

The Magazine for Animal Trainers



THE Clicker Journal

Winter 2006

Issue No. 75



The Clicker Journal

Founder and Managing

Editor

Corally Burmaster

Editor

Victoria Farrington

Design Production

Howling Beagle Design
www.howlingbeagle.net

Subscriptions, Renewals, Submissions:

Postal Address:

PO Box 14354
Mill Creek, Washington
98082

E-mail:

ulfarrington@earthlink.net

Phone:

508.539.0585

Website:

www.clickertrain.com

The Clicker Journal is a bi-monthly journal (6 issues a year) dedicated to the practical and ethical use of operant conditioning. Submissions of articles, photographs and illustrations are welcome, rates and guidelines available upon request. Queries on article topics are encouraged.

Subscription Rates:

WITHIN THE US \$22.00
CANADA \$25.00
OVERSEAS \$29.00

All foreign checks and money orders must be payable on U.S. banks OR subscribers must contact the editor for other arrangements

ON THE COVER:

Nancy Camp trains her horse Jack to do a shoulder stretch. She explains, "It's much easier on my back than the traditional method and I don't have to worry about putting too much traction on his leg. I can change it by using different height blocks, moving them for a stretch across or out to the side, or varying the duration of the stretch."

from the Editor...

Sometimes when I'm putting together a collection of articles to create an issue of The Clicker Journal, I find a single idea that echoes in each one and gives the issue a theme. Never has that been meant more to me than when I found the thread that weaves together this issue.

Tucked into the middle of these pages, in the usual place for the heart, Joyce Miller's article makes a case for change. At this very moment, you are literally seeing a changed picture. This is our first issue after a long hiatus; it's the first of our last three issues before we end publication; and it's the first issue available only in PDF rather than print format.

The decisions behind all of the above weren't easy ones. Nor was the process of implementing these decisions without trepidation, doubts and, quite frankly, moments of believing I should scrap the changes and go back to what was tried and tried but no longer felt true or right.

It's time for me to move onto other things. It's time for The Clicker Journal to end, although I keep repeating the phrase "in this incarnation," both to myself and any time I have to write or speak the phrase. For all the sorrow I feel at knowing there will be no more issues like the ones I've edited for the last four years, I've also been aware for some time that the production - the printing, the mailing, the delegation of small but necessary bookkeeping and data entry jobs, the very nuts and bolts of business - was not natural or comfortable for me and never became more so through practice. It never, as we clicker trainers say, provided sufficient reinforcement.

All those necessary tasks and all the problems that came with them began to sap my energy for the more important jobs of finding trainers who had something important to share, questioning and shaping that information in the form of articles, and

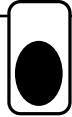
putting together collections of insights and experiences that I could be proud of. If I hold out the hope that The Clicker Journal will return someday with a new vigor, a refined mission, it's because while putting together this issue I found again the pleasure in The CJ that has made it all worthwhile, for me and, I hope, for you.

What has always mattered most is the information we provide, the work of our generous, intelligent and honest writers, whoever they are, from whatever authority and understanding they write. More than ten years ago, when Corally Burmaster founded the CJ, she made the decision to give as much emphasis to the explorations of novice trainers as to the conclusions of those with years of experience, to publish the insights of trainers working with one animal alongside articles by behavioral scientists and professionals. I have never doubted either that wisdom or the tone it set, the inclusion of us all in a community of the like-minded, and the generosity that should surely follow a belief that the concepts of clicker training are practical and infinitely adaptable.

I am very proud to know that this issue continues that tradition. In each of these articles, a trainer faces a task or solves a problem. In each of these articles, a trainer - of dogs, of horses, of other people - finds a way to communicate. They change the picture or the place. They try something different. They have epiphanies and revelations and they revise their plans. Nancy Camp discovers clicker training for horses - and reminds us all how it's done. Lana Horton and Robin Sallie approach herding from a different direction. Susan Mann works, literally, step by step with a little girl. And Joyce Miller reminds us to never stop looking for a way to succeed.

I sincerely hope you enjoy the changes.

Victoria



Please Join Us In Our Final Issue: A Celebration of Clicker Training

Send us your funniest and silliest and most touching moments!

Send us your triumphs, those that involve blue ribbons and those that happened in the kitchen!

Send us your revelations and your epiphanies!

Send us your answer to the question: Why do you really clicker train?

Send us your answer to the question: What is the most important thing you've learned?

Send us your tributes to the animals and trainers who changed your life or your point of view!

The first issue of The Clicker Journal was published In July 1994 and edited (and founded and organized and stapled and mailed) by Corally Burmaster. It was eight pages long and contained an article by Corally on teaching the directed jumping exercise, a short anecdote by Marcy Koenig on shaping a dog to respond to a judge for conformation, one by Becky Pike on redirecting a paw shove from Vegas the Doberman, and Margie English's story of conversion to clicker training after experimenting with her cockatiel.

In the introduction, Corally wrote, "Welcome to the first issue of The Journal, designed to be a place for exploring the practical applications of operant conditioning in ani-

mal training....If it will shed light on how to use the new method of training, I'll print it." She asked for "how I did it" contributions in the belief that "there are as many ways to structure an exercise as there are with traditional methods and we need to hear all of them," anecdotes because "these invariably trigger training ideas in other people" and responses to what others wrote in order to start a dialogue.



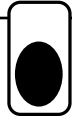
Clicker Journal History

As you'll see from the pieces of Clicker Journal history scattered throughout this issue, the CJ began as an attempt to form a community and a dialogue. At the time, there were few resources for clicker trainers. Now we sometimes seem to be awash in books and tapes, in lists and advice. But the idea of a community, of people sharing their experiences, is every bit as important as it once was. I also sincerely hope that it has always been what distinguishes The Clicker Journal from other efforts.

Let's end as we began, sharing our experiences and our excitement. As Corally said so well twelve years ago, this is your Journal and we need to hear from you. Please send your submissions to vlfarrington@earthlink.net by May 1, 2006. I'll be waiting to hear from all of you!

Table of Contents

Putting Your Training On Target.....	4
Dry-Work Herding.....	9
One Step At A Time.....	12
Changing Places to Change a Behavior.....	14
Step by Step.....	17



Putting Your Training On Target *(pun intended)*

by Nancy Camp

Clicker training is magic with horses. I'd heard about clicker training, but it never really interested me. One of my biggest hesitations was the use of treats in the process. I also believed the method was mainly for teaching tricks when it was applied to horses. I didn't think I needed to teach tricks, so I dismissed the clicker method as very nice but of no use to me. However, I had some friends doing agility work with their dogs. They'd seen clicker training in action and wanted me to help them organize a seminar with Corally Burmaster. They didn't think we could get enough people with only dogs but were sure that if we included horses we could make a go of it. Before I knew it, I was in

the midst of a three-day clicker training seminar with both of my dogs and several horses and I can't say I've ever had time better spent.

The first eye opener for me was that while my dogs are exceptionally well behaved, neither of them is particularly well trained. What's the difference? Here's an example. My dogs will sit any time I ask them to in the house or around the barn, even out on walks or trail rides. But if I stand one in front of me and change my orientation to him by turning my back and breaking eye contact with him when I say the word "sit" and what happens?

Absolutely nothing. He doesn't even acknowledge that I am speaking to him. So, I learned

that my dogs don't actually know the cue for sit. I make eye contact with them, make a sound and they guess that it means they are to sit because that's what I ask them to do the most. Okay. Now does that matter? Maybe not but what else in my relationship with my animals might be other than what I believe it to be? It turns out, quite a lot.

Take Granite, for example. Granite is a 16-year-old Appendix Quarter Horse who has been terrified of fly spray since I've known him. All anyone ever had to do to set him into a rearing, totally mindless fit was pick up a spray bottle of any kind and walk in his direction. Even wiping fly repellent on him after spraying it onto a rag has been a chore.

