



WHY DOES MY DOG..... NOT COME WHEN CALLED?

Coming when called is a must when you are out on walks with your dog, especially if you wish to call him away from traffic other dogs and people. If you are unable to control your dog in public you will need to keep him on lead to prevent him becoming a nuisance.

THE SOLUTION ???

The old-fashioned method might have recommended that you chase after your dog and certainly tell them off when you are finally reunited. But just imagine that every time you return home you are verbally and possibly physically reprimanded by a member of your family - you are most certainly going to be reluctant to go home! Reprimanding your dog when they return to you does not actually teach them to come when call, quite the opposite in fact and your negative behaviour can ruin your dog - owner bond.

So what can you do instead?

You must assume at this point that your dog does not understand the word 'come' (or your chosen recall command) as at present you are unable to get him to reliably return to you when using the command on walks. Choose a new word for his recall command that has no previous associations such as 'here'. This will enable you to start from scratch.

From now on each and every time he approaches you systematically reward him with affection, a food treat, or a game. If you call him to you and he comes always reward him, never punish him. You want him to learn first and foremost that when he comes to you something good will happen. Never follow his return to you with something he will not like or the cessation of something he is enjoying. You do not want him to learn that every time he comes to you it results in punishment (being scolded) or the end of his fun. Ultimately you want to teach your dog that 'come' or 'here' is more often than not just a check- in break: he comes, gets a reward and then is released to go back and play.

The following is the foundation of teaching a recall. This exercise should be carried out randomly through out the day whether at home or on a walk. When practising recall the initial sequence of events should be:

1. Prompts: hand clapping, luring, squealing noises be animated but not desperate

2. Dog approaches
3. Command to come e.g. 'here', 'home' and praise enthusiastically during approach
4. Handler takes the dog's collar in one hand - do not hurriedly grab at the collar.
5. Reach into pocket with the other to give the dog a food treat or toy to have a quick game with

I would advise using his daily food allowance as the food reward, however when there are lots of distractions you may need to use something of higher value such as a small cube of cheese or dried liver to encourage his to return to you. Initially reward him every time he returns to you. For times when he runs straight to you when called with no hesitation give him a jackpot reward i.e. more than one high value treat such as chicken, cheese, ham etc

Once he is reliably returning to you can start to only reward his best efforts. Not forgetting the 'Jackpots'.

I cannot emphasise enough how important it is to keep his return to you positive. This will ensure that on the one occasion it is imperative that he returns to you, he will.

Remember:

- When you call him you must make yourself far more exciting than anything else on offer, including other dogs. Be upbeat and animated
- Don't expect him to return to you if you call his name in a monotone voice. You are competing with everything else in his environment.
- Don't expect him to come to you if you are shouting his name in frustration. Why would he want to come to you if you are in such a bad temper?
- Don't run after him, you will be reinforcing his behaviour by joining in / turning it into a game, turn and walk/run the other way.
- Never scold him or tell him off when he does come back - this will only serve as an aversive and he will be less likely to come to you next time. He must want to come back to you.
- Do not let your dog practise running off. If you have not trained a recall you cannot expect your dog to return to you when given the choice between playing with another dog or child or coming back. You can purchase 'longlines' to give your dog the opportunity to run. Longlines are NOT flexi leads.

You may want to read the strengthening your recall sheet if you are still having problems.