HUNTING GAMES – THE FOUNDATIONS

🎾 Game 12 – Shaping Toy Pickup Method 2

For those dogs, who won't pick up articles from the floor.

🎾 Why This Game Matters

Some dogs are not naturally interested in picking things up from the floor. This can have many reasons. This method is an alternative method to the original toy pickup shaping method.

🎾 What You'll Need

- Your dog
- Toys or items your dog would naturally pick up
- A basket or container
- High-value treats
- Phone on tripods

🎾 Step-by-Step-Guide

1. Set Up

Scatter the selected items randomly on the floor and let your dog investigate. Take note of the following:

a) which articles/toys do they pick up
b) which articles/toys do they carry in their mouth
c) which articles/toys do they mouth/chew
d) which articles/toys are they happy to give up again
e) which articles/toys do they carry away and have a party of their own

To build the behaviour, select the ones that meet criteria a), b) and d).

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2. Build the Behaviour

- Kneel on the floor or sit in a chair with the basket/container in front of you.
- Place the toy into the basket and place it on the floor.
- Mark and reward looking at the container. Place the food into the container.
- Progress to mark & reward looking inside. Place the food into the container.
- Progress to nudging the toy. Drop treat into the container.
- End your session:
    - throw cookie away and pick up the basket.

3. Add a Layer

- Wait for the mouth around the toy.
    - This is your new criteria
- Pickups will most likely happen very natural now. Be quick to mark when the dog's head is still in the basket, so they release into it.
- Drop food into basket.
- Generalise the behaviour by placing the toy into different parts of the basket
    - into a corner
    - against the side
- Teach each "new location" separately and consolidate
- Treat goes still into the basket for rewarding.

End session with cookie throws before picking up the basket.

4. Raise Criteria

- Increase the duration of mouth contact/lifting gradually.
- Mark and reward at a time that the toy drops into the container.
- Place the toy outside of the container, close by.
- Mark when the toy drops into the container, feed in the container
- Gradually place the toy further away from the container
    - mark and reward toy drops into the container
- Start marking for the pickup straight away, so the toy drops to the floor.

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Troubleshooting

My dog is not curious.

While your dog is watching you, take a treat and place it under the toy. Mark when the dog is nudging the toy to get the food. Repeat a few times and then pretend to place food under the toy.

Advancing the Game

Multiple clean brief lifts and dropping on mark in a row = go back to the original method.

Checklist

1. Is engagement deliberate?
2. Is chewing minimal?
3. Are sessions short?

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