Over the past ten years, we've tried every approach known to us. We spent endless hours "getting him used to" the sprayer. He never got used to it. We puzzled over it. Was it the smell? It didn't seem to be because for the sake of expense we would practice with water in the bottles. Was it the sound? We invested in a silent sprayer that emitted a fine mist. He remained unimpressed. I got to where I could get the fly spray on him by cornering him and blocking him against a wall while I shot three or four squirts at him before he reared. Often enough, he simply didn't get any fly spray because it wasn't worth the effort. His eyes went wide, he shook, he'd begin to dance and, finally, rear and, more than once, he broke a halter or rope. He seemed legitimately terrified. Imagine my surprise when this turned out not to be the case.

About a week after our seminar with Corally, I was still reeling

A NOTE ABOUT FOOD AS A REWARD:

Many people object to hand feeding horses because they feel it encourages the horse to nip or maul them for treats. Here are some things to keep in mind if you want to clicker train your horse using food as a reward.

1. *You must control the treats. He will not work for something he can get for free. Horses are remarkable trainers and the old adage about having to be smarter than the subject (in this case your horse) can be a real challenge with this work.*
2. *Only give treats as a reward for having performed a desired behavior. Your horse will soon learn that mauling you will not get him a reward if the only time he gets his treat is when he has performed a desired task.*
3. *Keep the tidbits as tiny as possible. You don't want to have to interrupt a session to wait while your horse chews a huge chunk of apple.*
4. *Use a variety of treats. The same old peppermint chunk every time becomes boring. Mix it up and have something in your bag that is really desirable and can be given for a stellar performance.*
5. *The harder the task, the bigger or better the reward should be. I have one horse that will do anything for a peppermint and is all but disappointed by the butterscotch, licorice and apple flavored treats I offer. When he does something really well or finally accomplishes a new task, I make sure I have a peppermint treat for him.*
6. *Occasionally, surprise the horse with a "jackpot", a reward that is more generous than the usual treat. This will also help keep things interesting for the horse.*

from the realization that my dogs weren't well trained. Semantics or not, it really threw me. I brought Granite up from the field and the flies were bad. I looked at him and thought about Corally's claim that you can't see emotions. You can only see behavior. I knew I had to start viewing behavior as behavior and stop attaching a bunch of emotional baggage to it.

I looked at Granite, standing in the aisle covered with flies and decided to give it a try. Okay, so when he sees the spray bottle he begins to move and get wide eyed. That's behavior. Forget the "he's scared" part. So, the question was: what do I want him to do? I want him to stand still while I pick up the bottle.

Granite was in our seminar so he was already conditioned to expect a treat when he heard the clicker. I walked toward the bottle and he was just standing there so I clicked and treated. His curiosity was piqued so he watched as I picked up the bottle, and clicked and treated after putting it back down. In about two minutes I was seeing a change. It took about eight sessions over a three-day

time span before he was standing while I sprayed him with fly spray.

There are still some rough edges, all of which are due to my inexperience with this training method, but Granite is getting fly spray when he needs it and without the Shakespearean production it has been for the last ten years. Bottom line: Granite was never afraid of spray bottles or fly spray. He had somehow become conditioned to act in what we interpreted as a fearful manner whenever someone came at him with a spray bottle and the whole thing was behavior based, not emotionally charged as we had believed for so long.

Now I was supercharged with enthusiasm for this clicker thing. What else could I do with it? I do a lot of rehab work with horses and while stretches can be therapeutic for them, it's not for me. My back can't take it. I also worry about the tension created in their bodies when I attempt to physically manipulate them. I feel they're bracing even with something as subtle as wither rocking. What if I could get them to do some of these things for themselves?



Once he is looking to touch the ball, move it around to strengthen the behavior. Later, this particular move can be used to teach a bow but for now we are simply touching the ball in different locations.

In short order, I had horses placing their foot on a block and lowering their heads to receive their treat at ground level, swinging back and forth between road cones placed to maximize a neck stretch, high or low, or, by repositioning the cones, creating a withers rock. We are all having a good time and annoying behaviors are dropping like flies in my string of horses. Fred leads like a dream. Pilot stands still while the saddle is being put on. Jack doesn't take it personally when he's asked to back up. Wings will walk through water and Big Red finally understands lateral work and doesn't jig on trail rides when he turns back toward the barn. Ellie comes out of the trailer without coming unglued. Snapple accepts paste wormer without a fight. Need I go on?

I'm hoping that by this point you want to get started, so I'm prepared to outline the basics of the first steps. From here you can move on to using these basics in real life training situations and practical applications. You can use clicker training to get any behavior you



Moving the cones in and back, Granite's motion shifts to a neck stretch. You may also place the targets higher or lower depending on the stretch you want to effect.



By positioning the cones wide and to the side, Granite effects a withers rock as he swings from one cone to the other.

can imagine. You can also employ it for rainy or big snow weather days or to keep up a relationship with your horses when you are unable to ride due to injury or illness.

To go deeper into this, you will need to understand a few more terms and more about shaping behavior. I highly recommend you go to a seminar and read books. Karen Pryor's *Don't Shoot the Dog* and Alexandra Kurland's *Clicker Training for Your Horse* are two that helped me a lot, but it was the seminar given by Corally Burmaster, (www.clickertrain.com), that provided me with hands-on experience and really spurred me into action.

TERMS TO REMEMBER:

Operant Conditioning: A training method based on positive reinforcement that has become increasingly popular in recent years and is known as "Clicker Training". It is based on understanding the way a being interacts with and learns from his environment,

known as operant conditioning. Simply put, any action that has a positive consequence will tend to be repeated while those actions that have negative consequences will be avoided. Trainers can take advantage of this by providing positive reinforcement following an action that they would like the animal to repeat.

Modeling: Manipulating the horse's body into a desired position. Example: Using pressure to teach a horse to tuck his chin and back off rein contact.

Negative Reinforcer: A negative reinforcer is any stimulus in the environment that a horse will change its behavior to avoid or escape. Example: When a horse moves away from the pressure we have applied to his side, we remove that pressure as his reinforcement. In this instance, that pressure can be lightened to becoming an "aide," a cue as to what we want him to do.

Targeting: By teaching your horse

to target, focusing on something and following it, you can guide him through performing desired behaviors. Example: When the horse is being led and he stops when you stop, turns when you turn, he is targeting your body.

Shaping: To shape a behavior, you reinforce closer and closer approximations of the finished behavior. Example: If you want the horse to come to you, you first reinforce his just looking at you, then shifting his weight in your direction, then moving one foot toward you, etc.

Capturing a Behavior: To capture a behavior, you simply reinforce a behavior you like when it is offered even though you have not asked for it. Example: You watch your horse as he stands tied and notice that he puts his head down and you reinforce him for doing that.

Luring: Using a target (an actual one or simply food in your hand) or your body language to get the horse to do something so you can reinforce it. Luring is used for behaviors that are too complicated to capture but simple enough not to need shaping. Luring should only be done a few times and then the subject should be given a chance to do the behavior on his own to avoid his dependence on the lure. If he doesn't offer the behavior on his own, DON'T go back to luring in that training session. To do that would teach him to simply wait for you to put the target or food back in front of his nose! Example: Getting the horse to lower his head by showing him a carrot and having him follow it as you lower it.

Primary Reinforcer: The actual reward the horse is working for; usually food. The subject doesn't need to learn the value of a primary reinforcer; it has an intrinsic value.

A Conditioned, or Secondary

Reinforcer: A secondary reinforcer has no intrinsic value. Its value must be learned by pairing it with something the animal already considers reinforcing, such as food. The sound of a clicker becomes a conditioned reinforcer when paired with food. It acts as a “bridge” in time between the exact moment the animal does the behavior and when you can get the primary reinforcer to him.

MAKING THE CONNECTION

STEP ONE: Click and Treat. Simply click the clicker and deliver a treat in a series of short sessions. A minute or two of this at a time is enough at first. Do this until the horse expects a treat every time he hears the clicker. Click in a variety of places, indoors, outdoors, in the grooming area, in the arena, in his pen, and at unexpected times to make sure this connection has been made. You want to see a clear indication from the horse that when he hears the click, he expects the treat. Don't be fooled by coincidental responses.

