

Protocol for Training Dogs in the Shelter

All dogs need some amount of training and shelter dogs are no exception, Training the shelter dogs not only makes them more adoptable but also provides them with socialization with humans and mental stimulation.

Positive reinforcement methods will be used to train the shelter dogs. This involves rewarding the behavior you want and preventing or ignoring the behaviors you don't.

It is not acceptable to use physical punishment of any kind on a shelter dog. The dogs are under enough stress in this environment and the addition of negative experiences with their caretakers will increase the stress.

Methods

There are several methods of positive reinforcement training that are acceptable for the shelter dogs. Lure/reward training and clicker training are preferred.

Lure/reward training involves using a food lure to help the dog move into a desired position (such as a sit). Once the dog has moved into the position, the reward is given. A verbal cue should be added to the behavior.

Clicker training involves using a sound (the click of the clicker) to "mark" the desired behavior. First you must pair the sound of the clicker with the delivery of a treat (just 2-3 times will do it) and then the click will forever mean: "what you just did when you heard the click earned you a reward". Marker-based training is very effective because the dog learns exactly what earns reward. A verbal cue should be added to the behavior. Please refer to www.clickertraining.com for more information.

Training Sessions

Training sessions should be short (no more than 5 minutes at a time) and repeated several times throughout the day. Training should also be incorporated into all walks (i.e. asking the dog to sit before opening the cage door).

Tools:

Flat buckle collars, martingale collars, head halters, and body harnesses are appropriate gear for walking shelter dogs.

Choke collars, pinch collars, and shock collars will not be used on any shelter dog.