundays, two hours each. Teach your dog to **pull in harness**, from the kid’s sled to the firewood to competing in local Weight Pulling events. For any dog over 1 year, **Beagle to Saint Bernard!** This workshop is also very helpful before teaching your dog to pull a musher’s sled.

**Mushing Workshop coming up 2013!**

<http://www.bettercompanion.com/dogsports.html>.

 **Cancer Treatment Study looking for participants**

The **National Canine Cancer Foundation** is doing a ground breaking study on Elimay Supplements to prove that they really are helpful to our pets.

They are currently looking for dogs who would like to participate in the study. The study is 6 months in length and requires a vet visit in the beginning and end, which is paid for by the study. During the 6 month period as you give the supplements you are required to observe your dog and see if you notice a change in their quality of life and fill out monthly surveys regarding the supplements.

Here's more about the study: <http://elimay.wearethecure.org/about-study>.

**We have updated classes and events, so please read through the next section carefully!**

➤ **Sign up now!**

• **C.L.A.S.S. Evaluation Wednesday, Oct 3, 2012**

All C.L.A.S.S. course graduates (even from a C.L.A.S.S. course you took earlier this year) are invited to schedule an evaluation for Wednesday, Oct 3<sup>rd</sup>, in the evening, starting at 5:30pm. We'll schedule evaluations for every half hour. You can call us or check out [www.mydoghasclass.com/students](http://www.mydoghasclass.com/students) for more information about this program and the evaluation itself. This program is a wonderful way to bring your positive reinforcement training to the test ☺.

• **Treibball Classes October: Tuesdays; starts Oct 9. TB-Advanced practice 6:30-7:30pm, TB-Beginners 7:45-8:45pm.** Let your dog play with balls! We teach the dogs to push the balls TOWARDS you/the goal, and to work away from you, directing them around the balls as if they were sheep needing to be corralled! Any breed can learn it! A wonderful way to improve your teamwork with your dog and to keep them focused on you even at a distance.

• **Tricks 'N Clicks class: Thursdays, starts Nov 1<sup>st</sup>, 7:30-8:30pm.** Improve your clicker skills and learn to better communicate with your dog by teaching your dog fun tricks and useful household helper activities. From roll-over to picking up your car keys and throwing the toys back in the toy bin; anything you want to work on with your dog!

• **Nose Work Classes November: Mondays, starts Nov 5<sup>th</sup>. NW-Beginners 5:15-6:15pm, NW-Intro to Odor 6:30-7:30pm, NW-Practice 7:45-8:45pm.** This class allows you to learn from your dog! Let your dog guide you through his world of scent, by teaching them to only 'hunt' for the scent YOU have prepared for him. Help your dog working through distractions, ignoring other dogs and gaining confidence. This is the fastest-growing new sport in the country, so come and join us with your dog, no matter if s/he's 12 weeks or 12 years!

• **Check our class listings below in a new easy overview format!**

➤ **Open Play Time/ Doggy Day Care:**

- **DDC** will be closed on **Nov 22** (Thanksgiving)
- **OPT** will be closed on **Nov 23** (day after Thanksgiving)
- The next closure after that will be our **Christmas break (Dec 21 - Jan 6)**

The calendar can look very confusing at first. Please don't hesitate to call or email us with any questions about upcoming classes, workshops or practices.

Enjoy the Alaskan Autumn,  
Claudia

## Upcoming Classes and Practices:

Listed are start dates. The classes will run once a week for 6 weeks unless otherwise specified.

Click [here](#) to view the online calendar by month. To see who's instructing the class you're interested in, go to our online [calendar](#) and click on any week of that class to see the details.

Click [here](#) to register for a class.

Already registered? Click [here](#) to pay for a class.

Or contact us by email or phone: [info@bettercompanion.com](mailto:info@bettercompanion.com), (907) 357-2521.

<u>CLASS</u>	<u>Oct</u>	<u>Nov</u>	<u>Dec</u>	<u>later</u>
<b><u>Behavior Classes</u></b>				
Puppy 1	Wed 10/10	Sun 11/4	Tue 12/4	
Foundation Class	Wed 10/10 Overflow: Tue 10/9	Sun 11/4	Tue 12/4	
Puppy 2		Thu 11/1		Jan 2013
Elementary School		Thu 11/1		Jan 2013
High School				Mar 2013
CGC-test (one day)				Sep 2013 (one day)
C.L.A.S.S. - BA			Wed 12/5	2013
<b>CLASS Evaluation</b>	<b>Oct 3 (one day)</b>			
Rally College				<b>Jan 2013</b>
Rally Practice				
Tricks 'N Clicks		Thu 11/1		May or Sep 2013
<b><u>Sports Classes</u></b>	<u>Oct</u>	<u>Nov</u>	<u>Dec</u>	<u>later</u>
Nose Work Beginner		Mon 11/5		2013
Nose Work Odor		Mon 11/5		2013
Nose Work Practice		Mon 11/5		2013
Treibball Beginner	Tue 10/9			2013
Treibball Intermediate	<b>canceled</b>		<b>Wed 12/5</b>	2013

