



Training and behavioural help for GRWE dogs.

Owners of GRWE dogs have access to the Charity's fully qualified canine behavioural help free of charge.¹ Go through the website, contact the 07000 line, your Regional Homing Officer, or your Home Visitor to be put in touch with the Post Homing Support Team and we will help you and your dog.

We know that with so much conflicting information on the web, on forums and in the media it may be difficult to decide which path is right for you and your dog. A good rule of thumb is:

All dogs show unwanted behaviour because they are experiencing excitement, fear, confusion or frustration.

Any treatment or training which increases those feelings can't be right.

Any one of those feelings causes arousal, and a combination of those feelings can send the dog into panic mode. Most dogs are experiencing confusion much of the time for the simple reason that we don't speak "dog". Also, we are continuing with our busy day to day lives which have no meaning to a dog and expecting them to join in, cope and co-operate. Most of the time – amazingly – they do!

Our Post homing Support Team follow these guidelines:

Positive reward-based treatment given at exactly the right time is the best way of all to help your dog. It may be that you use a clicker and treats, a rewarding tone of voice and a pat or a short play with a squeaky toy. You will know what your dog likes best. The timing is everything. We don't believe in giving treats out for no reason. If it so happens that your dog has just barked at a squirrel on the bird table and you toss him a treat he is going to make the wrong connection. However, if he struggles with walking past other dogs quietly, and he has gone past one without making a fuss you need to cash in on that moment [give him a treat] so that he makes the right connection. People often think that sounds too airy fairy. Wrong – instant reward for the behaviour you want is very powerful.

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There are also some acceptable negative strategies such as exclusion from a room for a few seconds but this method needs to be used in consultation with your Post Homing Support Team member.

Punitive treatments such as smacking, rubbing nose in poo (would you do that to your child?) shouting, dropping tins with stones in to make a loud noise, are remedies of the past and have no place in the 21st century. Shouting is often totally counter-productive – to some dogs, it sounds like you are egging them on! Some are so frightened of the noise you are making they just want to hide and they are unable to learn when they are in a panic. These kinds of measures cause more confusion and do not help your dog.

Shock collars, scruffing, pushing a dog on its back in a supposedly 'submissive' position (how can it be submissive if they didn't choose to be in that position?), are totally unacceptable. Shock collars are banned in Wales and we are at a loss as to why they haven't been banned in England yet. Please note that they are certainly banned within GRWE.

To be clear: punitive measures will, in the long run, make your dog's behaviour worse.

At the beginning we said your dog shows unwanted behaviour when it experiences excitement, fear, confusion or frustration. Punitive measures block the behaviour but do nothing to help the dog with the underlying problem. This will increase his frustration which will overflow in other areas of behaviour. So, any dog that has been pushed on its back in a 'submissive' position may well bite you one day and who is to blame? Any dog that has had a shock collar used on him will develop such fear of this unknown attack from nowhere that it will profoundly affect his personality and his ability to understand and cope in other areas. He may stop the behaviour you didn't want, but you will have ruined that dog.

So, when looking for a trainer or behaviourist, make sure you choose one who never uses punitive treatment and whose qualifications are approved by COAPE (Centre of Applied Pet Ethology, www.coape.org)

ⁱ Although we do not charge for our advice, the cost of the telephone call will vary depending on your service provider. GRWE does not benefit or make a profit from its 07000 number.

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