

Drop It and Take It

This exercise is designed to prevent possessive aggression and/or re-direct a reactive dog. If the dog is already possessive aggressive, read Book Twenty-Eight "Possessive Aggression".

Begin by presenting the dog with a toy. While it's holding the toy in its mouth, approach with a treat that's more valuable to the dog than the toy. In a happy voice, give your cue to "drop it." When the dog drops the toy for the treat, lure it away from the toy using the treat, pick up the toy and hold it behind your back before rewarding it with a "good dog" and the treat. Then, offer the toy back with a "take it" cue.

Repeat this exercise three times then take a break before repeating the exercise. When your dog is happily dropping the object for the treat, begin giving the cue without offering the treat first. If the dog hesitates, take a treat out of your pocket, show it to the dog and put it back in your pocket. When it drops the toy, repeat the above pattern.

Another way to eliminate the treat is to place the treat on a counter instead of in your pocket. When your dog is happily dropping the toy for the treat, take one step away from the counter so that you have to move a little further in order to get to the treat. With each repetition, you'll move further away from the counter. In the end, you'll be able to take the toy from the dog in the living room before proceeding to the kitchen to get the treat.

Once your dog is reliably dropping a toy of low value without the need for a treat, move on to another object of low value. Always begin with objects of low value to the dog, gradually increasing the value as you move from object to object. If you experience resistance at any time throughout the program, return to your last point of success and proceed more slowly.

References

Dr. Ian Dunbar, Seminar notes Puppy Training 1990