

Dear Dog Lover,

Our monthly story at the end of this email: “Reward-Based Training, not Treat-Training”

Let's get ready for all the events happening in August!

Starting with the **dog show at the Palmer Fairgrounds** on Aug 6-8, you can observe (or take part at) the biggest confirmation show of the year, a three-day obedience and Rally trial, or just visit us at our booth and check out other vendors offering all kinds of dog related items and services.

The next two weekends all agility friends will meet in Anchorage for **two agility trials**, the first sanctioned by AKC, the second one by NADAC.

The last weekend in August is traditionally the **dog-day at the Alaska State Fair**. You get to see all the different dog sports and can visit with all the different clubs and groups that offer dog sports and other dog training in Southcentral Alaska. For more information, check out the information on upcoming events below.

September has great offers, too!

We'll offer our first Flyball Class here at the facility! Instructors are Linda and Karla, start will be Sep 9th.

The class will run for 4 weeks, two hours each Thursday from 5-7pm. It's an outdoors class, and if there's a cancellation due to weather, the class will be finished one week later. The fee is \$120 pre-registration (paid latest 14 days before the class starts), \$130 regular fee.

Right after Labor Day weekend we'll celebrate our **Responsible Dog-Ownership Day on Sep 11**. Lots of activities will be offered and presented, including a CGC-test, Nose Work and Agility demonstrations, a Dog First Aid seminar, meet-the-breed, vendor booths, a professional dog photographer will be on site, and more...

After our second set of **summer agility classes starting July 24th**, we'll take a break for the month of September to make room for other events, and resume with **more agility classes on October 2nd**. If you'd like to get into the agility classes this summer, contact as ASAP! We might have room just for you!

Like last time you'll find all changes from the July newsletter in **RED** below. Please, even if you're already signed up, check the schedule below to see if your class is affected.

Enjoy the summer, get out with your dog(s),
Claudia

Below you'll find:

1) Information on upcoming events

- 2) **REVISED:** Dates and times of upcoming classes
- 3) How to sign up for the classes
- 4) Information on the Open Play Times
- 5) This month's story: **Reward-Based Training, not Treat-Training**

1) INFORMATION ON UPCOMING EVENTS:

Aug 6-8: Dog Show at the Palmer Fairground

All-day event; we'll have a booth there and my dogs as well as some of our Rally students will enter the obedience/Rally trials that weekend. Admission is free. Bring a camping chair. Food vendors are on the grounds.

Sunday, Aug 29: Dog Day at the Alaska State Fair in Palmer

We'll have our presentation at 6-6:45pm in the corral.

We'll again need dog/handler teams to help us with our demonstrations of playing puppies, Elementary/ High School exercises, Tricks 'N Clicks exercises, and hopefully a Nose Work Presentation? Please contact us if you can help! The first 18 volunteers will get a free entry ticket for the State Fair for that whole day.

Saturday, Sep 11: Responsible Dog Ownership Day at the Regine Dog Training Facility

We have lots of plans already – stay tuned for more info!

Some highlights: We'll have a silent auction for some of our agility equipment, Canine First Aid seminar, agility and nose work demos (who wants to demo???), CGC-test, professional dog photographer available on site.

Saturday, Sep 25: 2010 WDMA (Willow Dog Musers Association) Symposium in Willow

We've been asked to give a demonstration about the new dog sport Nose Work. Who wants to help???

2) DATES AND TIMES OF UPCOMING CLASSES:

Drop-in classes running right now:

Instructors: Claudia (NW, RP), January (NW)

Weekly every **Thursday** until July 29th. >From August on we'll switch to **Tuesdays**, and can offer 2 classes back to back.

Starting in August we can also go indoors if it rains or gets too cold. Punch card available online.

Until July 29th:

Thursday 6:30-7:30pm: Nose Work (maximum 6 dogs) **FULL**

Thursday 8-9pm: Rally Practice (maximum 6 dogs)

Starting August 3rd:

Tuesday 5:15-6:15pm: Nose Work (maximum 6 dogs)

Tuesday 6:15-7:15pm: Nose Work (maximum 6 dogs)

Tuesday 7:30-9pm (including set-up): Rally Practice (maximum 6 dogs)

Behavior classes starting July 21/22:

Instructors: Rose, Claudia

All classes will run for seven weeks, and end Sep 1/2.

Wednesday 5-6pm: Puppy 2 - Kindergarten

Wednesdays 6:15-7:15: Elementary School **FULL**

Thursday 5-6pm: Foundation Class (first week: 6-8:30pm without the dogs)

Thursday 6:15-7:15: Puppy 1 – Preschool (first week: 6-8:30pm without the dogs)

Thursdays 7:30-8:30: Foundation Class (first week: 6-8:30pm without the dogs)

Agility classes starting July 24:

Instructors: Claudia, Kat, Heather

Saturday 10am-12pm (class 10:30-11:30am): Agility Puppy/Beginners

Saturday 11:30am-1pm (class 12-1pm): Agility Skills Training

Lunch break: 1-2pm

Saturday 2-4pm (class 2:30-3:30pm): Agility Sequencing

Saturday 3:30-5pm (class: 4-5pm): Agility Trialing 1

Saturday 5-6:30pm (class:5-6pm): Agility Trialing 2

Behavior class starting Aug 11th:

Instructor: Claudia

High School runs for 4 weeks and ends Sep 1st.

