

“Be a Splitter, Not a Lumper” – Bob Bailey

Anyone that recognizes that quote is aware of Bob Bailey and his wife, Marian (deceased) and knows of their famously clicker trained chickens. Yes, you read that correctly – they clicker train chickens, but also used operant training methods for dolphins, whales, and many other animals.

FMI: www.hsnp.com/behavior

Hmm, exactly what does that quote mean anyways? I’ve spent a few days talking about it at shows and with friends, and very few people have any idea what I’m talking about.

Clicker trainers are just as much in the dark as are other type trainers.

Simply stated, my interpretation of *“Be a splitter, not a lumper,”* means to break things down into small parts when training. I believe that clicker trainers think in smaller pieces, but this philosophy works with any type of training, with a clicker or without.

None of us would begin to train an obedience “Go Out” in it’s full capacity. We wouldn’t dream of asking our dogs to run 50 feet to the opposite end of the ring, in a straight line; turn and sit, wait for the command before take the correct jump on the left or right side of the ring, come into front position and finish on command. We would break this very complicated exercise into many separate parts and not even think of putting it together till each piece was pretty solid; and then, we would help the dog succeed.

When training problems occur, this simple quote could come in handy in helping us decide where our dog’s training needs help. When we break a behavior down, we make it simpler for the dog to succeed and for us to feel a sense of accomplishment in determining what needs work.

Of course, planning and thought must be given before any attempt is made to train or re-train the dog – think first, plan your action; and, then train.

.... Be a “splitter, not a lumper” !

Lynn Baitinger