STEP TWO: Link the signal to a

particular behavior. Touching the end of a crop or a tennis ball on the end of a stick with his muzzle will work. I like to use the tennis ball because it is unique to our training sessions and easy to see. The horse must touch the tennis ball with his muzzle in order to get you to click and receive a treat following the click.

Right here, right now, you must be absolutely clear about what you want him to do. What part of your device do you want him touch and with what part of his body to do want him to touch it. He's going to try a number of different approaches because all he really cares about is getting that treat out of your pocket and into his mouth.

So there you stand with tennis ball presented. Most horses are curious enough to eventually touch the ball. If things are going very slowly and it seems you might turn to stone before he touches the ball, then click and treat for any inclination toward noticing the ball, or maybe for touching the stick. You can shape his behavior into



Start with the simplest of tasks. You want to set the horse up to succeed. Don't say, "Touch" until you are certain the verbal cue is predicting the desired behavior.

touching the ball with his muzzle later (See Step Four) but at this point, since patience is a virtue, I recommend you wait it out.

Timing is critical. The click must occur the instant his muzzle touches the ball. You might do a lot of waiting with horses, much more so than with dogs.

Again, do this until you are certain the horse has made the connection. Sometimes it seems as though they have but the association really isn't there. To make certain, have him touch the ball in variety of locations and in different positions: up, down, close in, out to the side.

Get your horse to follow the ball on the stick. This is called targeting and can be very useful. Think about some applications here: might you want him to follow a target into a trailer, or through a narrow space? To do this, begin by having him touch the ball as before, then hold it a tiny bit farther away, just far enough so he has to move to touch it.

Be mindful or you will “lose”



Granite, always the clown, takes little seriously. I sometimes wonder if making me laugh isn't reward enough for him.

him. There is nothing to be gained by moving too far away and having him get discouraged or fail to respond. Distance will come with time. In short order, you will be able to hold the ball out 30 feet away and he will come to touch it. Do this until you are absolutely certain he feels he can make you perform by clicking and treating him when he touches the ball. Your biggest clue to success here is that this is really fun for both you and your horse!

STEP THREE: Strengthen the behavior. So far you have been employing a fixed schedule of reinforcement. The horse gets a click and treat for each correct behavior. Now, in order to strengthen the behavior, you will want to switch to an intermittent schedule of reinforcement. The horse has to work harder for the same reinforcement. Ask for two correct behaviors before you click and treat, then three, then one, then three, then four, then one, etc. When you begin to make him work harder, use your best treats. The same old peppermint chunk every time becomes boring. Mix it up and have something in your bag that is really desirable and can be given for a stellar performance. Occasionally, surprise the horse with a "jackpot," a reward that is more generous than the usual treat.


This is where you get picky and clean up the act a little bit. Thus far you've been happy with any touch, but there are a variety of factors in the touching process that can be perfected. You can now require perfection of one, or all of these, but you can only do one at a time.

You can first require that the horse touch deliberately instead of just brushing by the ball on his way to a treat. To do this, watch closely and if he just brushes by,

no click, no treat. This will puzzle him and he will begin offering variations on his behavior. As soon as he touches the ball firmly, like you want him to do, click and treat. After you establish this you might go for how quickly he moves to touch the ball. Present it and count to yourself to establish your time limit. If he touches it within your limit, click and treat. If not, remove the ball and when you present it again he should be quicker to respond.

When you add criteria, it is important to remember that you need to back off on the other requirements and focus only on the one element you are teaching. After the connection is established, you can raise the bar on the rest of the elements of the behavior to perfect it.

STEP FOUR: Now add a cue. Once you are absolutely certain your horse is going to touch that ball wherever it appears, you may add a verbal cue. I say, "Touch." The verbal cue is a stimulus that becomes linked with the behavior and eventually causes that behavior. The verbal cue must be presented consistently just before you know the behavior is about to occur.

When you do this, you must remember to back up on the difficulty level of touching the ball. You want to start adding the cue in a situation where your horse cannot fail. Go back to presenting the ball in an easy, piece-of-cake place so he will go straight for it. The behavior needs to be strongly in place before the cue is added. The cue must predict the behavior. Your goal is to have the horse look around for that ball when he hears you say, "Touch." 

About the Author...

Nancy Camp is a trainer and Riding instructor. She specializes

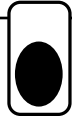
in rehabilitating horses that are breaking down within the paradigm of traditional horse management by practicing harmonious riding techniques, proper maintenance of teeth and feet, comfortable saddle fit and employing extensive body work. She teaches classes in Clicker Training, and High Touch® Jin Shin. She also presents EquiMotion, Feldenkrais® Integrated Riding Workshops with Robert Spencer, a Guild Certified Feldenkrais Teacher®. For information and the Clicker Applications DVD, go to www.wholehorsetraining.com

Clicker Journal History

In the editor's note to the second issue of The Clicker Journal, published in August of 1994, Corally Burmaster wrote, "Thank you for your great response to the first issue! I got such positive reinforcement that I'm finally going to cash your checks."

The second issue contained an article on heeling by Morgan Spector, an article on training horses by Melinda Miller, an article on using positive methods to "proof" training by Judy Edwards and responses to Corally's article on directed jumping from Karen Pryor, Cindy Luster and Becky Pike. It was in this issue that Corally coined the term "cross-over" dogs to describe those who had previously been trained by aversive methods.

The Clicker Journal also gained a slogan: "There must be a better way. Find it." Corally credited this suggestion to Patty Fineran who said it was on a sign that hung in Thomas Edison's office. Two issues later, Patty corrected the reference and the slogan became "There is a better way. Find it." This remained the slogan until the March/April issue of 1999.



Dry-Work Herding

by Lana Horton

Don't allow a stock shortage to keep you from training flanking commands, stops, downs, and walkups on your herding dog. Just because you don't have sheep in your front yard doesn't mean you can't train a dog in the basics of herding.

Herding "dry work" is fun for dogs of any breed; and for future herders, it bridges a training gap when stock availability is limited. I started using dry-work several years ago to gain more control on my dogs even though I had sheep and ducks of my own.

The key benefit to dry-work is that the dog learns without the interference of stock. "What? Stock interferes with herding training?" Of course! Livestock can be a major distraction when you're trying to teach a dog to perform stops and to take flanking commands.

Training away from stock can decrease training time by a measurable amount. The benefit of dry-work becomes evident when a beginner dog that is experiencing sheep for the fifth or sixth time can perform behaviors he learned in dry-work lessons and obey flanking commands.

My Aussie benefited greatly from playing herding games. On stock his natural style of working was far too close, he was a sneaky biter, and was he highly distracted by wool, "flossing" at every opportunity. He had another common beginner dog training problem: he ran around so much before finally coming under control that he was too worn out to work! He needed a break before any serious training could take place.

I started playing dry-work games with him and saw obvious improvement the next time he was

on sheep. He gave ground (removed pressure), downed, stayed, and called off the sheep. After a few more dry-work games, he also stopped on command and readily changed direction.

The most significant benefit was his sudden ability to flank stock in both directions. He started out as a confirmed go-bye dog. It always took several attempts to redirect him to the away flank in the round pen, while I had to run to reposition the balance point. Then he wouldn't hold the away for long, crossing over to return to a go-bye at his first opportunity. Dry-work quickly took care of that problem. The next time working sheep he took the away flanking command without a problem and it was wider, rounder, and more stable than the go-bye.

No Cure-all

Before working the go-bye with dry-work games, my dog's clockwise flanks were shallow. He would go wide at the top but then dive in toward the flock as he passed balance point, a common behavior in beginner dogs. I'd like to be able to say that's all solved now due to dry-work games, but it isn't. Dry work greatly improved his go-byes, but we still need to work on some shallowness when passing balance point. This will not be done with dry-work games however, but on actual stock. It's a problem that the games won't fix.

Dry-work is not a panacea for every herding problem and can't prevent future problems, but is good training tool for behaviors that don't require the presence of stock.