Wednesday 7:30-8:30: High School

Flyball class starting Sep 9th:

Instructors: Karla, Linda

Flyball runs for 4 weeks (2hrs each week) and ends Sep 30th.

Thursday 5-7pm: Flyball

Upcoming classes:

Aug 17 and 24: Rehearsal for the State Fair demonstration (here at the Regine Dog Training Facility, outside)

Sep 8/9: Start of Puppy 1 and 2, Foundation Class, Elementary School, Tricks 'N Clicks

3) HOW TO SIGN UP FOR THE CLASSES:

It's easy!!! On our webpage www.bettercompanion.com, use the menu bar on the left. You'll find a button "Classes", with the subtitle "Registration", which brings you directly to the **one registration form for ALL classes**. After clicking "enroll" at the end, you'll get to the pricing and payment page, which explains all payment options, policies, and allows you to pay online, too. You can also check out the pricing page first, to learn about prices, payment and cancellation policies. Take advantage of our **pre-registration fee** by signing up a minimum of **14 days before the start of your class**. Please read our cancellation policy on the pricing page – you almost can't lose!

Puppy 1 Preschool clients, please remember you can also purchase the **Puppy School Packet**, including P1 and P2 class. You only have to commit to the seven weeks of P1 class, and will receive a voucher for P2, valid for 1 full year! For P2 voucher holders, the voucher will be your payment. After you fill out the registration form for P2, you can email us the voucher number, mail the voucher to us or drop it off at the facility.

Reserve your spot! Please note **our registration policy: Only the payment will hold your spot**. Spots are reserved in the order we receive payment for them. **Always sign up for the class you want to join**, even if it could be full. Only the payment will keep you on the waiting list, in case somebody else drops out before the class starts. **Your payment is never lost**, even if the class is already full. Your payment will 1) save you a spot at the class, or 2) save you a spot on the waiting list, or 3) can be carried over to a later class, or 4) can be refunded if I couldn't get you in the class you chose, or 5) can cause me to open an overflow class ☺. Just as a note: I sometimes get up to three dogs per class moved in from a waiting list before the class even starts. **We now can take credit card payments over the phone and at the facility.**

4) SOCIAL HOUR - OPEN PLAY TIMES:

Come with your dog for one hour of dog play and dog owner social time. Each dog must be supervised by an adult handler, one dog per handler only. Vaccinated dogs only (5-way/DHPPi, dogs over 6 mo: Rabies, Bordetella). We also require having the dog dewormed or a fecal sample checked.

Please note the following dates when we'll be **closed for Open Play Times:**
Sep 6: No OPT, no daycare (Labor Day)

First-timers: bring your vaccination papers, we want to see them! Dogs over 6 months, please for the first time come on a Friday, when Claudia and Frank are managing the play times. After that, we'll discuss with you which hour will be best and if you can come Mondays as well.

Fee: \$7 at the door or punch card \$35 for 6 visits.

Our Open Play Times (indoors + outdoors) have become a safe playground for dogs of any size due to the newer size restrictions for each group. Only timid and absolutely

non-reactive dogs can be slightly heavier than the group limit. The group from 7-8pm is limited to 8 dogs, and reservations can be made in advance. Just call us and we explain the details.

Every Monday AND Friday:

5-6pm: toy and small dogs and puppies up to 25#

6-7pm: puppies and medium adult dogs 30-50# (giant breed puppies can be heavier)

7-8pm: Large adults over 60# (indoors: 8 dogs max; outdoors: 10 dogs max)

8-9pm: Large Dogs over 60# (if needed)

You can check the web page www.bettercompanion.com for info on classes, facility, and schedule, read testimonies from other students, print out the registration form...

Or contact us by email or phone (see below).

5) REWARD-BASED TRAINING, NOT TREAT-TRAINING

If you have a treat-motivated dog, using treats as a reward might be the simplest solution while training your dog. You could even help your dog getting more interest in toys through the treats. It's also possible to change the value of the plain kibble (dry food) by using treats.

If you have a dog that isn't too interested in treats, no problem for the reward-based training! Maybe your dog likes toys? Not either? If your dog likes nothing more than running towards other dogs, pulling on the leash or chasing squirrels, let's use exactly that for our reward-based training! Welcome to the Premack principle!

