

# How to use the No Reward Marker without using the word NO!

We warm the dog up with several quick games of GOOD and FOOD, then play the game, like Simon Says!

Step 1

The dog needs to be primed and really keen!



Repeat step 1-3 until the dog doesn't move

Repeat for a week or maybe two to give the dog the chance to know that Ohoh means No Reward coming! That's why it's called a No Reward marker (NRM).

We always finish with the dog on a WIN! Ideally let the dog finish on 4-5 wins of GOOD and FOOD, then offer some other FUN.

This way he KNOWS that when he hears Uhoh, there is nothing in it for him, but he can DRIVE his owner to pay up by sitting STILL!

## POISON PROOFING Part 2

SUCCESS! So, you worked your dog through the programme as outlined last month, and YES! You have conditioned your dog, your thinking and quickly reacting dog to avoid food, TO REFUSE FOOD unless he gets the cue to take it!

Your permission to take the food can be any word that you choose! We have used TAKE IT or YES and GOOD only as an example of the training technique!

From here, you can "set your dog up" or "PROOF HIM" against picking up bait by making sure that YOU control the consequences! Aha you say, NOW he gets it?

Well, yes, he gets it all right - extra lessons of Happy Training to safeguard his life! Just read on! We don't get physical!

You have him sit or drop, and place the food in front of him saying LEAVE IT! That's right, we use the command LEAVE it again, because we are introducing a new aspect, and when ever we raise the criteria, we make the task easier to accelerate learning, and to SET THE DOG UP FOR SUCCESS! He knows LEAVE or OFF, and he will not touch it!

YOU control the consequences. Should he lunge to take the food, YOU must be quicker and quickly place your hand or foot over the food. Then you silently pick it up and start again. At this stage, HE NEVER gets to pick up the food from the ground! YOU pick it up. Soon you just place the food and say nothing. He will remember the game! He moves? The consequence is: He gets "sweet nothing!"

When you want to have a few "TAKE IT" sessions; you place the food on the ground. He doesn't touch it. You pick it up and give it to him with his cue to take the food! This is another ball game entirely!

We are building up understanding and creating a reliable food refusal without aversive moves any stronger than frustration at not getting the desired cue! Soon you silently place the food one or two steps away. He gets up? OOPS or "Uhoh!" are your response! That's right, you use a NO REWARD MARKER!

This sound, OOPS, or UHOH, tells him that "nice try, but it gets you nothing!" Try again to win your reward! In this case, we will have him work through several refusals before we give him the cue to take it from your hand.

THE "NO REWARD" MARKER: You haven't taught him the NRM, the No Reward Marker?? It is pretty aversive, even though it is NOT a threat, it is not even a reprimand, it only tells him that his response, his behaviour, his move, was incorrect and will not earn the bacon! It is a negative punisher that can stop an unwanted behaviour instantly! It means the response was incorrect, or wrong, it is NOT BAD!

It is only wrong, NOT RIGHT! It doesn't get paid! Try again. If he repeats the incorrect move or response, you help him get it right next time. We want to teach in a manner that the dog understands! Give a little! We use the OOPS or UHOH in the split second in which he gives us a wrong response!

Our dog will very quickly learn that the right response earns him GOOD and FOOD, the wrong response earns him an OOPS and he must try again! He will work at AVOIDING the UhOH!

We did not use this in the beginning of teaching leave, because we wanted to reinforce the fact that he CAN take food ON CUE! At this stage, if he hasn't learned the No Reward Marker earlier on during your basic training using Positive Reinforcement, then we teach it now.

Have him sit. Step one step away and wave a bit of food in front of his nose. If he moves towards it: OOPS and "foodlead, that is lure him, back into position with the food! If he refuses all temptation to break position, GOOD and give him his cue to take it!

Repeat under varying conditions, onestep away, to the side, standing behind and reaching over him - dogs are very very poor at generalisation, and the slightest change in your or his position will require extra training before the desired behaviour is given reliably!

If the NRM is taught early on, it also has the side effect of teaching a neat and reliable STAY!

Remember that YOU must control the

consequences! If he gets up to move towards the food, or in any way breaks position to get at the food, YOU get there first and with an OOPS repeat the exercise! Soon you can offer or place the food silently and because he does not get his cue to take it, he will leave it!

YOU are always in a position to win. He only gets the food from your hand, either your fingers, or thrown by you, but always with the conditioned cue for him to take it.

When he is really steady, you tell him to LEAVE IT and throw a bit of food on the ground! Yes, you gave him the leave it cues again to make it easy and to ensure your success!

SUCCESS BREEDS SUCCESS! You have successfully tied your food refusal in with a reliable stay! There are endless possibilities and variations of the theme! When you can chuck food around and your dog will not touch it unless YOU give permission, you give the cue to take it, you can transfer all this clever learning to a moving dog!

Here you start again, but your Wonderdog knows the TAKE IT and LEAVE IT game, he understands and responds instantly to the No Reward Marker and works his wolfish little heart out to get a reward from you! Working your way through the programme with the dog moving about, "FREE" and just mooching around near you, you practise chucking the food and should he move towards it, you hit him with the sweetly spoken NRM, the OOPS or gleeful UHOH, and he should veer away instantly! Whether in your own garden or on the oval, at the beach or in the park, he is tempted with food and only gets to eat it on cue! That's YOUR permission!

Now it's time to transfer all this knowledge of only taking food from YOUR hands by working with distractors! Work with a non-family member of course! When they offer food, YOU simply do NOT give the cue to eat! It's as easy as that! Should the dog reach for the food, you or the distracter give him the No Reward Marker, the OOPS or UHOH! The only Positive Reinforcement comes from YOU or a family member! Some people actually teach that only THEY, just one person in the family are the bringers of food. Tough on the relationship with the rest of the pack - pardon -

family! Take him through the whole programme again, rewarding several refusals of food offered by the distractor with several WONDERFUL large and ever so tasty and MUCH BETTER rewards given by YOU, on cue! (Permission to take it) To the Dog Trainer using Traditional training, this will sound impossible to achieve. Only people familiar with the use and POWER of Positive Reinforcement will believe, and know that this is so! Your Reward History of Positive Reinforcement has taught your dog that he gets to gobble the goods with YOUR permission!

The final phase is setting your dog up for success by secretly throwing food on the ground and then watching like a hawk for your dog to find it! At this level he should be wary of any food without his cue to take it attached to it! He does not want to hear a No Reward Marker!

He gets the UHOH or OOPS if he moves towards it, and then it is back two steps in your training programme to patiently and lovingly, with much joy and fun in training, consolidate the earlier lessons before you again set him up for success in FOOD REFUSAL in a home and garden set up!

Take it from there, and soon your dog will be as reliable poison proofed as any dog working his way through a poison proofing programme using traditional methods. We do not need pain or fear! We do not need strong aversives when our dogs will WORK their hearts out FOR Positive Reinforcement and work equally hard at avoiding a No Reward Marker of OOPS or UHOH!!

For the Trials Ring, you simply command STAY, and never give the cue to Take it!

Do you know what the most amazing aspect of this style of training really is? The fact that not once was the dog "punished", in the name of training, for making a mistake! When you think it through you will realize that he learned to refuse the food NOT by being physically punished for taking it, except with the No Reward Marker, which after all, IS negative punishment (That's right!!!) but, by EARNING REWARDS for taking it on command, YOUR command, his cue! Clever? Clever! So, here's my advice: Take it or Leave it, HONEY Gross Richardson richardson@efel.net.au