Dry-Work Game

One version of a dry-work game that I've used with a lot of success is one that I can also take into the round pen with beginner dogs. The finished game has the dog performing wide outruns in both directions, stopping, backing up, downing, and walking up. Since most beginners are working on fetching stock with the dog facing the shepherd and the stock between them, this game stimulates that picture quite well for the dog. Downs and backing up should be taught separately to give the dog a concept of these behaviors before they are added to the game.

I don't use the clicker a lot in playing dry-work games because most of what the dog does is self-reinforcing. It brings back a toy and I'll throw it again or play tug for a minute and tell it in a high-pitched voice what a clever doggie it is.

I do use the clicker with treats and toys when first working real stock. Then I fade it and use the stock as reinforcement as soon as I can. This is to prevent creating a herding dog more focused on the shepherd than the stock.

From the game's introduction to the dog's ability to perform the game on stock is a step-by-step process like herding itself. I've tried to include everything I do in the following steps and listed them in the order I use them.

Catch

Teach the dog to catch. Socks are the best things to use for this purpose. Click at first for the dog making any effort to catch, then for a good catch, and then fade the clicker as soon as he can catch the sock with any consistency.

Teach him to catch a “Frisbee.” I use a fabric disc toy and start with short and slow tosses until he figures out how to catch. As your dog becomes proficient at catching it, toss it a little ways past him until he starts to follow it before it hits the ground. When he starts trying to intercept the toy, he’s ready for farther and faster throwing until you have built up some distance.

Flanking

When the dog is anticipating the toy by running out to intercept it, start throwing it to the side and give a flanking command. The dog is probably facing you and it’s good to just leave him alone at this stage and not insist on stays and downs.

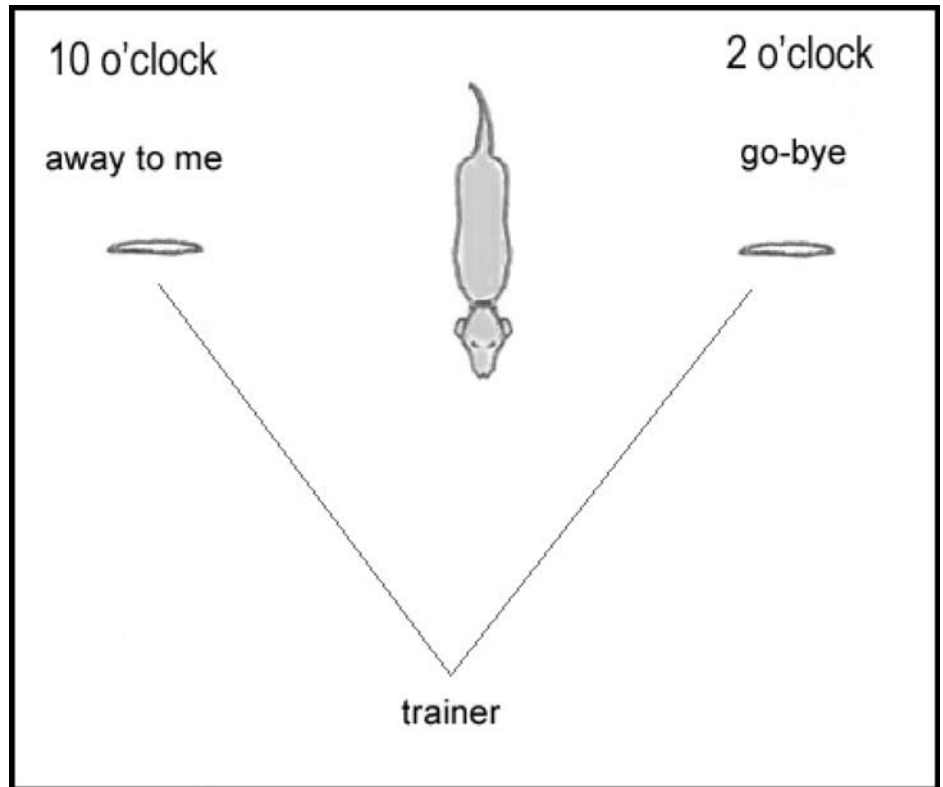
Catching the toy can be a self-rewarding behavior that needs no additional reinforcement. Because I’m not teaching a retrieve, it’s up to him whether he wants to give it back. But I want to play this game again and again, so I add positive reinforcement for him bringing the toy to me. I click and feed, play tug, or rub my dog’s tummy and praise him as reinforcement for returning with the toy.

The dog should start to anticipate the throw by running out a ways before the toy leaves your hand and he will run in the direction you normally throw. When I see this behavior, I know it’s time to add criteria for distance and commands – one at a time, of course.

Since this is a flying disc toy, it can go high, far, and fast. Do keep in mind that jumping puppies could become injured puppies and keep your throws low enough to keep jumping to a minimum.

Adding Flanking Commands

Because I want very crisp turns when I send the dog on a flanking command, I try hard to make my throw go toward 10 or 2 o’clock.



It looks like this: with the dog standing directly in front of you, throw the toy to the 2 o’clock position for a “go-bye” and at the 10 o’clock position for an “away.” This will teach him to move to the side rather than fading forward as he makes his flanking turns (see drawing).

I add back-ups here and there. By throwing the toy directly over his head so there is no direction paired with it and telling him in advance to, “Get back,” you can teach a pretty good back up behavior. Reinforce the dog by throwing the toy directly at his mouth when he backs a step or two.

Add a down here and there and send him from that position. Make sure the resulting flanking behavior is something close to a 90-degree angle to his down by throwing the toy to a point that is perpendicular to his ribcage (see drawing).

Gaining Distance

By the time I get to this phase, it’s getting really fun for me and for the dog. He’s becoming operant and offering behaviors like fast runs, quick downs, and prancy little backups. He’s starting to look over his shoulder, watching for the toy as he runs. Now I start adding distance – not in how far I throw the toy, but in how rounded the dog’s path is.

I have several tricks to accomplish this, but here’s one that works well and doesn’t require props. Hold the toy close to your body (which keeps the dog from jumping up to snatch it away) and start to slowly turn one way or the other with it. He will follow the movement. If you’re rotating to your right, he’s turning to his left, moving in a clockwise circle, which is the “go-bye” direction. Wait just a moment and he will naturally move away so he’s in a better position to chase and catch the toy. If he jumps for it, raise the toy up and wait. His movement is

a reinforceable behavior, which causes you to throw the toy in the direction of the flank he's taking. You can add the flanking command here if you want, and then use this command occasionally while playing the game.

The next phase of the game includes the dog obeying flanking commands from the stand, down, and sit (I use stand and down) positions and from a distance. Dogs tend to fade in toward stock and/or shepherds when given flanking commands from a stopped position. Prevent this by making sure your throws are not in front of the dog, but to his side as explained earlier.

If he has a favorite direction, that's usually the one he will travel in. If it's not the direction you want, give the other flanking command and wait. As soon as he offers it, which he will do if you've worked both directions equally, reinforce him by throwing the toy.

Stop, Turn, Wait

Everything you've done up until now is an excellent segue into introducing the stop command: "There." When the dog will perform a flanking behavior and circle you widely at least once, it's time to add the stop. Just say "There," and throw the toy directly at his mouth. Do this a few times and he'll start anticipating the throw by stopping and facing you when he hears the command. The "There" command means stop, face your stock, and wait.

Redirect

While the dog is circling and before you throw the toy, stop him and send him in the opposite direction by giving the flanking command and throwing the toy in the desired direction. Now start fading the toy, because you're almost done.

Stop the dog while he's flank-

ing and send him in the same or different direction. If he takes the command, keep it simple and allow him to travel for only a few steps, say "There" to stop him again. Then give him lots of praise, run over and pet him, feed him treats, and so on. Have a party for your great future herder!