Back to scenario #1, the treat-motivated dog, maybe overly treat-motivated. The more your dog likes treats, the faster you should be able to fade them out, letting your dog **'work' for the hope of a treat, not for the expectation**. To keep up this hope, you should never fade the treats out to zero, just to 'less often'. To create that hope, it's important to surprise your dog with a treat when he expected it the least. That is for example when you asked your dog for a behavior without preparing treats first. If your dog thought you didn't have a treat, still showed the desired behavior, and then got a treat, his hopes are now up at any time!

This is also called the **difference between bribery and reinforcement**: bribery is when you first prepare a treat, and then ask for a behavior. "If I give you ice cream, will you wash my car?" Reinforcement is when a behavior gets rewarded afterwards: "Wow, that's a clean car! Can I invite you to an ice cream for that?". So when your dog surprises you with good behavior even though this wasn't a training session and you don't have a treat on you, make sure you tell your dog "YES!" and run to the cookie jar to give her a jack-pot!

Some games can become so much fun in themselves, that they become a reward without treats. When you teach your dog a simple or fun behavior, like “Touch my hand”, “High Five” or “Jump in my arm”, that behavior can be so much fun for the dog, that it will become a reward for other behaviors. I taught my Jack Russell Lucy to jump up into my arms so that I didn’t have to bend down to pick her up, while I had a bad back. She enjoys this so much, that it has become a very sufficient reward for the recall. Come to me and you can jump up in my arm! Sally (my Aussie/Husky) was never a thrilled retriever, not even of balls. But giving her a treat for each ball she brought, made her enjoy the ball game so much, that she now often eagerly waits for me to throw the ball, and runs after it with a passion, to bring it back to me. She only needs a treat reward for that behavior every once-in-a-while.

Lucy doesn’t like eating her plain kibble. So I added two games for her: I ask her for some sits and downs and stands, and offer her the kibble as a reward after that. She’ll eat them then; obviously earning them makes them already more valuable. Another game we play is putting a small amount of kibble in her bowl (I started with 2-5), and rewarding her with a tasty treat when the bowl is empty. Later I used the verbal cue “Eat!” for that behavior. Now when I want her to eat at least half a portion (because my schedule wouldn’t allow me to feed her the next 4-6 hours, and she might get sick over an empty stomach), I ask her to “Eat!”, and when the bowl is finished, she gets a cookie. Often she looks at me proudly after finishing her bowl, and I sometimes give her a cookie for that.

Now what if your dog wants something else much more than your cookie? Let’s say you’re on a leash walk, and another dog appears. Now your treat is totally uninteresting, because the other dog is all your pooch wants. There’re two solutions to this:

- 1) The strange dog represents a distraction to your dog that’s beyond her capabilities to cope with – at this time or point in training. Move away from the other dog, to a distance where your dog is again interested in you and the cookie, but knows that the other dog is still there. This is called working below the threshold. Now you’re at your dog’s training level, and working at this level, will enable you to get closer and closer to the distraction over the weeks. The threshold will move up, and your dog will work for the reward of treats even if the other dog is nearby.

- 2) Use the strange dog as the reward itself! You want your dog to walk on a loose leash, not to pull, and to be responsive to you. So, if your dog comes back to you from the end of the leash, praise your dog and take a step forward. If your dog pulls, stop, or even take a step backwards. This is a direct consequence to the dog’s behavior. His behavior influences the outcome directly. I used this behavior with my dog Maggie (a Greek stray), when she pulled me to her agility classes. I stopped, waited for her to check back with me (which caused the leash to slack), and then took one step forward. It took several weeks (class once a week), until she realized she’ll only get to where she really wants to go, if she keeps a slack in the leash. This reward system is called the Premack Principle. If your dog is very interested in the other dog, and won’t check in with you at

all, then you'll need to start at a greater distance, as described under 1) using the treat reward.

Even the chasing of a squirrel can be used as a reward. A nearby squirrel won't draw your dog too far away from you, since it'll run up the next tree. To be certain not to lose your dog to a squirrel hunting frenzy, you can start using a long line. When there's a squirrel present, ask your dog for a simple behavior, then reward your dog with a "chase it!", and allow him to chase the squirrel up the tree. Then call or reel your dog back to you, and repeat. Your dog will learn that it's fun to be out with you, his partner in the squirrel chase, and become more obedient specifically around squirrels.

Have you used the Premack principle already, maybe not knowing that you did? Send us your story about when you successfully used the Premack principle (before or after reading this story), and we'll publish it in a future newsletter!

Happy training,
Claudia
Claudia Sihler, CPDT-KA
(Certified Professional Dog Trainer)

Your BetCo Team at
The Better Companion - Regine Dog Training Facility
Claudia Sihler, CPDT-KA
Frank Sihler, Iditarod Finisher
Cindi Dupuis (office)

(907) 357-2521
betco@mtaonline.net
www.bettercompanion.com
1400 E Regine Ave, Wasilla, AK 99654