

**Truro Veterinary Hospital**  
165 Arthur St  
Truro, NS  
(902) 893-2341  
[www.trurovet.com](http://www.trurovet.com)  
trurovet@tru.eastlink.ca

### **Clicker Training Facts**

Our trainer answers the most commonly asked questions while dealing with some of the myths about Clicker Training a.k.a. Positive Reinforcement.

**Q: Isn't clicker training another word for food bribery?**

*A: While some associate the two terms, this isn't true. Positive reinforcement involves the dog earning their resources. While this does include food, I personally never recommend food bribery. The dog is expected to earn their daily food intake along with other resources such as toys, play etc...This is the most humane way to establish leadership while keeping both you and your dog happy.*

**Q: My dog just isn't food motivated, can I still clicker train my dog?**

*A: Absolutely. Most dogs are not food motivated when it is offered in a bowl. This is boring to the dog. Besides, why be in a hurry to eat when it will be there all day? The dog becomes interested in this necessary resource once they realize it is being controlled and doesn't "magically appear."*

**Q: Isn't it cruel to deprive a dog of food?**

*A: Yes, of course it is. But this is not what clicker training is about. A lot of times, people find that they have to be careful not to go over their dogs daily ration. You will learn how to both gain and keep your dog interested very quickly.*

**Q: Why can't I just use my voice instead of the clicker?**

*A: We all find ourselves talking to our pets frequently and it often appears that they hang on our every word. This contributes to a normal and healthy human/animal bond. However, most of the time our pets have no idea what we are saying, as much as we would like to believe they do. An example of this is a dog barks, their owner shouts "be quiet" and the dogs barking becomes worse. The dog is not being defiant, they believe that you are joining in, and like what they are doing, for the words have no meaning to them. They have not been taught how to appropriately respond to those words.*

**Q: If I clicker trained my dog, would I have to use the clicker for the rest of my dog's life?**

*A: No. A clicker is only a training device to teach your dog just what it is that you expect of them. It tends to have a special value to the dog, for they quickly learn what they can expect from you. Your dog will be weaned off of the clicker and certainly will not need a reward to comply.*

**Q: Can I change my dogs behaviour with a clicker?**

*A: Absolutely. I have personally used a clicker to train for control of many forms of aggression, as well as separation anxiety and annoying behaviours (jumping, barking, digging, etc.)*

**Q: Wouldn't it be more beneficial to show my dog who's boss?**

*A: While establishing leadership is important, the manner in which you go about it is just as important. Physical punishment can be very dangerous to both person and dog. Most often, the dog learns that aggression is both acceptable and necessary to maintain their position or move up in the pack. Some will work to avoid pain some will shut down and others will rise to the challenge and fight back. Remember that the boss never argues...they have no reason to, for they control all of the necessary resources.*

**Q: Will I see results immediately?**

*A: Animals, like people learn by repetition. I never promise that any dog will sit, stay, heel, or come when called in just one lesson. However, when the clicker is used correctly, you will see your dog responding to the clicker immediately.*

**Q: Can I clicker train my other pets?**

*A: Yes you can! My motto is "if it is breathing, it can be trained." I have never heard of any animal that didn't respond to positive reinforcement. Again, the clicker must be used correctly. It is not a toy and some make the mistake of using the clicker to get an animals attention.*