



**FOLLOW THE
LEADER K9**

BUILDING FOOD MOTIVATION

When it comes to achieving training goals with our dog, a very strong desire for food is essential. Often times we may use high value treats to increase our dog's motivation for a food reward. Although high value treats are great for training, there are some limitations we may find with them. For example, if we give the dog too many treats they can get an upset stomach, or gain excessive weight, or even develop other health related issues. Also, overusing treats incorrectly may cause a dog to become a picky eater and they may begin to stop enjoying their regular dog food as a result. When we are able to use their regular food we feed them at mealtimes for training, we are able to avoid these undesirable side effects. It is important our dog develops a high degree of desire for all kinds of food, especially their daily allotment of food they typically eat at mealtime.

Benefits of High Food Motivation

Here are just some of the benefits that will come from building food motivation:

- Our dog will find immense value and joy in the training process itself.
- Our dog will readily offer us good behaviors with little to no input from us as they enjoy the work in obtaining their food reward.
- Our dog will readily follow our hand with ease as we lure them into new positions during the teaching phase of training.
- Our dog will stay engaged in the training process longer and with a greater ability to focus on the task at hand even in the face of distractions.
- Our dog will be more likely to remember the new behaviors we teach them and repeat them later on without having the food present.



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Tips for Building Food Motivation

Here are some techniques that will help us achieve success when it comes to building more food motivation with our dog:

- Avoid the temptation to leave a full bowl of food out for our dog to graze from at their leisure. Instead, offer them opportunities to eat part of their daily allotment of food 3-5 times a day. If they are not interested in the food, remove it and offer it to them again later when it is most convenient for us.
- Feed as much of their everyday food as possible throughout the day from our hand for accomplishing basic skills such as making eye contact, following your hand as you lure them, coming when called, waiting patiently, or practicing their obedience commands.
- Offer them the same amount of food each day. If they do not eat all their food one day, do not over feed the next. If they appear ravenous at their last feeding of the day, do not offer them any additional food.
- Put a portion of food in a snuffle mat, puzzle toy, or sprinkle it on the patio or lawn so that they will have to work with their body and senses to obtain the food.

If we are consistent and follow through with these suggestions, we will be certain to find that our dog will obtain the benefits of having stronger food motivation. If we work with a qualified trainer, this process can be greatly facilitated through their expert feedback and coaching. If there are any questions about this process, please do not hesitate to ask at your next training session. Lastly, remember that your dog is so lucky to have an owner like you who is willing to educate yourself on the needs of your animal and how to best show them the way. As always: "We don't blame them, train them."