Behavioral Applications Regarding Canines
Training Efforts to Increase the Adoptability of Canines

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About B.A.R.C.

Behavioral Applications Regarding Canines (B.A.R.C.) is a competitive internship program run through UWEC’s Psychology Department. Students in the B.A.R.C. program implement behavioral training techniques with canines at the local humane association to increase obedience skills and decrease problematic behaviors, with the ultimate goal of improving adoptability potential and long-term adoption placement. Simultaneously, students benefit by gaining hands-on experience applying behavioral principles while providing a community service.

Our focus is to use positive behavioral interventions to increase adoptability. Of these interventions, one primary focus is to improve leash walking behavior as that is the first interaction potential adopters have with the canines. We also aim to teach general obedience and socialization. Other focuses include community education: we create and distribute informational handouts about learning principles and dog training methods to students, potential adopters, and shelter volunteers. As a part of our interventions, we collect data on treatments to determine efficiency of programs and to track the dogs’ progress.

Future Directions

Sample Training Programs

Sit
Raise a treat up and over the dog’s head using a “Treat-Lure Method”
Slowly guide the treat towards their back. This motion will naturally prompt them to sit down (without you physically prompting them to do so).
As the dog moves back into a seated position, give a hand signal (a closed fist that moves up toward the trainer’s shoulder) and say “sit”
Fade out the treat over nose lure after responding becomes consistent.

Down
While the dog is in a seated position, move a treat towards the ground.
A visual cue should be used such as two fingers straight outward moving towards the ground (holding the treat in the hand so the dog can see it).
The dog should crouch to the ground, if you are having trouble getting the dog all the way to the floor you may shape approximations of the behavior by treating the dog for getting closer to the floor.
Once the dog responds reliably, you may start fading the prompt by using just the visual cue while no longer moving your hand as close to the floor.

Stay
Trainer holds a reinforcer in one hand while holding their other hand in the stop position.
The trainer will then take a step back, and if the dog holds their position, will immediately return and reinforce. Continue and increase the distance.
Once the dog holds his position after going 3 paces back for 3 seconds, the trainer begins to fade out use of the reinforcer.
The trainer will begin to show the reinforcer and the visual cue for only 2 seconds, continually decrease until reinforcer is no longer present and the visual cue is only for a second at the beginning.

Walking Program

Begin the walk by saying “Let’s go” once the dog has all four paws on the ground or is seated.
Reinforce the dog with treats continuously while he is walking next to the trainer, this area is known as the “reinforcement zone.” Be sure to reinforce every few steps that the dog remains inside the reinforcement zone. Do not reinforce if he errors and goes outside of the zone.
If the dog starts pulling on the leash, hold your position and remain stationary until he returns to the trainer’s side and immediately reinforce.

For more information about the B.A.R.C. program, contact Dr. Lagorio at lagorich@uwec.edu, or email the group at uwecbarc@gmail.com