

CFR Secrets for Success

Use of Food in Guide Dog Puppy Training

In the last five years or so we have developed protocols and techniques using food reward based methods that work extremely well for our puppies. These techniques make training enjoyable for pup and handler alike but we must ensure proper application and tracking for the pup's records. To avoid confusion over when it is permissible to use food rewards please keep this guide as a reminder. Actual descriptions of how to apply the techniques can be found in the manual and in handout sheets available from CFRs and leaders. All food rewards are single pieces of the pup's regular kibble unless specifically noted.

All Guide Dog puppies in training receive food rewards from the handler's hand when practicing these two exercises:

- **Food Induced Recall**
- **Go To Bed**

These two techniques are to be practiced throughout the puppy's raising utilizing kibble rewards from the hand. As the puppy progresses through the phases of training in these techniques the food rewards will become less frequent. It is not the intent to wean the puppies off food rewards completely before entering formal training.

Food Protocol

Many puppies will also undergo Food Protocol training for distractions, for confidence issues or to reward calm behavior. This official Food Protocol always involves puppies receiving food from the handler's hands. On very rare occasions high-value food (not kibble) may be utilized for a limited period only, on recommendation of the CFR.

Puppies may only be placed on a Food Protocol by recommendation of the Community Field Representative. The CFR will note and track the protocol for the pup's records and will supervise its application through the club leaders. Leaders may decide to train all handlers in the club in the technique but cannot place individual puppies on the protocol without CFR permission.

Other Uses of Food

The protocols utilizing food noted below may be recommended by the CFR on a case-by-case basis. Leaders may ask permission to place a puppy on one of these protocols if they believe it will help the individual puppy's development. The CFR will document the protocol in the puppy's file.

In these cases puppies may receive a kibble from the handler's hand and/or have food placed in a bowl. In some rare cases, high-value food (not kibble), may be used but strictly by CFR recommendation and on a very limited basis.

- Nail Trimming
- Relieving
- Tie Down and/or Crate Behavior
- Vehicles
- Rollover/Layover
- Dominant Puppies
- Food Possessiveness
- Finicky Eaters
- Headcollar Acceptance
- Jacket Acceptance
- Separation Anxiety

Occasionally, CFRs may recommend the use of food rewards for other behaviors. These exceptions will be discussed with the Canine Resources Manager and tracked in the puppy's records.

When feeding the pup to enhance a behavior doesn't need permission...

Having the puppy either sit or lie down and wait for its meals in a bowl is not considered a special protocol and does not need CFR permission. However, the food cannot be used to lure the puppy into position; it is only given after the pup has been placed in the position then released by the handler to eat.

Feeding the puppy its meal from a bowl in a crate is not considered a special protocol and does not need CFR permission. However, if the puppy has an issue either entering, or staying in a crate and food is being utilized in other ways (food stuffed Kong or hand feeding), then it is considered a protocol and the CFR must be involved.

We all love to see our puppies overcome challenges and be enthusiastic in their responses; food based training definitely augments traditional methods! For Guide Dog puppies it is so important to maintain good manners in the presence of food and to document their development into formal training; for these reasons we ask our raisers and leaders to follow the guidelines in this document. If in doubt, please check with your leader or CFR - we are here to help and support you in raising our puppies!