

TUG OF WAR and HAPPY TRAINING!

For decades most of us have warned our friends and fellow trainers about the dangers of using tug of war as an outlet for the dog's predatory drive. What did we give the dog instead??

Maybe an enthusiastic retrieve and woe the dog that tried to hold on to his prey without releasing it cleanly on command! True, **there are dogs that get carried away**, there are children that bring out the too enthusiastic play response and power tussle, but this is because the dog and the children have not been taught any RULES! Played by OUR rules, tug of war, becomes a great release of our dogs' Predatory Drive!

It does not TURN him into a predator, he already IS ONE! That's something we all know but just needed to be reminded of! What we need to do, is to channel his drive!

As Canadian behaviourist and Dog Trainer Jean Donaldson says, in her EXCELLENT and absolutely "MUST READ" book: **The Culture Clash:** " When dogs are playing TUG OF WAR, they are not playing against you, they are cooperating with you to make a kill. It is not you versus the dog, it is you and the dog versus the tug of war toy!" She goes on to say that a dog intense on a tug or war game, is indistinguishable in his moves, from a member of a hunting pack, bringing down the prey!

A pack member may have the antelope grabbed by the nose, another may hang onto the tail, while yet another one grabs and holds and pulls like mad, on the hamstring.

This is not about dominance, it is about dinner! In the first couple of paragraphs of my leaflet on **BITE INHIBITIONS**, I have described the tools used to bring down and cut up his prey!

Tug toys are generally pulled on, the dog knows it's not to be eaten, so he does not bite off chunks to eat! He doesn't have to, it's all A GAME! It hones his skills, it burns off his predatory drive, it gives him great satisfaction to work with the boss and play a game of ravaging wolves bringing down the prey!

How safe is this game for us, for our children, for our dogs??

YES! I said for our dogs, because if we make a mistake, we might get hurt, but alas, if THEY make a mistake, it's a trip to the vet and the green dream! Here's one of the reasons why we discouraged owners from playing tug of war games with their dogs:

It has the potential to lead to nasty accidents with a dog getting carried away playing with an over excited child! We teach our children to keep their distance from dogs' teeth!

Ask for the BITE INHIBITIONS leaflet at your sales table. It is mentioned here, in order to safeguard against playing these wild and wonderful dynamic games without understanding what goes on in the dog's mind. We may play in blissful ignorance, until one day, we have a crying child and a condemned dog, a high price to pay for a moment of unsupervised play!

Some of the high energy dogs with high drive for activity, will also be extremely sharp food guarders. This tendency can spill over into the Tug of War Games, so your food guarding should be eliminated separately before your dynamic pooch gets his reflexes and wires crossed! The **SAFE GUARD against FOOD GUARDING** leaflet will be useful to you too!

Before you permit your children to play Tug of War games with a dog, you must establish that he has an absolutely soft mouth! No my friends, he's not an old, gummy, toothless wonder, he simply has his BITE INHIBITIONS in place and plays with absolutely admirable **SELF CONTROL!!!** This is the natural way for dogs to play! Dogs are Pack Animals! It would be VERY detrimental to the pack, if the dogs were in the habit of injuring each other! OK, we rush them to the vet and fix them up, but would their ancestor, the wolf, have maimed his pack and weakened his hunters? No WAY! Injured members of the pack lessened their chances of survival! Every member of the pack is required to be fighting fit!

Let's teach our Kids and Dogs HOW to play Tug of War! In the beginning, we want our dog to be absolutely HOOKED on retrieving! We know that before we send the dog on a

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heart stopping chase to retrieve, we must know that he will bring his prey to us and give it back! **You'll need your healthy happy pup**, a box of treats, an interesting toy!
So, pick up an interesting item and **Play to the RULES!**

- 1: Offer him the toy with "FETCH" He'll take it!
- 2: Say "GOOD", and stroke under jaw!
- 3: Say GIVE and take it from him!
- 4: Say "GOOD" and give him a treat!
- 5: Give him his toy back as you say "FETCH"

Everything we teach, **we work on in blocks of 4 or 5**, so repeat this several times, honing your skills and his technique, then finally, give him several treats and put the toy away.

This great little Retrieving Game is played several times a day, always in our blocks of 4 or 5 repetitions.

Soon you can play this with any toy, changing the object and

including sessions where your dog starts off being a little excited. Let the toy come to life! Whiz it across the floor, let go, let him pounce on it and bring it to back to you for GOOD, stroke, GIVE and then the FOOD He'll soon focus on fetching and giving to hand for the treat and always be ready for more. If his teeth touch you, cry OUCH! That hurts, and stop the game for at least 5 seconds, up to 10 seconds if he was very clumsy! Turn your back on him! This time out cools him down and he learns to control his passion for the game! You can build a great retrieve on this later!

