

OBEDIENCE TRAINING

You know*Sit.... Down....Come....* those basic things.

Why is this a good idea for every single puppy and/or dog whether an inspiring Obedience Champion or the puppy or rescue that will be raised in a wonderful pet home?

I got to thinking about this for no particular reason except an interesting incident came to mind recently. While I was showing Morgan in breed I took the opportunity to have professional photographs taken while she was “all dolled up”. While Morgan was up on the photographer’s platform sitting on the spot I asked, and watching me from a distance to get a certain head angle, a breeder/handler in the area passed by and happened to notice. She commented in a tone of amazement, “*How did she get her to do that!*” I must say, I was equally amazed that a “dog person” would make a statement like that.

But, then I realized that breeders who show in the conformation ring train very differently than I do. Earning a Conformation Championship requires its own special set of handler skills and training techniques. Not very many obedience dogs can stand as beautifully or gate as well as a conformation dog. As most of you know my respect for the breed ring went way up when I learned to show Morgan.

Many Agility enthusiasts don’t want to “ruin” their dog’s drive by training traditional obedience exercises. Later, they run into trouble in the agility ring because of their dog’s lack of basic training. I’ve seen agility dogs that could be wonderful if their owners had only taken some time to also train a stay for the start line for example! To their credit, most agility enthusiasts realize soon that basic obedience is not the dirty word they think it is. In my experience, Mr. and Mrs. John Q. Public are overly impressed when they see a dog perform a basic sit stay for a treat. I’ve seen this way too often during my years and it is starting to depress me. In this enlightened age, I feel that Basic Dog Training 101 should be the standard, not the exception. Do they really expect that little from a pet? Perhaps this mindset contributes to the problem of so many dogs in animal shelters. I think it does.

Because I am what is commonly called, in the dog world, an “obedience” person – one who loves to train my dogs for competition as well as for the fun of training; perhaps it is I who needs an attitude adjustment or a reality check. Well, I don’t like this reality.

We sell our dogs’ short by not giving them these basic skills. For me training a dog and seeing the light bulb go on is a wonderful feeling. There is so much more to a dog than a warm body and wiggly tail. Training brings out the personality of a dog or puppy and the confidence they gain serves them well in this confusing world of ours. Also, the human/animal bond must multiply tenfold with the interaction of training.

Puppy obedience is so much fun – it is all done with food and luring. A cookie by the nose raised up, causes the puppy to sit. A cookie tucked under their chin/chest causes them to lie down. Soon they realize that this is a great way to get a treat and with a bit more training.....I wonder what possibilities await!

Perhaps members of the MSCM, both as a group and individually, may want to consider promoting and encouraging puppy and obedience classes to all the dogs we sell, rescue and place. A mentally healthy dog is just as important as a physically healthy dog - and I’ll bet it is a happier dog too!

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