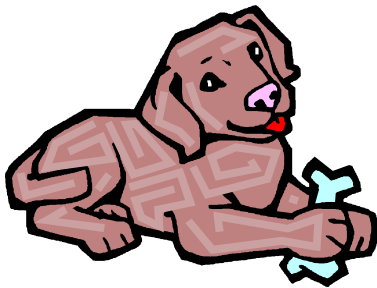


MAT TRAINING

Quite often dogs are not allowed to come inside the house and are living in the yard only because they are behaving uncontrollably and inappropriately inside. This frequently includes jumping up on furniture or beds, counter surfing in the kitchen or simply dirtying the brand new carpet.

Unfortunately, confining the dog to the backyard can bring a number of unwanted side effects. Dogs are social animals and seek the company of their perceived “pack.” In the summer months this is not as much of an issue, as we tend to spend a number of hours every day in the yard giving the dog the chance to interact with us. In winter, however, when it is either too dark or too cold to enjoy being outside, our dog is not getting a lot of time with us. Often, this results in unwanted behaviours such as barking, whining, destructive or escaping behaviour, just to name a few.

The solution to this is generally quite simple. Unless we teach the dogs how we expect them to behave around the house they will not know.

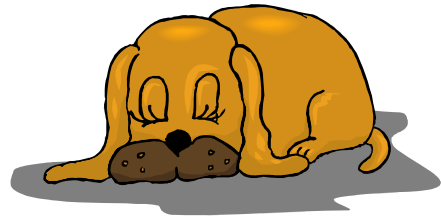


The mat training exercise teaches the dog exactly what we require of them around the house: Lie quietly, chew a toy or treat, and wait till we let them know what else to do.

This prevents inappropriate behaviours like jumping on beds, being restless and noisy, or demanding attention. Another benefit of the mat training is that the mat is portable and can go with you on holidays, to friends’ houses, training class, vet surgery etc.

The way we teach our dog mat training is easy:

- Lure the dog with a treat towards the mat and reward with the treat as soon as the dog steps onto the mat. Repeat several times
- Lure the dog with a treat towards the mat and add your verbal cue 'on the mat' or 'on the bed.' Reward with the treat as soon as the dog steps onto the mat. Repeat several times.
- Without a lure point towards the dogs mat giving the cue 'on the mat' or 'on the rug' and reward with a treat once the dog walk onto the mat. Repeat several times.
- We *always* want the mat to be a rewarding, pleasant place for the dog to be.
- When the dog is not looking, sprinkle some treats on their mat. On their return, they will be pleasantly surprised to have found a place where treats "grow!" They'll want to be around *there* more often!
- Once you have established the mat as a great place to be we will try to extend the time the dog stays on the mat.
- Tether the dog while lying on the mat and chewing a rawhide chew. After 10 minutes remove the rawhide chew from the dog and take the dog off the tether.
- After ½ hour encourage your dog to come back on the mat, put the dog back on the tether and reward your dog with the remainder of the rawhide chew. Doing this we have achieved 2 sessions with longer duration on the mat.
- With time the dog will automatically choose to lie on the mat.
- Teach your dog another great way of staying on the mat by placing the mat near your feet when you are sitting and watching TV at night. Every few minutes sprinkle a few treats on the mat rewarding the dog for quietly laying on the mat (initially use tether if necessary)
- The dog will learn very quickly where he will be rewarded and will choose to be on the mat more and more often.



Mat training can also be extremely beneficial when toilet training your new puppy as it is the puppies' natural instinct to try and keep his/her sleeping area clean so they will do their best not to eliminate on the mat. For further information regarding toilet training please refer to our 'toilet training' information sheet.

If you would like further information about your dog's behaviour please contact RSPCA Animal Training Centre staff on (07) 3426 9928 during office hours.