



Sussex Brighton and East Grinstead Branch

Registered Charity No. 206630

PREY DRIVE TRAINING

STEP 1: Ditch the bowl

Animate the food and look at what most animates your dog. This exercise aims to build up those good experiences with you, making you more valuable and food more valuable and so it overpowers the environment. If dry fed, use one of your dog's meal your dog's meal allowance (such as breakfast) to build up good experiences with you, so they will pick you over the squirrel/bird etc. If not dry fed, use some low value treats or kibble.

- Simulate elements of what they like about the movements of animals, so start by throwing and encouraging your dog to catch it. Try different positions.
- Next cage the food for your hand on the floor and then flick food away to simulate the darting movements.
- Lure your dog around with the food then throw it so they can get it. Most important thing is that it should be fun and animated.

STEP 2: Chase me

To chase is a natural behaviour in dogs. It is not a behaviour that can be extinguished entirely, but if we can meet the same chasing need as the bird/squirrel/cat/small dog etc, but make us even more valuable using food/toys etc, they will over time, with lots of good experiences in the memory bank, choose us over the prey animal (or animal they perceive as a prey animal) etc.

- Take some pieces of food, show your dog you have them, then throw the food on the floor so the dog can eat them.
- Just as they are finishing that food and their head starts to lift, run in the opposite direction for a few seconds saying "chase me"!

- Once your dog catches up to you, drop a few more pieces of food on the floor and repeat, running away saying chase me, then dropping food etc.

STEP 3: Orientation game: look at me

We are now going to add in the step that encourages our dog to check in with you and not the environment.

- Throw some food away from you and when your dog chases after it, wait for them to look back at you and the moment they do, use your marker word “yes” and then throw some more food in the opposite direction.
- Wait for them to look back at you and mark with your marker word and then throw the food again.
- Repeat this trying to get faster in between marker words.

STEP 4: Be the squirrel

The reason that prey animals can be so rewarding for our dogs, is their lack of availability. They just appear and then move away, sometimes at a pace. We need to meet this need in our dogs more regularly, but by using ourselves, not a bird or squirrel etc.

- Get a tuggy toy of some description. Ideally one that can drag along the floor behind you. Scatter food in one room of your house and when your dog is eating it, run out of the room with the toy dragging behind you and into another room.
- As soon as your dogs chases you and catches up to you reward them with a tug on the toy, which simulates the chase and then actual catch of the prey.
- After a few seconds of tug, scatter some more food and then repeat, run out of the room dragging the toys etc.

Extra help

If you are struggling please get in touch with a qualified behaviourist. These can found by copying and pasting the following link into your web browser:

<https://www.rspca.org.uk/adviceandwelfare/pets/general/findabehaviourist>