

TRAINING TIP 2: *Hand target*

HOW to train

1 Place your hand gently out a few inches from your dog's nose. If she makes any movement towards the hand, mark with a word like "yes" or a click, and reward.

2 If your dog is uninterested, start with a peanut butter approved by your veterinarian or spreadable treat on your hand. Then, once she's interested in the hand, remove the smeared treat. Add in a word like "touch" and say it just as your dog touches her nose to your hand.

3 Work with your dog until she's able to follow your hand further distances and onto and off of things. Practice the behavior with other people so your dog gets used to touching other people's hands as well.

HOW it helps

Hand targeting prepares your dog to willingly move towards, away from and on or off of objects and directs her focus. Then you can ask your dog to target to get her out of the car or onto the exam table. The hand target also provides a familiar way for your dog to first greet and interact with new people, such as members of the veterinary team. If your dog is distracted by something, such as another dog in the waiting room, the hand target allows for you to help refocus their attention and to get her willingly turn to face you.

BONUS:

Training your pet to hand target can also boost her confidence with novel or seemingly threatening objects. If your dog is afraid of the stethoscope, you can use the hand target to get your dog to willingly approach the instrument and investigate it at her own pace. This makes the novel object more of a familiar part of a game she knows how to play rather than something she fears.

