

## Chasing

Chasing is an innate and self-rewarding behaviour that dogs engage in when playing, hunting or herding. Although some chasing is fun and harmless as well as great exercise, chasing vehicles is dangerous and chasing prey can lead to injuring or killing the animal. And some people and animals are afraid of dogs and will panic if chased. When a dog is in flight it tends to be high in energy and highly distracted making it difficult to get the dog's attention or response to a cue. Because of this, we need to teach our dogs *what* it can chase and *when*, while instilling a few valuable cues that can be used when necessary. Our dogs need to learn that chasing is not a right – it's a gift we give them under specific circumstances only.

### Solutions

- Provide sufficient exercise to keep your dog's energy level under control.
- Supervise your dog whenever you're in an area where a chase may occur.
- Take precautions to prevent escape from your yard, the dog's collar or leash. Make sure your collar fits snug enough that your dog can't back out of it. If your dog tends to escape from its collar or harness use a sensible/sensation harness that has a ring at the dog's chest. Attach the clasp of your leash through both the chest ring and the ring on the collar to prevent escape.
- Control the environment to prevent inappropriate chasing by not allowing your dog off leash in an area where a chase may occur without a solid safety and training plan in place.
- Teach your children not to run around your dog unless you are proofing it to that particular distraction.
- Practice chase games paired up with recalls, teaching your dog to stop chasing and come to you on cue for a tasty reward.
- Create a reliable recall with distractions that can be used when needed. (See *Recall* handout)
- Use a lifeline (long leash) while training your dog in an unsecured environment.

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- Interrupt and re-direct your dog while it's **thinking** about chasing – before the chasing actually begins - because it's more difficult to interrupt your dog while it's in flight. Call your dog and instruct it to do something else.
- Desensitize your dog to everything that triggers your dog's chase drive. (See *Systematic Desensitization* handout)
- Counter condition your dog to each trigger. Teach your dog to feel calm instead of excited in the presence of the chase triggers and to perform an incompatible behaviour when it feels the desire to chase. (See *Counter Conditioning* handout)



- Teach a reliable “leave it” cue. “Leave it” means your dog is to remove itself from whatever it's focused on therefore this cue can be used to prevent the chase. (See *Leave It* handout)
- Teach a reliable “drop it” cue. If your dog chases and catches a bird or animal you'll need a “drop it” cue to remove the animal from its mouth and potentially save its life. (See *Drop It and Take It* handout)
- Teach a reliable down stay. Teach your dog to hold a down stay as people and animals pass by at a slow pace. Then gradually increase the speed at which the person or animal passes by. (See *Self Control Exercises* handout)