Treibball Advanced	Tue 10/9		Wed 12/5	2013
Flyball Beginner				Summer 2013
Flyball Practice				
Agility Puppy/Beg		Sat 11/10		Jan 2013
Agility Skills		Sat 11/10		Jan 2013
Agility Sequencing		Sat 11/10		Jan 2013
Agility Trialing		Sat 11/10		Jan 2013

You can check our web page [www.bettercompanion.com](http://www.bettercompanion.com) for info on classes, daycare, Open Play Times, facility, and schedule, read testimonies from other students, print out the registration form and more.

Or contact us by email or phone: [info@bettercompanion.com](mailto:info@bettercompanion.com), (907) 357-2521.

## **MONTHLY STORY: USING TREATS IN REWARD-BASED TRAINING**

There's a lot of discussion out there; **how useful or harmful it is to use treats** when training our dogs. You'll meet other dog owners and dog trainers who'll try to convince you that using treats in dog training is wrong. I want to give you the understanding and scientifically proven **arguments FOR the use of treats** in dog training and I want to give you some very **useful tips and tricks** on how to use them correctly, to **minimize any of the downsides**.

So how harmful can it be to use treats in dog training?

- **People say "My dog should listen to me without the use of treats"**

Dogs show a certain behavior because of the outcome afterwards: Behaving correct is rewarded, or behaving incorrect is punished. Wouldn't you rather train your dog to expect the hope of a reward, than the fear of an "And if you don't, I will..."? Most dog handlers try to use a mixture of correction-based and reward-based training. Unfortunately, it's much easier by human nature to re-act to the dog's wrong behavior (with a correction) than to prevent it by anticipating it and teaching the dog an alternative behavior that can be rewarded. So if used in a mixture, corrections are invariably used predominantly. Every time the leash gets popped for pulling, it's a correction. The dog will need hundreds of corrections, to find out that there's only a small space next to the handler where they don't get popped. So why not start out by rewarding the dog in that small space, to show them promptly and unmistakably that this is a good place to be at?

- **People say “I do reward my dog - I praise the dog!”**

So why not just praise the dog? Be honest; would you go back to work every day if your boss would tell you that from now on you'll get praised only - no paycheck? Praise is important to keep a good relationship, and it maintains a better work attitude than having a grumpy boss. It's the same for our dogs: They behave a certain way because of the outcome, and if they get rewarded for a behavior with real tangibles (treats), it's much more likely that behavior will be repeated more often. Praise is an important tool to show them how we feel about their behavior, but in the end (and even more so in the beginning), our dogs mostly behave not so much because of how we feel about it, but because of the outcome for THEM.

- **People say “I do make my dog ‘Sit’ for his food!”**

So if someone doesn't want to use treats, would they be willing to use the dog's dog food as a reward? Or is he getting that for free? One “Sit” for the whole food bowl? That's too easy! Having the dog ‘earn’ its food throughout the day, and sometimes rewarding the dog with a better tasting reward than the kibble, is an easy way for every dog to get their ‘paycheck’, and sometimes a ‘bonus’! We aren't asking the dogs for complicated math; just polite behavior and often rather for doing nothing, like laying on their mat instead of pestering the guests, or sitting instead of jumping. An additional advantage of sometimes using treats instead of the dog's regular food is that it enables us to progress faster in our training.

- **People know that timing of the correction (leash-pop, etc...) is crucial**

If using corrections to train; to give a correction at the right millisecond is crucial for the dog's training. For the heeling, it should be given at the exact same threshold every time the dog crosses that threshold, let's say when the dog's neck reaches 12 inches away from the handler. Are we consistent with that? I don't think we can be. We'll sometimes pop the leash earlier, sometimes later. The dog never understands when and if the pop will come, because the dogs CAN instinctively measure by the inch! So the dog will become insecure, and at some point stay close to avoid any chance of getting popped again.

If you feed a treat (or kibble) for the dog being close-by, and you miss feeding one when the dog is close, or feed one even though the dog isn't that close, it might take a little longer for the dog to find the exact range you want, but otherwise no harm done. You'll still have a happy dog along your side, trying to find the area with the HIGHEST treat-flow.

Now that you know you can't harm your dog using treats as a reward, but you CAN harm your dog using correction-based training, let's talk about the downsides of using treats as a reward.

