

Pack Leadership

Pack Leadership is one of the most important components of dog training, and living with dogs.

Dogs are, whether we like it or not, pack animals. They are also prey driven animals---in that, in order to survive, they must hunt and kill.

Understanding this, and understanding how dogs think, and having the ability to communicate it to owners, will provide you the means to becoming a good dog trainer.

If you have ever had the opportunity to watch a pack of wolves or dogs in the wild, you had had a delightful experience. If you have ever seen them bring down a deer and eat, you have had an outstanding, once in a lifetime experience. I have had that.

While observing a pack of coyotes killing a deer and eating it, it was obvious that the leader of the pack ate first, then, the second in command, then the pups, then the rest of the pack was allowed to eat.

If an owner does not think that they have a problem, ask them the following questions:

- While on a walk, is your dog out in front, pulling you down the street?
- Does your dog go through doors ahead of you?
- Do you serve your dog dinner before you eat your own?
- Does your dog sleep with you?
- Do you wrestle or play tug of war with your dog and let it win?
- When visitors arrive, does your dog greet them before you do?
- Does your dog put up a fight if you try to cut its toenails?
- Does your dog bump your hand to get petted? Do you then pet it?
- Do you let your dog choose the time and place for relieving itself?
- Must you repeat commands to get your dog to listen?
- Does your dog steal your possessions then play keep away?

If you have answered yes to a number of these questions then you may have unwittingly handed over the title of "leader of the pack" to your dog.

You must reestablish pack leadership in the dog's mind. To do this, you must mimic the actions of a leader.

When a dog feels leadership coming from its owner, it will eventually be all of the following:

- Relieved to be free of the responsibility of controlling everything and taking care of the pack.
- More Secure
- More Confident
- Less worried about strangers, both human and canine
- More likely to interact happily with family and friends
- More obedient
- Less aggressive

Tenants of Pack Leadership

1) Leaders of the pack eat first. Period. That is his right. It indicates to those in and out of the pack just who the leader is. Humans on the other hand, do not generally behave this way.

GOAL: TO CONTROL THE FEEDING OF YOUR DOG

--you must determine the time and place for feeding your dog.

--The feeding procedure must be orderly. The dog must DO something in exchange for the food.

--Your dog must see you eat first, even if it is only a snack

SOLUTIONS:

A) Feed Rover after you eat

B) Put Rover on a regular feeding schedule.

---once or twice a day, 15 minutes down, then pick it up and put it away.

---The dog will not starve itself to death, and will eventually eat. The owners must be firm on this and not give in.

---Free Feeding often creates a picky eater

---Scheduled feeding will cause Rover to look forward to meals.

C) Feed multiple dogs in order of your choice of dominance.

D) Handle the dogs' food bowl fairly.

---Although, the owner has the right to pick up the dogs food bowl without any threat

of

violence from the dog, they have to be fair about it. In a pack of wolves, once the entire pack is eating; the leader does not interfere with their meal. That would be unfair, and leaders are always fair. Food Bowl aggression/possessions is often owner caused.

E) Retrain a Food Aggressive Dog

---A dog that has serious problems with anyone or anything that goes near it's food bowl, certainly does not respect its owner or see him as a leader.

1) Owners need to begin by hand feeding all the dogs food for at least 2 weeks

Owners need to use a new food dish, and place it on the counter away from the dogs reach. Then with them sitting in front of the dog, tell the dog to sit, and feed it a piece of kibble. If the dog reacts aggressively simply put the food away and walk away till the next meal.

2) After 2 weeks of this feeding (yes it is time consuming, but necessary) the procedure changes. Place the empty food bowl on the floor. Fill another bowl with the dog's food and place it on the counter. Take one handful of

food

out of the Your bowl and place it in the dogs' bowl. Never give him anymore until he eats what you have given him. and looks to you for another handful. Again, if the dog reacts aggressively, or obnoxiously, the food goes away until the next meal. This takes place for at least 2 weeks, longer if necessary.

3) The final step is to make Rover sit, then put down his bowl with food in it. While he is eating, place a piece of chicken or cheese in this bowl. Do this two three times during the feeding and continue to do this for the next 6-8 weeks. IT DOES NOT NEED TO BE A BIG PIECE. The SIZE OF A DIME IS LARGE ENOUGH. What you have done is to teach Rover that food is coming from and that good things happen when you approach his bowl.

Do not be confrontational or antagonistic with a food aggressive dog. You will only make the situation worse. Simply walk away if necessary, and since the food is on the counter, you don't have to attempt to take it away from the dog.

