



## **Please Keep Your Snout in the Muzzle! (AKA Duration Game)**

### **Lesson Instructions & Troubleshooting**

**Goal:** The final Goal of Duration is to teach your dog to hold her snout in the muzzle for 8 to 10 minutes without removing her snout until you release her.

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

- A basket muzzle that easily allows for feeding
- A hungry dog
- 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.
  - A release word to indicate to the dog that a repetition is finished

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

- Take your time with this step. Trying to rush it will only result in your dog having more failures than successes and that will reduce her ability to learn what the game is all about.
- Sit in a chair.
- Brace your left elbow on your left knee (or reverse is if you are left handed)
- Cradle the muzzle in your left hand. Hold it securely.
- Hold as many treats as you comfortably can in your right hand.
- You will present the muzzle to your dog to place her snout in – hold your food hand quiet and still
- As soon as your dog places her snout in the muzzle, begin counting. Start with a count of one – one thousand then immediately feed 3 pieces of food. Count another one – one thousand then immediately feed 3 pieces of food. Repeat 3 times.
- Next count two-one thousand and feed 3 pieces of treat.

- As shown in the video examples, the goal is that your dog remains still with her snout in the muzzle as you repeat the counting game as described above.
- As your dog demonstrates an understanding of the game by maintaining her snout position in the muzzle, you will gradually increase and vary your counting (i.e. 1, 1, 2, 1, 2, 1, 2, 3, 2, 1, 4, 2, 3). Your goal is to get up to a 30 second delay before you reinforce with pieces of food.
- Now that you are delaying the food rewards, you will help your dog build this skill most efficiently by keeping the following rules in mind:
  - As you work with numbers that are getting higher (meaning your dog is waiting relatively longer for the food), feed MORE pieces of food. i.e. a count of 3 will get more food than a 1, and a count of 4 gets more than a 2, and 20 seconds deserves more than 10 etc.
  - Vary the numbers you are counting to up and down a range, and after you count to a relatively higher number, drop back down the scale for an easier length of time.
- Once your dog will keep her snout in the muzzle for longer and longer using a timer may be easier than counting.

### **Game Guidelines:**

- Train in a quiet, familiar environment with minimal distractions so your dog can focus on the game at hand be sure to separate from other dogs
- Keep each training session short, 3-5 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 in the muzzle and be generous when feeding
- 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 that has dropped

### **Game Troubleshooting:**

- If your dog places her snout in the muzzle and immediately pulls it out, be patient and wait until you are able to count to one-thousand before feeding. See the video example with Jubilee.
- If your dog puts her snout in the muzzle but does a lot of tossing her head around or other undesired behaviors – DO NOT FEED her. Remove the muzzle, count to 3 to reset the trial and then present it again. Feed your dog only when she gives you a clean behavior by placing her snout in the muzzle.

- If the dog fails at the same number count (i.e. 5 seconds) 3 times in a row, do more work in the 2-4 range before trying the 5 again.

**When to Move On:**

- Play this game for a number of days, slowly increasing your count up the scale of numbers until you have a 30 second delay before feeding. Some dogs may take longer than others with this skill. Be patient and avoid rushing your dog through the game.