I know that sounds easy, and there are pitfalls. If you've been clicker training your dog though, you already have a pretty sound idea of what to do: wait. If you stop playing the game, he'll start trying to figure out what made you stop and "fix" the problem on his own. If you've done the groundwork by playing the game in steps as outlined, he'll offer the correct behavior. If you feel more comfortable using a clicker in these situations, bring it back out and use it. In fact, I recommend it if you have one of those sensitive dogs that becomes worried when he is unsure.


From the Game to the Pen

Some parts of this game can be used in the round pen and even in a big arena or field with a lot of success. Not all dogs feel totally rewarded by the movement of stock alone; some respond better to "human" games. If this is your dog, give him what he wants and take your flying disc, treats, and clicker into the pen. It might take several clicks for the dog to hear it the first time, so be prepared to click four to five times before he realizes he's being clicked. After that, be prepared to click and throw a treat or toy to the dog if he's where he should be.

Here's where the game pays off with real stock. If the dog is not in the correct position, change the balance point or give a command and then throw the toy to where the dog should be. When he goes there to catch or get the toy, click. I realize this is a form of "reverse"

clicking, but it works. If he comes running in for a treat, give him one and send him back around. Coming for a treat isn't a bad thing: it gives you the opportunity to restart the game and resend the dog, which is just more practice for both of you.

He's done with treats and toys when he starts refusing to leave his "post" for reinforcement. He'll do this fairly quickly as long as you are moving about in the pen, which allows him to see the job at hand and to realize his role in it. If you are enough of a beginner that you tend to stand still and watch what's happening, it will take your dog a little longer to realize his role. Just keep practicing and it will come naturally. If your stock is heavy (meaning that they stay with you) and your dog isn't attacking them, you have all the time it takes to gather your thoughts and take the next step.

As with all training methods, use what you can from this article, evaluate your dog's progress, and then continue or change what and how much you are doing based on his progress and yours. 

About the Author...

Lana has been involved in dog training for over 20 years, and in clicker training since meeting Karen Pryor in 1993. Lana's first book, "The CLICKED Retriever" was first published in 1996, and quickly became a revelation to clicker training for the obedience retrieve. The retriever book was followed by the "Practical Clicker Training Guide," which was the first book of its type, written just for clicker training dogs. She is currently working on a third book titled, "Puppy Magic."

Lana started out training dogs as helpers on her farm, a horse boarding and training stable for Quarter Horses. They held horses

and flashlights, retrieved everything from keys to tools, and one even did a fair job of stacking firewood. In 1989, she became interested in competition obedience, and since has earned several AKC, UKC, and ASCA competition titles in obedience, agility, herding, and conformation, include obedience UD's and an HX in herding. Her clicker-trained dogs achieved more High-in-Trial awards in obedience and herding than any other to date. She has also owned and handled more than one breed champion, taught 4-H breed handling and obedience classes, offered classes and private lessons in obedience, agility, and herding, and has trained several service dogs in addition to teaching service dog classes.

DO YOU TRAIN FOR INNOVATION?

Do you play "101 Things to do with a Box" or other innovative games with your animals?

I am a doctoral student at the University of California-Riverside, and one of my mail research interests is creativity and innovation in animals.

As part of my current research, I have composed an online survey on the topic of training for innovation. It should take no longer than 30 minutes to complete, can be done anonymously, and has been reviewed and approved by UCR's Human Subjects Review Board.

Please help me by completing the survey at:
<http://semantics.ucr.edu/~allison/survey/>

(Please note the last "/" as the page will not load without it; and use "Clicker Journal" for your facility name if you are not affiliated with a company or organization.)



If you have questions, please don't hesitate to contact me at allison.kaufman@cmail.ucr.edu.

THANK YOU!

One Step at a Time

by Robin Tinlay Sallie

I took my German Shepherd, Blue, to a herding lesson. It was our third time with sheep.

My instructor, who breeds German shepherds, is a traditional trainer. She was shocked that I'd pay for an hour and a half lesson and not let Blue move the sheep. Last week she watched me work on loose leash walking around the pens and said, "You can fix that with a couple of strong collar corrections."

I very much had Susan Ailsby's Song and sheep on my mind when I decided what I want to get out of herding. I plan to print out and present my teacher with a copy of Song's story at our next session.

I broke today's lesson into 14 sessions:

1) Before our lesson, I worked

Blue around the farm on paying attention to me. We stayed well away from sheep or other dogs.

Then I put her back in the car, where she was quiet and happy in her crate. Anytime she was not working she was in her crate parked in a place where she could not see sheep, other dogs or people.

2) Because the only thing that I know about herding is that I want to do it, I worked sheep (sort of) with the teacher as my dog. I have to learn to direct a dog with a four foot stick without frustration the dog or causing bad habits. I thought starting with out a dog was the way to go. How can I tell a dog were to go if I don't know myself? I am terrible!

3) Then I was the "dog." I want

to understand what the dog is seen when I'm waving my stick around in confusion.

4) Then the teacher was the "dog" again. I think she had a good time barking at me!

5) I worked Blue around the farm on loose leash walking. We worked close to sheep and other dogs. Then I put her back in the car.

6) I watched the teacher work her advanced dog. She whispered commands to the dog from outside the pen and the dog did what was asked using only voice cues.

7) I worked her novice dog. He was impressed that I had liver in my pockets and was willing to share.

8) I brought Blue in from the car

and worked on Blue being attentive to me and keeping a loose lead with the sheep on one side of the pen and us on the other. I put Blue back in the car.

9) I worked another novice dogs

10) I brought Blue in from the car and worked on Blue stopping at the gate and not entering pen with the sheep until I said, "let's work." I put Blue back in the car.

11) I worked the first novice dog again.

12) I brought Blue in from the car and worked on Blue stopping at the gate and not entering to the sheep until I said "let's work." I let her have a break to sniff the room out side the pen and then worked on her sitting calmly in the pen to watch the sheep without losing her mind. I let Blue wander the room while I talked to the teacher and I clicked and treated Blue every time looked at me. The conversation went on for a while, so I put Blue back in the car.

13) I talked to the teacher about why I do what I do and tried to map out the next steps. She said she has NEVER trained any of her shepherds to herd (or do anything else, not obedience, not agility!) using all positive reinforcement. And she has a dog for whom nothing she has tried has worked. She said that watching me work with Blue showed her a new way to work with her problem dog. He has high sheep drive without caring to work with her. Blocking and collar corrections shut him down.

14) One last time, I brought Blue in from the car and worked on Blue stopping at the gate and not entering the pen until I said "let's work," sitting calmly to watch the sheep without losing her mind and following me out of the pen



when I told her "That will do." I put Blue back in the car.

With each session Blue became calmer and got there quicker. She may have been with the sheep for a total of 20 minutes out of the 90 minute lesson.

By the end of the lesson, Blue was happy to wait to go in the pen and watch the sheep with out losing her mind. She was able to eat treats while sitting calmly in the pen about fifteen to twenty feet from the woolies.

My teacher was impressed with our progress. She thinks that a dog with Blue's drive - from German working lines - and need to work could be trained to trail in a couple of months if I'd consider long-line collar corrections and blocking - the stuff that shut down dog her *problem* dog. She said that my way will take for ever but she is more than willing to let me do things my way with Blue as I am after all paying her for her time! I told her I have no deadlines.

Next visit we will review this week's lessons, add a toy reward into the mix and see if we can do

walk ups with a loose lead without Blue's brains running out of her ears: Penalty yards versus sheep. This week's sheep stood in the corner to stare at us while we worked outside their bubble. Movement may help Blue lose her mind.

Gotta love these teenage herding dogs! 📷

Clicker Journal History

In the twelfth issue of the CJ, published in July of 1995, Karen Pryor wrote, "I think of the Clicker Journal as a sort of communal diary. That is, to me it is not supposed to be a collection of articles by experts but a place for us to share training experiences, as we might share with that other clicker trainer in our neighborhood if there were one, which there seldom is. This is the place to jot down your shaping ideas, surprises, and great moments. You never know when something seems like small event to you will solve a problem or provide a big Aha! for someone else."



