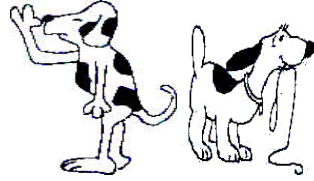
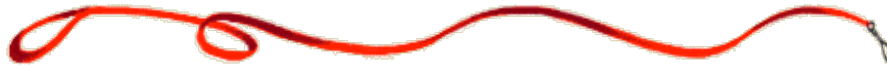




Last Chance Dog Training



Turn This . . . Into This!



No Treats for Tricks

I was sent out on an aggression case that was a real puzzle.

A little old lady and her white teacup poodle. The dog would come running into the room after eating his evening meal. Stop in the middle of the floor, have what appeared to be some sort of epileptic fit. Then growl, run over and bite the little old lady on the ankle. I asked if she had taken the dog to the vet to rule out a brain tumor or something. She had, of course, and they found nothing wrong with the dog. I asked if this was a one-time, after-meal thing. She said no, periodically throughout the evening this dog will have a fit and do the bite thing. So I put a line on the dog so we could have some control over the biting part and we just waited for the next episode. Meanwhile I worked the little dog to see if it was trainable and while a bit stubborn he was certainly trainable. Meanwhile, I spoke with the woman getting some history and trying to establish some sort of pattern. I asked if she had worked with training or commands, she said no but that she had taught the dog some tricks using treats. I asked what sort of tricks and she replied the usual, to dance on his hind legs, to sit up, to lie down, to roll over.

I got to see three more episodes of the seizures when the light bulb went on over my head. I asked one more question: Does she still do the tricks with the dog? The answer was no, he just stopped doing them one day.

That's when I was sure of what was going on. The dog had been doing his tricks all along. This dog would run into the room after his evening meal, go through every trick in rapid succession and then when he didn't get his treat he would run over and bite the woman's ankle and run off.

Now that I had the pattern, it was relatively simple to break it with some obedience commands. This dog had to learn some patience. As with all cute little dogs, people don't require much of them and when they first start any biting behavior or disobedient behavior the owner has a tendency to think it's cute. But, as with all behaviors, things are always progressive; they dog will continue to get worse if you don't take steps to establish yourself as the top dog in the pack.

That's why I'm not a big fan of training with treats. It becomes all about the treat, not the trick or the command or paying attention to you

