RETRIEVING GAMES

Game Day 17 – Retrieve with distractions

We have played the "Go Get it" game in a low-level distracting environment. However, to grow our dog's understanding it is vital that we strategically add distractions to the game, so they learn to ignore them and focus on the work at paw.

What you'll need:

- A space to create some distance
- Your dog on a collar
- Toys/items for your dog to retrieve
- Distractions from your dog's distraction list (level 3 – 6)
- High value treats
- Your dog's retrieving cue
- Your dog should be familiar with all previous games

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Step-by-step guide:

a. Start by adding some Level 3 distractions from your Dog's Distraction list. Be fair to your dog and set them up for success. Make sure you can manage the distraction not the dog. E.g., if you're using a food distractor, have it in a sealed container if you think your dog would go for it.
b. Place the distraction to the side of your dog's retrieving path
c. When you and your dog have mastered this, move the game to a new environment.
d. Use your backyard, where there are some distractions, but the environment is well known to your dog.
e. Lower your criteria when you change environment, e.g., decrease the distance of the toss, decrease the length of the hold.
f. Slowly increase criteria once your dog understands the game in a new environment.
g. Still in your backyard, add more distractions as you play along.
h. Grow the game from there.
    a. Start placing the distraction closer into their path
    b. Increase distraction level
i. If your dog goes for the distraction rather than retrieving the item, go over, gently take them by their collar, move them further away from the distraction and throw the retrieving item between you and the distraction. This way your dog can make a good choice and doesn't have to run "over" the distraction to get to the toy.
j. If you are using a distraction that they can get as a reinforcer, mix up your reward by releasing them to the distraction with "get it" every now and then. This will put more value into the retrieve as you grow this game.
k. Remember that we are still only clicking for the touch, not the taking the toy.

Daily Use: Play this game a few times during the week with different toys/items, different distraction levels (3 – 6) and in different environments. Move your game into a more distracting environment. Take your time at this stage and watch for your dog's IYC moments. Your dog will tell you their understanding of and value for the game.
Play through all stages with a new toy/item or in a new environment. Only change one parameter e.g. new toy OR new environment OR new distraction.

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