



## **Dog's Choice**

### **Lesson Instructions & Troubleshooting**

**Goal:** The Goal of the Dog's Choice lesson is to ask your dog to make a choice between a handful of food and placing her snout in the muzzle. We are teaching her that placing her snout in the muzzle is the behavior that makes the food come and continues to build value on choosing the muzzle.

#### **What You Will Need:**

- A basket muzzle
- A hungry dog (reduce her portion of breakfast and dinner as required)
- Delicious, high-value food that is cut in cubes that are large enough that they are easy for you to handle. Examples include:
  - Chicken, hot dogs, cheese, steak, pork chops, homemade liver or fish treats. Peanut butter on a spoon. Spray cheese.

#### **Summary of the Game:**

- You will have the muzzle in one hand and a small handful of food in the other – when your food hand is closed all the food needs to be covered to prevent your dog from accessing it.
- You will present both hands to the dog at the same time and about 1 ½ to 2 feet apart
- Your dog has several choices:
  - Place her snout in the muzzle
  - Do nothing
  - Perform a behavior (sit, down, paw, etc.)
  - Pester the hand with the food in it
- If your dog chooses to place her snout in the muzzle IMMEDIATELY feed her 8-10 pieces of food through the muzzle just like you did in The LOVE Connection.

- If your dog chooses to do nothing, pester the hand with the food in it, or perform a different behavior (sit, down, etc.), your job is to stay still and QUIETLY WAIT.
- You will QUIETLY WAIT until your dog gives up on the behavior they are trying (nothing, sitting, pawing, pestering, etc.) and places her snout in the muzzle (even just a jab is OK to start – see Bear’s example in the video).
- AS SOON AS she places her snout in the muzzle you will feed her 8-10 pieces of food from the handful of food through the muzzle just like you did during The LOVE Connection.
- When you finish feeding, pull both hands up and away to reset for another repetition
- Avoid the temptation to reprimand or correct your dog for making an choice other than placing her snout in the muzzle. Let her sort the puzzle out on her own for more meaningful learning.
- Also avoid the temptation to “help” her make the right choice – it will build her confidence to allow her to make choices and figure out that placing her snout in the muzzle to access your GREAT food is the best choice

### **Game Guidelines:**

- Train in a quiet, familiar environment with minimal distractions so your dog can focus on the game (i.e. separate from other dogs)
- Keep each training session short, 2-3 minutes is plenty – use a timer!
- Play the game 1-3 times each day
- Use high value food that makes it worth your dog’s while to make the choice to place her snout and the muzzle and be generous with 8 -15 pieces of food.
- When you are not playing Muzzle Games with your dog, keep the muzzle out of sight and out of reach.
- Try not to use food that crumbles or easily drops on the floor. You want all the value to happen when your dog has her snout in the muzzle and not to start “shopping” on the floor for food.

### **Game Troubleshooting:**

- If your dog sits, lays down or does nothing for 60 seconds +/- pull both hands up to remove the choices, get up and move so your dog has to move out of the sit or down and reoffer the choice.
- If you offer the choice 3 times and your dog continues to sit, lay down or do nothing for 60 seconds +/-, then go back to Lesson 1: The LOVE Connection to build more value for the muzzle.

- If your dog continues to pester your food hand for 2 minutes (*really, it's your choice as to how long you wait. Being patient here is invaluable as your dog is learning to make a choice.*) Some options:
  - Try a lower value food to help your dog choose the muzzle over the food.
  - Return to The LOVE Connection to build more value for the muzzle.

**When to Move On:**

- Play this game 8-10 times over several days. Some dogs may need more but this is a good place to start.
- After 8-10 times and several days of training, move on to Building Duration.
- You can come back and play Dog's Choice at any point to continue to build value and drive for the muzzle.