2) Leaders Initiate and Control Interactions

--GOAL: TO initiate and supervise the Dogs Interactions

The owner must determine and supervise interactions the dog has with the outside world, including those with strangers, other animals cars, and so on. IF this goal is successfully completed; it will send a strong signal to the dog that you are the leader and are in charge.

To begin with, the dog needs to be kept on leash at all times, and needs to have a handle on controlled leash walking and sit/stay.

Solutions:

- A) Determine when to take your dog outside
 - First thing in the AM
 - Soon after each feeding (especially for puppies)
 - Midday, if possible
 - Right before bedtime
- B) Take control of physical contact with your dog
 - If your dog attempts to cajole you into petting it. IGNORE IT and walk away.
 - When YYOU decide it's time to pet the dog, make it do one simple thing first, such as sit.
 - You should decide when to end the petting. When you do, say "Good Rover" and simply walk away.
- C) Train your dog to greet properly
 - Sit/Stay, ON LEASH AT ALL TIMES!
 - IF the dog breaks the sit/stay, issue a proper and effective leash correction and re-issue the command.
 - Continue until the dog remains seated while the person approaches.
- D) Tone down greeting and departure rituals

3) Leaders maintain a dominant posture.

GOAL: To Maintain A Dominant Posture

Solutions:

- A) Maintain an Upright Posture
 - Practice elevating yourself over the dog, on a regular basis. IF the dog is standing in the middle of the room, walk over, and stand next to it. Don't pet it or pay any attention to it. Just stand there. Then ask the dog to sit.
 - If you are sitting have it lie down on the floor next to you.
 - Do not allow Rover to rest in an area that allows him to be higher than your position. In other words: NO FURNITURE PRIVLEDGES.
- B) Prevent from jumping up, leaning, stepping on your feet or mouthing.
 - Walk to Rover, and pet him on the head. IF he jumps up, don't yell or get angry, simply ignore him and turn your back on him. After a few moments turn back around, and ask him to sit, and reward him. If he jumps up again, ignore him. Keep this up. He will get the message. You can also issue a leash correction for breaking the sit.
 - When he jumps on others, make sure that you have the leash and collar

on him, and correct him hard.

****Do not say a work.** We want him to think, “every time I jump on someone, I get bit on the neck, so maybe I shouldn’t jump on people” NOT: “every time mom/dad is around I am corrected for jumping on people, but they are fair game if my owners are not present.

4) Leaders Go First

****A TAUT LEAD TEACHES THE DOG SEVERAL THINGS. AND NONE OF THEM ARE GOOD!**

a) Dog doesn’t have to pay attention to where you are or what you are doing. He knows exactly where you are, precisely because of the pressure on the lead. IF the lead were loose, he would be forced to pay more attention to just where you were.

b) A taught lead can also be a signal that you are afraid of something, hence the dog may begin to react aggressively to whatever he perceives you to be afraid of.

GOAL: To Show Rover that you, the Leader, always goes first.

- a) Teach Rover to walk on a loose leash
- b) Teach Rover that you go through doors first
- c) Teach Rover to come when called.

5) Leaders control their space and possessions

GOAL: To reclaim your territory

- a) Keep Rover off the bed and the furniture
- b) Keep rover out from under tables, chairs and out of corners
- c) Teach Rover that everything in the home belongs to you
- d) Teach Rover the “LEAVE IT” Command
- e) Teach Rover to move out of your way
- f) Control where Rover relieves himself.
- g) Limit Rovers freedom in the home.

6) Leaders Protect Their Pack

GOAL: To provide a safe environment for your dog

- a) Safeguard Rover’s Environment
- b) Provide rover with a proper diet
- c) Provide Rover with proper vet care
- d) Exercise your dog

7) Leaders are calm, fair and confident

GOAL: Provide an atmosphere of fairness

- a) Avoid extremes of emotion
- b) Don’t set Rover up to Fail
- c) Don’t hold grudges
- d) Know what to expect
- e) Decide and Act
- f) Be Consistent
- g) Manage the relationships between dogs in your household.

TO SUM UP LEADERSHIP:

- 1) Eat Before Rover
- 2) Sleep Higher than Rover
- 3) Initiate and Control Interactions
- 4) Go first, not last
- 5) Control all space in the house
- 6) Maintain a dominant posture
- 7) Begin and end play
- 8) Be fair, calm and confident
- 9) Be a good provider and protector