Changing Places to Change a Behavior

by Joyce Miller

Handling a show dog, training an obedience dog, or running a dog in agility takes lots of practice, good teachers, and lots of experience. Performance sports require a willingness to make mistakes and to learn from those mistakes. They also provide valuable lessons for all of us involved in training our dogs.

All training for these activities depends on how clearly the handler perceives what they want the dog to do. Sometimes, dogs and trainers seem to be going in different directions, and no matter what the trainer does, the dog does not respond. Sometimes, in order to resolve these problems, we need to change what we are doing and where we do it. We do not necessarily have to find the underlying belief that is interfering with the

outcome we want, but we do have to find a way to strengthen the picture of what we want.

A Personal Experience

Last year, my show dog, Dilys, suddenly decided that no one, except me, was going to touch her in the show ring. This meant that the judges could not go over her. She did not act aggressively; she just could not be touched. Figuring out what was going on, since I mentally pictured her standing perfectly still and letting the judges examine her, required that I go back in my own life and find out what was sabotaging that picture in my mind. Then, armed with that knowledge, I discovered that changing venues helped me reinforce the picture of the outcome that I wanted.

When I pondered what was happening in the ring, I thought about my mother breeding and showing Boxers when I was a child. My memories of her work and going to shows with her were happy ones: She loved showing her dogs, and whatever happened at a show, win or lose, she came home exhilarated. I loved going to the shows with her, and I liked helping with the puppies. But my father, who had chosen the breed and purchased a bitch with the agreement to show her, to breed her, and to return a puppy, had little use for the show ring, or as he called it, "the beauty ring." To him, it was nothing more than a beauty pageant: the dogs and owners only had to walk around the ring and stand at attention. "Give me an obedience dog any time," he used to say. "They have brains." I realized that his oft repeated statements about conformation had affected my own opinion of showing dogs, leaving me with the belief that it was just about walking a dog around a ring.

I didn't learn how wrong he was until I was in my 50s and had my first show dog. I look back with embarrassment on my first attempts in the ring: stiff, stilted, no clue of what it took to show off a dog or how to train a dog to do this. Handlers told me there was nothing to it. Mentors told me what to do: keep a loose lead, pull the head up, make sure that the dog is moving correctly, hold the tail up, and keep the dog perfectly stacked. Every time I entered the ring, I felt like "Baby" learning to dance in the movie, *Dirty Dancing*.



Dilys, my Best Of Breed, frolics in the Bluebonnets...

Handling classes were of no help: every Tuesday evening, I took that dog to handling class. No one gave us any instruction. We just lined up, kept moving to the front of the line, stacked our dog, took it down and back, and went around to the end. Every week, I looked desperately around the class: What was I supposed to do? Each week, I picked someone who seemed to know what they were doing and tried to copy them. Even though many of the people in the class were very experienced, I did not have a clue whether I was copying something that would work in the Airedale ring or not. In short, to quote Corally Burmaster, all I was doing in class each week was rearranging my ignorance.

Even though this was supposed to be my hobby and it was supposed to be fun, I ended up sending my first and second show dogs to a professional handler so they could finish their championships.

Years later, with 20 handling workshops under my belt, one owner handled champion to my credit, and a successful handling class, I still did not truly understand what I was doing in the ring. When Dilys suddenly balked at judges going over her, she caught me by surprise. When I showed her again, I expected her to do this: I didn't want her to do it, but the picture planted in my mind was of her balking and me wondering what I could do to stop her from doing that. She did not let me down: three more judges, wonderful judges who refused to excuse her from the ring, had trouble examining her. Each judge said that excusing her would ruin her, and each counseled me to get her out more frequently during the week. Dilys, however, was a very well socialized dog who loved going out, letting people touch her, and playing with other dogs. I knew that was not the problem.



I knew the problem had to be me. Even though I was teaching other people how to be successful handlers, I was still affected by my father's words, and that early belief was undermining my visualization of showing successfully in the conformation ring. I had to get over that, and I had to do it with Dilys.

Change Up What You're Doing

I decided to change up what I was doing. Several of my students had rare breeds and the only conformation venue for them was the United Kennel Club (UKC). They seemed to really enjoy showing their dogs, and they encouraged me to show in their shows. What did I have to lose? I registered Dilys with the UKC and entered her in a show.

For several months I had the only Airedale entered in UKC shows in Texas. At the first UKC show we entered, I discovered that

the atmosphere was informal, friendly, and supportive. Other exhibitors and the judges were eager to help, and I felt no pressure to make points. In that atmosphere, I relaxed. When I went into the ring, Dilys stood for exam exactly the way I pictured her standing: rock solid with her ears alert and her tail up. She didn't even flinch when the judge came up to examine her. At the second of the three shows that weekend, we did so well that we took Terrier Group 1 and then went Reserve Best In Show.

After the fun I had at that UKC show, I decided to try another show venue, the International shows that were scheduled a month after our first UKC show. There were four shows in two days under four different AKC judges, three from the United States, one from Canada. Once again, we were the only Airedale entered and the atmosphere was, if anything, even more relaxed. With no pressure

to win, we had a great time, and Dilys came home an International Champion.

At both of these other competitive venues, the focus was on the dog and the breed standard. There was no fussing about grooming. My Airedale was well groomed and conditioned, but instead of spending hours at the show getting her ready for the ring, I kept track of time, and about 10 minutes before we were to go into the ring, I put her on the table and brushed her. Instead of fussing and worrying about whether she was groomed well enough, I spent my time relaxing, meeting people, playing with Dilys, and visualizing what we would do in the ring.

The most significant part of changing up what I had been doing was that I changed. I not only became a more relaxed and confident handler, I had learned that competing in the show ring is fun. I actually looked forward to going into the ring, and regardless of the outcome, Dilys and I both had fun. Win or lose, I praised my dog and I could feel the difference in me.

Our next show was an AKC show. Instead of going to the show early, I got there in time to set up my grooming table, brush my dog, and go in the ring. Instead of being fearful and nervous, I was eager to show my dog to the judge, a well-known terrier expert. My new approach and my new attitude worked: Dilys won the four-point major. We went to three more shows together before she finished her AKC championship. We did not always win, and one weekend, we didn't even win our class. But from then on, we both had fun in the ring, and that enjoyment showed in our body language and our attitudes.

Success Breeds Success

Using a change of venue gave

me the opportunity to work on my handling skills while simultaneously building confidence in myself and my dog. Since this experience, I have used these shows for introducing a new dog to the show ring, and, since both UKC and International shows have classes for three to six month puppies, for introducing puppies to the noise and bustle of show venues.

The UKC ribbons and the International show medallions are impressive, and the dogs seem to understand that they have done something very special when you are given one. When the last judge at that first UKC show handed me our huge best of breed rosette, Dilys grabbed the rosette and pranced out of the ring. This was her rosette, and it was meant to hang on her crate!

By changing places to work on a problem, I had not only banished an undermining belief and strengthened my visualization of our performance, Dilys and I had become an equally invested, competitive team. 📷

About the Author...

Joyce Miller received her doctorate from Bryn Mawr and is now a retired teaching and marketing writer. She is a member of the American Dog Writers Association, the International Association of Canine Professionals, and the Airedale Terrier Club of America. She teaches a six-weeks handling techniques class, and also does in-home training for people with puppies or older dogs that need re-training. She lives in Dallas Texas, where she and her husband breed and show Airedale Terriers.

Clicker Journal History

The fourth issue of the Clicker Journal, published in October 1994, contained our first article on teaching clicker classes, this one by Linda Brodzik who was teaching classes under the auspices of a veterinary hospital. In the introduction to this article, Corally comments, "I've heard many comments about how it can't be done using a clicker because dogs will get their clicks confused with someone else's. I've also heard you can't bring a lot of dogs together in a class situation without using some force to control them initially. Well, I've heard from several people who know what they're talking about because they are doing it."

Gee, we're still hearing some of that nay saying—and some of us are still just doing it!

