HUNTING GAMES – THE FOUNDATIONS

🎾 Game 1 - Treat Diving

Build excitement and introduce “search” permission.

🎾 Why This Game Matters

Food on the floor is only available with permission. Clarity reduces frustration and grows confidence.

Permission builds trust.

🎾 What You’ll Need

- Your dog
- low to high-value treats
- Mat or dog bed
- Phone on tripod

🎾 Step-by-Step-Guide

1. Set Up

Play on a non-slippery floor. Prepare your area without your dog. Keep sessions short.

2. Build the Behaviour

We begin by observing your dog’s enthusiasm and food preferences.

a. Take 3 – 5 treats in your hand.
b. Stand still.
c. Toss one treat on the floor, encourage your dog to chase it.
d. Repeat with different treat value.

Watch closely.

- Which treats do they chase faster?
- Which ones created the most excitement?

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Make a mental note of their preferences.

Repeat until your dog is eagerly "diving" for treats.

3. Add a Layer

I use the word "search". Choose the word that feels natural to you – but one you don't use in everyday conversation.

The order matters:

a. Grab your treats.
b. Stand still.
c. Say your cue ("search").
d. Toss the treat.

Always remain still when you say the cue and before tossing.
Soon you'll notice your dog lightning up at the sound of the word and look to the floor.
When your dog hears "search" and happily anticipates the toss – you're ready to progress. Take note of your treat ranking. This will matter later.

4. Raise Criteria

Creating value for a station.

a. Place the mat on the floor
b. Say "search" and toss a higher value treat onto the mat.

If your dog steps onto the mat and then comes off, repeat.

If your dog remains on the mat:

a. Say "search".
b. Toss a lower value treat away from the mat so they leave.

Over several repetitions, your dog will begin gravitating to the mat.

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One at a time:

- change rooms
- change mat/bed

🎾 Troubleshooting

My dog is refusing to leave the mat:

- Higher value treats to leave the mat
- Medium value treats on the mat

Adjust strategically.

🎾 Advancing the Game

Expectantly looking to the floor upon hearing the cue = strong association for the LSM.

🎾 Daily use

Treat Diving teaches your dog:

Not everything on the floor is free. Permission matters.

This game is also wonderful in situations where your dog feels uneasy. Searching for treats can lower stress and redirect focus in a healthy way.

You're building:

- Arousal regulation
- Permission clarity
- Value for a station
- Environmental communication

All through play.

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🎾 Checklist

1. Did you record and review your session?
2. Where your sessions short and engaging?
3. Did you stand still before tossing?
4. Is your dog confidently chasing?
5. Look at their T.E.M.P?

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