



BLUE DOG BAKERY

Healthy Treats for Dogs™



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It feels like just yesterday we were ringing in the New Year, and already it's the beginning of the holiday season. Everyone here at Blue Dog Bakery is thankful for our four-legged friends (and yours), and we hope you are keeping warm as the weather turns chilly. November brings large family dinners and the temptation of feeding table scraps to your canine companions, so I have included an article on how to stop your dog(s) from begging at the table.

Coming up this month, you will also be able to find Blue Dog Bakery at two events (*details below.*) Make sure to swing by to say "hi" or "woof!" and get your On the Go Pack samples and coupons. And as a bonus, take a picture with our brand ambassadors then post it to Facebook! We will send you a coupon for a FREE BOX of treats! Get out there and support your local dog-friendly organizations.

Give those dogs a big hug from me - and remember to turn your clocks this Sunday!

Lara

Congratulations to Tex!

Congratulations to Tex -- our November Blue Dog of the Month!
To read about Tex, check out our [Blue Dog of the Month](#)

feature.

Thank you to everyone that submitted photos for Blue Dog of the Month - November! We think every dog is a winner, so find your photos on our [website](#) or our [Facebook page](#).

Submit your dog to be the Blue Dog of the Month by e-mailing us a photo, your first name, hometown and a few sentences telling us what makes your dog special. (*Note: Dogs only please*) Even if your dog isn't chosen, we will post your photo on our website to show the world how cute s/he is!

We chose from each pool of photos submitted on a monthly basis -- so please re-send your photos each month if your pooch is not chosen.

Stop Begging!

by Katherine Ayres, Ph.C

It happens almost without fail. I am in a private behavior consultation explaining the use of "high value rewards" for training a dog (which are almost always people food, not dog treats you buy at the store), and the owners look at each other then look back at me and say, "Oh we decided to never give Fido people food."

Now why do owners say this? Often, an owner's main concern is that their dog will start begging for people food. Most owners have a good enough understanding of positive reinforcement to know that if they feed their dog at the table, it inevitably leads to more intense and continuous begging when owners are eating at the table.



Concerns about begging are perfectly understandable. We never tell owners to give their dogs high value treats at the dinner table or in any other context in which they do not want their dog to associate food. We recommend that owners save super high value treats (people food) for when the dog is in the presence of scary things, people or dogs. We can use lower value treats like the dog's kibble for basic training where the distraction is low. Rule of thumb: the harder the thing is that you're asking the dog to do, the higher the value of the treat. Before we get to how to fix begging let's talk about "dog

food" versus "people food". For those of you who watch *Mad Men*, you will understand that the dog food industry has run a highly successful and honestly quite impressive marketing campaign that has the majority of consumers thinking that dogs should only eat from bags or cans that say "dog food". However, up until the 1960s, there were only a few commercial dog food companies. So what on earth did dogs eat before the 1960s? Well, they scavenged and ate whatever their humans ate. The line between dog and people food is arbitrary. In fact, most dog foods are highly processed scraps of human agriculture waste with a lot of preservatives and are not any healthier for your dog than so-called human grade food. Although, there are a few pet food companies making food appropriate for

a predator/scavenger.

Long story short, It is perfectly OK to give your dog food that is not labeled "dog food" as long as it is not toxic to dogs. If you want to prevent begging, you want to avoid giving your dog ANY kind of food in certain contexts and situations. This is your prerogative, but some contexts might be sitting at the dinner table, anywhere in the kitchen, at your office desk or wherever you do not want your dog to associate food. You absolutely DO NOT want to give your dog food when they are actively begging. This might include sitting staring at you with "those eyes", whining and/or demand barking for the food. Begging is 100% human behavior driven. The good news is you created the behavior, therefore you can fix it.

There are three approaches that we recommend for putting an end to begging. One approach is to manage the situation. This one is simple. When people are eating in one room, the dog goes in another room, outside, or perhaps in a crate with a frozen, stuffed Kong.

The second approach is what behaviorists call negative punishment, which will eventually result in extinction of the behavior. Wow that sounds really horrible, but in practice negative punishment is a scary way of saying you take something away to stop the behavior. Although it is called punishment, there is no force, fear or pain involved in the process! In this case, you are going to take away your attention and the food when the dog is begging.

Here's a warning though, once a behavior becomes established and we try to stop it by ignoring it or taking things/people away, what can happen next is that the behavior gets worse before it gets better. In other words, you will get a burst of naughtiness with higher intensity before the behavior will completely disappear. Usually that burst of naughtiness is where owners give in and reinforce the behavior either with a verbal reprimand (which the dog actually finds reinforcing), praise, touch or food. You definitely do not want to give in here! Just be patient, count to yourself, go to your happy place or, better yet, pick yourself and the food up and go in the other room and close the door. We want the dog to learn that begging doesn't get them anything. In fact, it makes you go away and you take the food with you.



The last plan of attack, and the most effective, is to train an incompatible behavior. Contact [Companion Animal Services](#) and we can help you tailor the best way to approach this, but one possibility is to train your dog to go to a special mat and stay there while the people eat. Getting your dog to go to their mat and stay there in the presence of food and people (highly distracting) requires training. You can't just lure a dog onto a mat and expect them to stay there. You train any stay behavior by slowly building duration and distraction. Start by training your dog to go to their mat. Once they're going to the mat, you can begin to increase the amount of time they stay on the mat. Once they're staying on the mat for 20 seconds, begin including distractions like people moving around the mat and then moving around the mat with food. If you really take the time to train this properly, the dog will be staying on their mat when the family sits down to eat. If Fido stays on the mat during the duration of the meal, then he gets a very special treat when the humans are done eating and all the "human food" is cleared from the table. If you consistently have trouble keeping the dog on the mat, you can give the dog a chew or a stuffed Kong that they can eat on their mat while you eat. If you've spent several weeks training this behavior consistently and your dog is still too excited to stay on the mat, you can use a time out when the dog gets off the mat.

In summary, human food is OK for dog training, but it's the context of the reward that can lead to begging. If you are at the end of your rope with begging, our dog trainers are highly skilled at using these methods and can help you develop the best plan of action and coach you through using these methods to get rid of begging for good!

Where in the world is Blue Dog?

What: Doggie Dash & Dawdle

When: November 6th, 2011

Where: Balloon Fiesta Park - Albuquerque, NM



What: Petsmart Charities PetWalk

When: November 19th, 2011

Where: Trinity Park - Dallas/Ft. Worth, TX



If you or your local shelter/organization have an upcoming walk, run or gathering, let us know. We'd love to donate treats and add you to our community calendar. E-mail me at lara@bluedogbakery.com.