

# "Gotcha" Exercise

*by Terry Ryan*

Isn't it frustrating when you reach for your dog's collar and he backs up? When he plays "keep away" and runs around in circles when you try to put his leash on. Perhaps it's because when you are reaching for the collar, something good ends. He doesn't get the garbage he was about to scarf up on your walk. Maybe it's time to go home and you called him from the dog park, away from his friends. The Gotcha Exercise is to condition your dog to anticipate good things when you grab his collar.

Several different times in your day, grab your dog's collar and give a small food treat. Do this while your dog is safely confined in your home, fenced yard, or on a leash. No name, no word Come. Don't associate ANY word with this action. The only thing we are teaching right now is that hand on the collar predicts a really good food treat. Do it in a variety of situations, for example while on a walk, or when the dog comes up for attention while you're watching tv. Do it any time your dog is hanging around you EXCEPT when the dog is sleeping, eating or distracted.

At first you might need to "jump start" your dog by showing him the treat, but try not to lure him in with the treat. In other words, hold the treat very close to you and make the dog come in close to get it. Do NOT extend the treat toward the dog. The sequence is:

1. Your hand grabs the collar
2. The dog receives a treat.

## **These sequences are wrong:**

Grasp the collar  
Give the treat at the very same time.

Give the treat  
Grasp the collar.

Gotcha will build a good foundation for any attention-based exercise. It will also help get your dog over any bad experiences he's had with collar grabs.