

Top Dog Training Motivators

Learn what makes your dog tick, says “Greatest American Dog” judge Allan Reznik.

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The weekly Dog Bone Competitions on CBS’ “Greatest American Dog” challenge the dog owners to find ways to get their four-legged friends to meet a goal, whether it’s by offering food, praise, or both. Although most trainers today endorse positive training methods, “rewards” don’t have to be edible, says Allan Reznik, the Editor-at-Large of DOG FANCY and Dog World magazines and a judge on the reality show.

“You have to figure out what makes your particular dog tick,” he says. “If your canine is ball crazy, or can’t get enough of his rope toy, use these toys to reward him after a training session. Non-fattening and 100 percent satisfying!”

For many softer, more sensitive dogs, verbal praise is often enough. Lots of “Good boys/girls” given in an upbeat, encouraging tone of voice can inspire such a dog to truly go the distance for you, he says.

Got a food-motivated dog in your household? Keep the treats small and nutritious. Some dogs are thrilled with a piece of kibble.

However, if you need to “up the ante,” cheese, roast beef, chicken, or turkey are all perennial favorites, he says. Apples or carrots will also push many dogs’ buttons.

“Taper off the treats so you are offering them occasionally, as a happy surprise,” he says. “You don’t want to create a situation where the dog will tune you out unless you have food for him.”

In addition, remember to reduce the quantity of food you feed your dog if you are using food rewards. Calories are calories, and chow hounds trained by generous owners can really pack on the pounds.

Reznik will be on DogChannel’s message boards at 10 a.m. PDT on Thursday to talk about the latest episode and field questions from visitors about the show.