

PUT THAT BOWL AWAY!

THE BENEFITS OF MAKING YOUR DOG WORK FOR FOOD - Toys and Feeding by Hand

Dogs need to keep busy. A dog in the wild will spend all of his waking time searching for food. A pet dog spends no time searching for food - he gets it plopped in front of him throughout the day. This leaves a gaping hole in his schedule where he's got nothing to do, and a bored dog is the root cause of many problem behaviors, like destructive chewing, digging, and excessive barking. Feed your dog with toys or hand-feed.

Put his meals in a hollow food-dispensing toy and let him work for his food while you're at work or need some quiet time. He'll use his brain and keep himself busy working for his food. This is a great way to train puppies to chew on toys instead of your furniture or shoes. It also reduces anxiety because it gives a stressed dog something to focus on.

Increase the value of kibble. Using treats is the most efficient and effective way to train a dog. Unfortunately, it can get expensive to buy lots of high-quality treats, and for some dogs it can cause tummy trouble to eat too many dog treats. Hand-feeding your dog will increase the value of kibble in your dog's eyes, and he'll be happy to work for it - food you're going to give him anyway.

No wasted training opportunities. Your dog probably eats several hundred kibbles a day, and if you're dropping those kibbles into a bowl, that's several hundred training opportunities being thrown away. Put his daily ration of kibble into a bag and use them throughout the day for training. Having trouble with sits or downs? You've got plenty of opportunity if you use kibble for training. Use kibble on daily walks to practice loose-leash walking. The opportunities are endless.

Fearful, pushy, or aggressive dog? Your dog is less likely to be fearful of someone who hands him his food every day. Likewise, your dog is less likely to be pushy toward his source of food. Dogs who are aggressive toward people in their household often improve just by being hand-fed because it increases the relationship between person and dog.

Lack of attention. If your dog has a hard time paying attention to you, hand-feeding is an excellent way to build a bond with your dog and help him pay attention to you. Young puppies are very attentive to their mother and always know where she is. They panic if they become separated from her, if only for a moment. That's because mom is the source of their food. She is key to their survival. Without mom there is no milk and the pups will starve. Teach your dog that YOU are his food source. Plopping a bowl in front of him and walking away isn't going to cut it.