First of all; please remember, that **The Better Companion teaches REWARD-BASED training**, not TREAT-BASED training. We encourage dog handlers to find other alternatives to reward their dogs at home and in public, **real-life rewards** like allowing the dog to be petted for sitting politely, or opening a door only when sitting. Treats come in handy when the dogs are highly distracted (class room, walk) and when teaching a new behavior with lots of fast repetitions.

- **People say “My dog only listens if I show him a cookie first”.**

In this case, the treat has become a “bribery” tool versus a reward. Dogs can become treat-dependent if the treat was used incorrectly. We want to use treats in front of the dog’s nose only very briefly when guiding the dog into a new behavior, e.g. teaching the Down. Then we want to progress to using an empty hand when guiding the dog into a behavior as fast as possible. In that moment the treat turns from a bribery into a reward, given **AFTER** the dog has performed a task for us.

Not only **showing the treat**, but also **taking the treat out of the container** can turn into bribery. You need to decide clearly if you want to prepare the treat before asking your dog for a task, or if you want to wait until the dog complied, before even reaching for the treat. If you reach for the treat while waiting for your dog to perform, or while your dog starts, your dog will most likely interrupt and expect the reward without finishing the behavior.

**Preparing the treat pouch** is another way of bribery. At class, the dog’s know we come prepared with wonderful treats. At home, you have the opportunity to ask your dog for the task first, and then run to the cookie jar to get the reward. Now you have a dog who did it for the **HOPE** of a reward, not for the **EXPECTATION**.

**If your dog won’t do it, unless you show a cookie:** Go back to rewarding the “Touch” of the empty hand, to power up the empty hand as a guiding signal versus having to use a cookie to lure the dog. **DON’T** go back to food as a lure, because that would allow your dog to blackmail you in the future (I won’t do it until you lure me with a cookie). Ask for easier tasks without bribery, and reward them afterwards with a reward. The best way to fade out treats, is to **surprise the dog with one that wasn’t expected**, to fuel that **HOPE** for a reward.

- **People say “My dog hangs with the nose on my food pouch all the time”**

The **treat feeding point** is super important. After a performed behavior, don’t allow your dog to demand the cookie, like leaning towards your pouch. Also, don’t allow your dog to ‘meet you half-way’ when delivering a cookie. Your dog should wait for the cookie to be delivered at a specific delivery point, depending on the behavior you asked for. Again, dogs count by the inch and half inch! Give them ½ inch and they take a foot!

**Feeding the dog in a specific position:** If your dog had to Sit for you, feed the dog exactly **where the mouth WOULD be** with the dog sitting relaxed, with a straight spine, looking straight ahead. Don't even give into the dog turning or tilting its head towards you! Bring the cookie very quickly to exactly that point, so that your dog can always expect the treat delivery in the same spot in relation to his position, and your dog's **Sit and Stay will improve!**

**Feeding the dog at a certain spot:** If your dog was asked to go to or stop at a certain spot, like laying on its bed, or going to a target, always **feed the dog at that spot**, no matter how close to that spot your dog is in that moment. Let's say one time the dog lays on its bed only with its hind end, and the front is off the bed. Don't feed the dog where its mouth is right now, feed the reward on the bed, where the mouth should be if the dog would lay all the way on its bed. Pick one spot on the bed that you always deliver the reward at, and your dog will soon learn that there's no reason to cheat on trying to have less body mass on the bed and still getting the reward. When rewarding a certain spot, it's better to **lay the treat on the spot** versus feeding the dog from your hand. You want the dog to remember that spot as a rewarding place, not your hand.

Still, the possible problems that can come when using treats as a reward are minor compared to the fall-out that can happen when correction-based training is either applied wrong or even used correctly but on a dog that can't handle it! Reward-based training works for every dog, no matter if soft or hard headed, shy or outgoing, small or tall. And treats, although they aren't absolutely necessary to train reward-based, can be very helpful!

Training never ends! Enjoy every day with your dog(s)!  
Claudia

Claudia Sihler, CPDT-KSA  
(Certified Professional Dog Trainer - Knowledge and Skills Assessed)  
APDT C.L.A.S.S. Evaluator  
AKC CGC® and STAR® Evaluator

Your BetCo Team at  
**The Better Companion - Regine Dog Training Facility**  
Claudia Sihler, CPDT-KSA  
Frank Sihler, Iditarod Finisher  
Deb Frost (office)  
Robin Jacoby (office)

(907) 357-2521  
[betco@mtaonline.net](mailto:betco@mtaonline.net)  
[www.bettercompanion.com](http://www.bettercompanion.com)  
1400 E Regine Ave, Wasilla, AK 99654