

Food Rewards for Recall Training

These guidelines are for all puppies undergoing a food induced recall training program. Raisers of puppies and dogs put on a Food Protocol for distractions, or lack of confidence, should refer to their leader and PRA for appropriate instruction on that method.

Food reward based training is very successful but consideration must be given to a guide puppy's future responsibilities when utilizing this method. Everything possible must be done to prevent the puppy being distracted by food. Raisers may have to work harder on exercises to ensure that the puppy does not assume that it can take food from any human hand, and to prevent scavenging off the floor. If done correctly, the guide puppy trained with food should be well mannered in the presence of food and understand that it may only accept food from the hand in specific circumstances.

Page 2 of the Food Induced Recall covers the specifics of what, where and when to give the food reward. Those instructions should be read over before commencing with every step in the recall training. If the raiser is concerned with the puppy's interest in food or sees an increase in food-distracted behaviors, the leader and PRA should be consulted.

Puppies should take the food gently when offered. If the puppy is grabbing the food offering the kibble from a cupped palm rather than between finger and thumb will help. The raiser may hold the food in a tight fist and slowly open the hand to present the food. Puppies who insist on snatching at the food will benefit from further work on how to take food appropriately; the PRA should be consulted on methods to teach the puppy to accept food in a reasonable manner.

Puppies must not be allowed to eat dropped food off the floor.

- If food is accidentally dropped, the handler should step away from the food as quickly as possible drawing the puppy by the leash or collar and walking backwards. In most cases of dropped kibble, the raiser will already be holding onto the puppy's collar, making control simple.
- While the raiser holds onto the collar with one hand the other hand can reach behind into the pouch for another piece of food to offer to the puppy.
- The puppy must not be lured away from the dropped food by the raiser waving another piece of food at it. The new piece of kibble is given from between the knees as the puppy is being praised for coming away from the dropped food.
- It is wise to step at least 6 feet away from the dropped food before rewarding to prevent the puppy from darting back to the dropped food.
- The dropped piece of food should either be picked up by an assistant or the handler should pick it up and place it back in the pouch. *The handler must never offer the piece of dropped food directly to the puppy.*

Bait bags should be made out of cloth or leather and have a way to close them. A simple pouch, with a Velcro closure and clip to attach to the belt or waistband, is an acceptable

alternative to a commercially available bait bag. Pockets and plastic or paper bags are not alternatives to a bait bag or fanny pack. It is preferable that the bait bag is loaded and attached behind the raiser's waistband before getting the puppy out to work it. We don't want the bait bag to become a cue to the puppy. Raisers should be aware that the bait bag will become a focal point for the puppy if care is not taken in its handling. It should be stored well out of the puppy's reach and sight when not in use.

The food induced recall is going to greatly increase the success of our puppies in learning the 'Come' command and should be of tremendous help in preventing 'keep away' issues. With these guidelines any negative effects of working with food rewards should be minimal and vastly outnumbered by the positive effects that food reward training brings. However, the success of the program depends on the commitment of leaders and raisers to implement it. If a puppy's behavior is deteriorating due to food distractions the leader or PRA should be consulted as soon as possible. Early intervention is key; the PRA can help get the puppy on the right track and make this program successful and enjoyable for raisers and puppies alike.