This issue also contained Karen Pryor's "llama post" in which she describes a fourteen-year-old girl, Sarah, training her llamas. Karen concludes, "The point is NOT that "no" force was used...The point is also NOT that we were nice to the llama...The point is not that the clicker in itself is special...The point is that using real reinforcement—food in this case—and a conditioned signal to tell the animal what activity or movement has just paid off for it—allows you to shape behavior incredibly fast, in spite of fear, previous conditioning, or whatever, provided you get the information to the animal in a timely way and keep raising your goals steadily, but by small steps."



Step By Step

by Susan E. Mann

A few years ago, Karen Pryor introduced Theresa McKeon to Joan Orr, and TAGteach was born. Theresa, a gymnastics coach, had learned about clicker training when dealing with a horse with issues. Joan, a scientist and former athlete, had been using clicker training with dogs. Both saw the advantage of using a marker based approach to teaching humans. TAGteach is the application of clicker training principles to teaching humans. Due to the sensitivity of some people to being “trained like an animal,” the acronym “TAG” was developed. “TAG” stands for Teaching with Acoustical Guidance and we refer to what we do as “tagging” rather than “clicking.”

One major difference in working with humans rather than animals is that we share a verbal language that we can use to tell the learner what we are tagging. We refer to the specific piece of behavior that we are tagging as a TAGpoint, and often use the phrase, “your TAGpoint is ...” TAGpoints are very specific, and the criterion for that TAGpoint must be singular and discrete. In other words, it must either be accomplished, or not, so the learner either receives a tag or not. This is a very important point; if a learner has been told that the tagpoint is A and he does A but doesn’t do B, you must TAG since he accomplished the TAGpoint. You can keep those things that the learner is not doing well in mind for future TAGpoints. When considering what to make a TAGpoint, breaking the behavior down into small pieces is essential. Often, working on one TAGpoint will “fix” other pieces of the behavior; we refer to this as a

“Value-Added” TAGpoint.

The only time that multiple TAGpoints are allowed for a single TAG is in a set-up TAG. In the case of a set-up TAG, each portion of the set-up is tagged individually, and then they are put together; the learner gets the TAG when the set-up is complete. The learner has already been tagged for the individual TAGpoints, and now puts them together to earn a TAG when in position, which facilitates earning future TAGs. As I learned with Bethany, the little girl I’ll describe working with, a set-up TAG allowed her to earn a TAG sooner in the process, and helped her balance when starting so that she could accomplish her task more easily--and earn more TAGs in the bargain!

One additional difference from clicker training animals worth noting is that tagging can be used without additional reinforcers for some students who are motivated by achieving the desired results. Most learners, however, will benefit from some form of additional reinforcement. People using TAGteach regularly have found that providing a layered approach to reinforcement is very beneficial; for instance, every 5 tags earns a sticker, every 10 stickers earns a toy from a box. For learners with difficulty understanding this concept, earning a primary reinforcer in the form a small treat every tag, or every few tags, also works well. I tell Bethany before we start that once she earns 5 tags, we will play a few minutes of Zoom, the TV show, one of her favorite reinforcers. I have also done some layered reinforcements with her, although I made it a fairly rich reinforcement schedule to avoid

causing her frustration; I’m hoping that this helps with her ability to think abstractly, though I have no evidence to support this.

Additionally, the chance to earn something for the whole class when everyone achieves something can be very helpful in promoting a sense of camaraderie. For example, give a pizza party when everyone has put at least 3 “pepperoni stickers” (each sticker represents, for example, 10 tags) on their “piece of pizza” cutout (earned by getting 25 tags)- this encourages those who get their tags quickly to encourage the others who are slower to get their tags, and since tags can be given for varying levels of accomplishment, the “best” students don’t necessarily get theirs first. The TAGteach team has even developed “tagulators,” beads on a macramé lanyard that can be pushed across to help keep track of tags.

TAGteach is being used in a variety of settings, including dance, gymnastics, soccer, music, and martial arts, as well as in both general and special education. Children with autism often have difficulty with auditory processing, and the simplicity of the tag versus verbal feedback, seems like a natural fit. I have a friend with a daughter who is diagnosed with autism/pervasive developmental disorder, and with whom I had done some volunteer work previously. Her mother was agreeable to my doing some more work with Bethany using TAG, and the following is what I did over the past year while working with Bethany to teach her to walk down the stairs alternating legs.

Background and beginnings

I worked with a little girl with autism, Bethany. Since April, she had had six hours a day of one-on-one instruction, first in the home, and then transitioned to school. Prior to that she had 3 hours a day of a teacher, with others and myself volunteering for the rest of the day. Bethany was making good progress using an ABA based Verbal Behavior program that goes year round-except for a three-week break in August. They would be out of town for the last 2 weeks, but Bethany's mother was more than willing for me to work with Bethany in that first week off, and I wanted to use that time to try some TAGteach with her. Bethany had two issues that I thought I could tackle (or start to tackle!) - one-stepping down stairs, and toe-walking. I eventually decided

to work only on the stairs issue.

Beth walked up stairs normally, but walking down stairs she put one foot down one step, then brought the other to meet it. My first task was data collection: did she use the same leg to lead all the time or does she switch? At the ClickerExpo, we saw a video of a little girl about the same age as Bethany who had this issue and TAGTeach was a great success in dealing with it. I wasn't sure if Bethany would make the attempt, allowing me to TAG her. If she always led with the same leg, an earlier TAGpoint might be to alternate legs, while still allowing both feet to stop on the same step.

I also wondered if I might make use of her siblings to demonstrate the correct behavior while I tagged and then gave reinforcers for the tags while she watched.

Report on Progress:

August 22, 2004

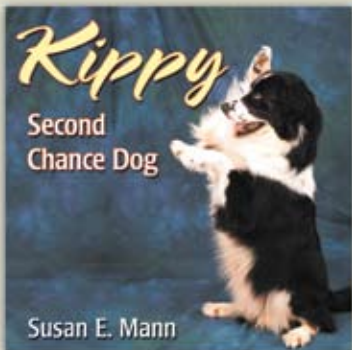
We did some video on the first day: Bethany walking up and down stairs, walking outside while holding her mom's hand, and doing some school tasks (putting plastic fish into a slotted box, completing a four-piece cone puzzle, etc) I will be showing this video to her regular teacher shortly, as I don't think I got the best baseline for Bethany, but it is true to what she normally is like, with her wandering off and trying to get into the refrigerator.

I also introduced her to the TAG by clicking her while doing the fish and some other tasks. Then I TAGGED her older brother for walking down the stairs "correctly" and then missing some steps, and then doing it correctly again. I then tried introducing her to walking down the steps "correctly" and it was a big flop! Both literally and figuratively: we didn't make any progress, and she flopped herself onto me.

Afterwards, I talked to Theresa from TAGteach, as well as the teacher who had worked with the little girl in the video, and I backed off. For the next two days, I just worked on things Bethany does, albeit not always consistently or well or with much focus, and got her more used to TAGGING, to working with me again, and to working in that location, the basement of house, instead of the room at school or the room at home we had previously used.

Late in a session on the second day, Bethany escaped upstairs into the kitchen, and then wanted to go to the family room to watch ZOOM, her favorite and on video so always available when we need it! I decided to use that motivation to again introduce Bethany to going down stairs by alternating her feet instead of one-stepping. Since

**THIS IS THE BOOK THAT
TRAINERS HAVE BEEN ASKING FOR...**



...a book for families and kids that teaches the whole how to integrate a new dog or puppy into family life! Part story and part training manual, entertaining and humorous, "Kippy: Second Chance Dog" is available at amazon.com and bbotw.com for \$12.95. Significant discounts available for multiple book purchases of at least five books for shelters, rescue groups, trainers, and others who wish to make this book part of their ongoing education and fundraising efforts.

"I recommend Kippy: Second Chance Dog to any family with children who want to introduce a new dog into the family. This book is for the whole family to share and to learn how to train the dog, solve problems, and give each family member a role. Susan Mann has done a great job explaining clicker training and this positive approach can be used even by children to help build a safe and loving bond with the family dog."