CHEW TOYS are our next goal! He's happily and calmly chewing away, we approach and say GIVE, take it from him and reward with a SUPER treat! **Give him his chew toy back!** As in the original game, repeat in blocks of 4 or 5 and then let him keep his chew toy! We are going to train, not trick him! Never break the dog's trust. Eventually, when you NEED to take something precious off him, he will give it up, YES! You ALWAYS reward him, you're fair! This is **NOT for children** until he is more than 100% SAFE, and **NEVER** for kids **under 12**. **If your dog shows unease or heaven forbid, resentment,** then we need to have an absolutely irresistible treat ready and offer this BEFORE we reach out to take the item away from him! He will be happy to SWAP! Soon you can request the GIVE and then offer food!

There IS a difference! We are **not asking for a confrontation** if the dog is possessive, we simply **change his motivation!** We offer the MEGA TREAT that he now wants, so he gives up the chew toy. He gets the treat AND the chew toy **is given back** to him! After a few repetitions, he will readily give up the chew toy and THEN he gets the treat! Why is it so? Because he understands **the CONSEQUENCE** of his behaviour: Give you what you ask for, and HE GETS A TREAT! Always work in short sessions, 4 or 5 exchanges will have both of you flushed with success! **The Consequence drives the behaviour!**

Never ever physically chastise your dog! Don't let anyone tell you to smack or hit your dog, grab him by the scruff or do any of these "pseudo Alpha things"! Why not? Because **Aggression begets Aggression!** We want to form no connection between over enthusiastic play and any type of fear response which will give us aggression!

Object Exchange Games can become your dog's favourite game, but he is not safe to play this with any children until he is 100% safe with adults, both family, and friends! It is in the dog's nature to guard his food! **It is a matter of SURVIVAL!** He doesn't know that he's onto a good thing for life being owned by you! Recognise this instinct and learn to use his drive! Favourite toys are equally important possessions to him! **Playing SWAP under your supervision** with your by now soft mouthed dog, will create the habit of giving and taking without even a hint of teeth touching our hands: We now have a dog with a **Soft Mouth!!**

Tug Toys include ropes and rings that make handling the toy safe and easy even with a very excitable dog! Set your dog up for an adrenalin rush! Make erratic "prey-moves" with the tug toy and watch your pooch pounce! He'll grab and hold, and you'll both pull, and for the first couple of times, **you reach for a delectable treat and offer him that** with the GIVE! He'll

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release and your **GOOD** and a **new round** of a bit of a tug game is **the reward!** After a couple of gentle games, you can afford to let him become a little more excited, and even so, you gradually shape his behaviour to **INSTANTLY** release on your **GIVE!** First you prompt or lure the "give", and as he gets to know what you're after, you call the "give" cue **BEFORE** you offer the treat! Your dog will growl and roar with the thrill of the kill, and you'll both be hanging on for dear life and dinner! **You win! Always!**

He's putting his whole being into the game, and on your **GIVE**, he releases and is rewarded with a treat **AND** a repeat! If there is a scrape of teeth - you cry **OUCH** that **HURT**, take the toy, turn your back on him and stop the game! Should there be the **slightest hesitation to GIVE up the Tug Toy**, you **STOP THE GAME!** Take the toy, **IGNORE him for 5 minutes.** Let him feel the **CONSEQUENCE** of his behaviour! **This Negative Punishment, taking away something GOOD**, your attention and the toy, is very effective!

You have discovered a weakness, now work on it! Build up, with **FETCH** and **GIVE** games, a reliable "OUT" to the cue of **GIVE** or "out" if you prefer, always **REWARDING** every step in the right direction! Soon he will know how to play **SAFELY!** Join your Predator, in the thrill of the kill with **HAPPY TRAINING!**



Building your Retrieve: With the dog enthusiastically taking just about anything you offer him from your hand, you can give a little throw, just letting the object flit away from your hand, and your pooch will pounce! When he grabs it and returns it to you, praise with, **GOOD**, and stroke under the jaw, ask him to **GIVE** and reward him with a treat! Tease with the toy and throw it just a little further, and when he is really revved up and enjoying the game, call it a day! Give him a treat and put away the retrieve toy! It is **YOURS!** Always stop on a high so that he's panting for more and can't wait for you to commence the game!

The dog that **brings back 5 or 6 different types** of retrieve objects, will become a reliable retriever of just about anything you can ask him to fetch for you! Before you send him on wild retrieves, **teach him with short distance work**, ask him to stay while you place it, return to him and send him! Success every time! This ties in well with your **LEAVE IT GAME**, where he has learned great self control! You can have absolutely terrific **FUN** with house searches for his favourite toy! Error free learning is yours with **HAPPY TRAINING!**