

Behind the Scenes

With Susan Garrett

What Reinforcer When?

In Behind the Scenes this month, we see what reinforcers Susan keeps in her buckets. The rewards you use for your dog need to be age appropriate, appropriate for the behaviour you are rewarding, and something your dog considers reinforcing.

Puppy Tugs

For puppies, Susan uses really long toys that are easy for a puppy to grab and engage with, and will keep the puppy's mouth away from hands.

Bungees

A bungee is introduced as the puppy gets older. Bungees are great to attach to other toys, and the 'give' helps us when tugging with our dogs. A bungee alone can be held tight in the hand so it is not in the dog's view if you are carrying a tug when handling.



Long toys are great for puppies



Join toys together for more length



Bungees can be attached to other toys or used alone



Crunch N Tugs are a toy many dogs love

Activity Appropriate

Long handled tugs are excellent rewards to use for reinforcement out of tunnels etc, as the handle makes the toy easy to place appropriately. Toys on long handles are also good to use for rewards while you are working on a retrieve.

Toys that sit up off the ground are excellent to use on a jump grid, for example, so your dog can easily pick up the toy and not drive his head into the ground when coming out of the grid.

A ball is appropriate to reward a dog at a long distance away. Practice your throw so the ball drops in over the dog's head and in front of him to reward. You can also use your verbal cues to ask your dog for behaviours while he is on the way to the ball so he does not drive hard and fast down onto it. Balls are used sparingly as they are not 'interactive'. If you do use balls, look for way to include you in the reinforcement.

Where you are training also determines the choice of reinforcer. If you are training in dirt, a toy like a cow milker that will not hold the dirt and can be easily cleaned is ideal.

If you will be holding a toy in your hand when you are training (handling sequences for example), use a small toy that can be hidden in your hand and used as a surprise reward for your dog.



A long handle makes a toy easy to place



Toys that sit up off the ground are good for jump grids



Balls can be thrown to reward at a distance



Cow milkers can be thrown, tugged, and are easy to clean

Blog resources covering the use of balls

Retrieve Games: <http://susangarrettdogagility.com/2009/08/retrieve-games/>

Fido Fitness: <http://susangarrettdogagility.com/2009/08/fido-fitness/>

Using Food

When you are training with food reinforcers remember that you need to have transfer of value from the food. It is important to keep ItsYerChoice (IYC) in mind so make a habit of having your treats out in view when you are training. You can review ItsYerChoice in Surprises in Agility Nation: <http://www.agility-nation.com/topics/the-itsyerchoice-game/>

Susan uses a bait pouch but primarily only at trials. It can be easily placed on the ground or thrown to friends when it's time to head into the ring.

Training aprons can be an excellent option to store a variety of treats, and phone for timing, when you are doing body awareness work.

The use of a training pouch or apron come with the caveat to use sparingly and only when appropriate, otherwise all of the value your dog has for food will transfer to the pouch or apron and not to you.



Keep your treats out in view - practice IYC!



Bait pouches are good to use at trials



An apron can be used when working on body awareness

Website Resources

4MyMerles: <https://www.4mymerles.com/>

Dog Dreams Toys: www.dogdreamstoys.com

Tough Tugz: <http://www.toughtugz.co.uk/>

Canis Kilt: <https://caniscrbs.com/products/canis-kilt-dog-training-pockets>

Cow Milkers: These are also known as dairy milker inflations and can often be sourced from dairies. Many dog toy providers stock cow milker toys. You can also google 'cow milker toys'.

Bait Pouch: The brand of the bait pouch Susan showed in the video is from Outdoor Dog and has a magnetic clip and space to hold a clicker. If you google bait pouch, or treat pouch, you will be sure to find a style that suits you.