*Joan Orr M.Sc., President- Duggone Safe;
Faculty Member- Karen Pryor Clicker Expo;
Producer of Clicker Puppy DVD; and co-author of
Getting Started: Clicker Training Your Small Pet*

"Kippy: Second Chance Dog" is Susan's first book- part story and part training manual, it was written to help families and kids learn how to integrate a new dog or puppy into family life using clicker training and good management practices.

Bethany doesn't follow verbal instructions very readily, I physically cued and helped her move her feet, TAGGING her at each step and then putting ZOOM on for her afterwards. I also gave her a piece of pretzel or cookie two to three times while still on the steps to make the reinforcement more immediate for her. I did this two or three times that day, and then ended the session with her watching ZOOM with her babysitter.

On the fourth day, we started off with classroom stuff first, but did a lot of stair work throughout the day, mostly going from kitchen to family room with ZOOM as the main reinforcer. We also worked on her going down to the basement for another favorite reinforcer, Capri-Sun juice. I continued the physical cuing and assistance, but needed to do less, especially with the right leg.

On the fifth day, we did 2 sessions. In the morning we just worked as we had done, some on the stairs, but not a whole lot. We were mainly doing work in the basement, as her siblings were home and getting ready for vacation.

When I came back in the afternoon to video, we initially had some problems as her siblings distracted Bethany, at one point putting ZOOM on when she was still at the top of the stairs, which resulted in her trying to catapult herself downstairs in frustration! We did manage to get some good video, which actually looks better than it should, as you can't see my cuing very much, whereas it was still going on.

However, when I compared this to what we started with, I was still very much encouraged, especially as I know that ideally she would have been more receptive to verbal instruction and had more experience with TAGGING before trying this. Mom came home just as we

finished taping, so I showed her live and on video what Bethany was doing, and she was very happy. She even took a clicker with her to the beach so she could continue working with Bethany while on vacation. I can't wait to find out how it went!

Report on Progress:

August 28, 2004

Good news! On Friday, we did a little work, and then some taping—and boy did she do well!

On Thursday her teacher, Judy, had come over to see what we were working on. Beth had done better for me once or twice, but pretty much performed almost to what she was capable of when I “showed off” to Judy. She still required some heavy cuing and assistance, especially for the left leg, but she was cooperating except for some difficulty getting started.

Friday afternoon, we started using ZOOM in a TV/VCR set-up downstairs in the basement: Wow, what a, big difference! Friday's taping shows Bethany walking down the basement steps with almost no physical cuing or assistance, just a very light touch to get her to actually plant her feet! We got a couple of repetitions of it on tape, as well as her very quickly putting the fish and the bangles away...and then the battery died.)

I estimate that we did about eighteen to twenty-five repetitions of her walking down the stairs between the first and second taping, and about the same for the time between the second and third tapings. I should have kept better records, and had great plans, but didn't follow through. At least by journaling, I got some of the details down in a general format.

We are also trying to get Beth to start down stairs using her left leg, to break her habit of always leading with the right and bringing her left to match it.

Report on Progress:

September 10, 2004

I saw Beth's teacher today and she reported that Beth is alternating legs coming off the stairs from the bus with only a verbal or light physical cue. This consists of only two to three steps, and there are no other stairs in the school.

Report on Progress:

February 28, 2005

Bethany's mother stated she has not worked on this with Beth except when coming off the bus, but she is getting very good at it. When she can get Beth to start with her left, Beth does the 3 steps consistently alternating her legs.

I worked with Beth last Thursday and Friday. Initially she had some difficulty getting started, so we went downstairs and did some other tasks like puzzles to get her going and used video-watching (ZOOM, of course!) as a reinforcer. We repeated having her siblings demonstrate the correct behavior--for hugs and pretzels!

I noticed that when Beth goes up stairs, she always starts with her left, so I tagged her for each step going UP, and named it, using either “left” or “right” for each step. Then I turned her around to come back down. Initially, she had a very hard time getting started but is now doing much better, although she requires some holding on to keep her balance when she starts this way. Once she gets started, she almost always goes all the way down the seven steps alternating her legs with only the verbal cues of left and right. When she does start one-stepping in the middle, she seems to lose her balance, and it is always after her right foot has gone down, and the left comes to meet it.

Update on progress:

June 16, 2005

I worked with Beth on creating

a set-up tag. The position is “one hand on the rail and her left leg raised (so she will start with that foot). It went well!

I did the stairs a few times with her before trying this, to see where we were since I hadn't seen her in a while: her avoidance behaviors continued, she was fine once we got going, but she still needed physical cuing to get the first step. Once we did the set-up work, she was much easier to get started; maybe she was avoiding the feeling of being off-balance? The set-up tag also provided a tag earlier in the sequence, which has to be a good thing. Note to self: think set-up tags whenever possible!

Update on progress: June 30, 2005

Bethany went down stairs alternating her legs and starting with the left, with only a reminder to hold the rail. She still one-stepped down stairs if she was on her own. I decided to continue to tag her intermittently to maintain a high rate of reinforcement, as well as to reinforce her at the end of the behavior each time she does it correctly. So far, this has all happened in her home, which has short flights of stairs. I'd like to go somewhere to do longer sets, as well as do shorter sets in other locations to help generalize the behavior.

Update on Progress dated September 7, 2005

I worked with Beth a few times in August at home, and had plans to work with her elsewhere that got cancelled a few times. She is now in a school building that has stairs, which is good news. I worked with her briefly before class started this morning and she did a great job!

This was a) a new location; b) a different surface; and c) a much longer set of stairs than those at

home (about fifteen steps versus five to seven at home). Her first time down, some kids came in and she did stop at that point, with both feet on the same step, but she got going again after they left and finished without any more mis-steps. The second time she came down, she was perfect, albeit a bit slower than at home. These steps are much more slippery than the carpet and wood surfaces at her home. She was doing this with only the verbal cue of “put your hand on the railing” to get started.

Beth's teacher was very happy about her progress. When we talked last week, she said that Beth still needed physical cuing, which I haven't seen in a long time. I suggested that she use verbal cues of “left” and “right” when she gets started if she feels that Beth needs any cues. Now that she's seen Beth doing it, she says she'll work on it on a more regular basis.

Conclusion

So this is my journey of learning to use TAGteach with Bethany. Certainly it wasn't the immediate change in behavior that I was hoping for, but for Bethany, all learning has come very slowly and the intermittent nature of my work with her was not ideal. But she has learned and is becoming more proficient. Her mother and teacher are both impressed, and want to do more with TAG, and perhaps that is the best compliment I could get--other than a hug from Beth! ☺

About the Author...

Susan Mann is “mom” to three dogs: Pepper, a 14 year old Beagle mix; Brodie, a 7 year old Border Collie, and Kyp!, a 6 year old Border Collie/Spaniel (maybe) mix. She teaches agility at Flexible Flyers in Honeybrook PA, and also does private lessons and behavior consulting under the name of Tip Top Training. She is also an

educator for the Oxyfresh pet and wellness product lines. She can be reached online at susanmann@susanmann.net or through her website, www.susanmann.net She lives in Newark DE at present, and is hoping to relocate to Florida in the near future in order to be closer to family.

Clicker Journal History

From Issue Number 7, February 1995:

“Nancy Nieset of Ohio, who has used nothing but positive reinforcement for years, was having difficulty finding a positive reinforcement that would be effective in helping her overcome the problem she was having in potty training her two year old son. She racked her brains for days until she finally hit on what turned out to be the perfect solution.

She went to the store and bought one of those blue things that goes in the toilet tank. She installed it and waited until it had turned the tank water blue, but she didn't flush the toilet. Then she filed her son up with juice and water, waited for an appropriate time, and took him into the bathroom. He was told that when he went potty in the toilet, he could pull the lever to flush it. He went potty, flushed the toilet, and his eyes almost bugged out when the water turned BLUE! His training proceeded swiftly thereafter. Positive reinforcers don't come much better than that!

THE  **Clicker Journal**

Victoria Farrington, Editor, P.O. Box 14354 Mill Creek, WA 98082