RETRIEVING GAMES

Game Day 11 – The Hold

Your dog is happily picking up everything you placed on the floor, great! Now we want to transition to a hold of the toy. This can be quite difficult as we tend to wait too long and accidentally click the drop as our dog is confused why the pick-up doesn't earn a click anymore and drops the item.
Follow these steps below to create clarity and add another layer to your dog's understanding.
There is a connection with stopping and dropping, therefore we are going to use distance and movement to teach our dog to carry and hold on to the item longer.

What you'll need:

- A confined space
- Your dog
- The toys/items your dog has already played with
- High value treats
- A clicker or marker word
- Your dog should have reliably progressed through Game Day 9 & 10 and has played with different toys/items in different environments

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Step-by-step guide:

a. While standing, place the item on the floor at your feet.
b. Immediately start moving backwards a couple of meters to get a bit of distance between you and your dog, who is picking up the item.
c. Your dog will pick up the item and automatically move towards you.
d. Click after your dog has taken one or two steps towards you (with the item in their mouth). This will result in the item being a little away from you.
e. Reward your dog by placing a few cookies on the floor in front of your feet!!! This will teach the dog the out and back pattern we need for a retrieve!
f. Look where the item fell to the floor and reposition yourself (e.g. while your dog is eating the treats, move to the other side of the item), it might be already at a good distance, or you need to move a few steps further away.
g. Repeat the above and reposition yourself after each rep. Keep the distance between you and the item the same as before.

Once your dog has understood that walking towards you with the item in their mouth is the new exercise, you can progress like follows:

- Increase duration of the hold:
    - As your dog becomes familiar with the above, wait longer each time to click when they walk towards you, carrying the item.
    - Increase the distance gradually (mix up duration, sometimes go back to short holds) until you click just as your dog arrives back at you.
    - Always feed at your feet

- Increase distance from the item:
    - Start moving further away from the item after you have placed it on the ground. E.g., if you have started with 2m distance, increase to 2.5m and so on.
    - If your dog is unsure of what the new criteria is, decrease distance again until they notice the item and then start moving away to where you wanted to start.
    - Gradually increase distance.

- Increase the drive back to you
    - To increase the drive towards you, we will start walking backwards while our dog is coming towards us
    - This will make your dog want to catch up with you
    - It will also help to increase the duration and distance of the hold.

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- Keep clicking before your dog reaches you and keep rewarding at your feet.

At this stage it might be tempting to take the dummy out of your dog's mouth and or wait for a delivery to hand. Please refrain from doing both at this stage. The reason I'm saying this is, that some dogs tend to play keep away with a retrieved item. To prevent this, we need to teach our dog in carefully created layers, that we are not interested in the item and they will be rewarded for returning it to us. Furthermore, we want to proof the hold against distractions before we move on to the hand delivery.

End your session as before by throwing a treat and retrieve the item to put it away.

Daily use: Play this game a few times during the week and change locations (change environment) as well. Practice with many different toys and item. There is no need to rush, make sure your dog has a great understanding that the new game is "hold that thing!".

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