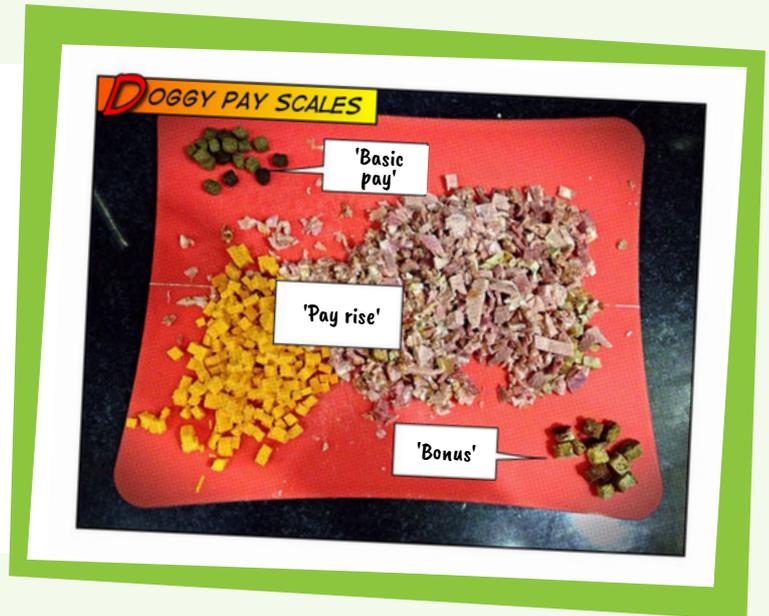


using food rewards

introducing dog pay scales

Sometimes people are reluctant to use food when training their dogs; they feel that their dogs 'should just do what they are asked' or that they are 'spoiling' their dog by giving them food treats.

However, using food is the smart way to help your dog learn new behaviours and speed up learning. I like to compare the use of food in dog training to that of wages, and I use the concept of 'dog pay scales' to explain it.



'basic' pay

Routine 'jobs' and training tasks may only merit 'basic' pay, such as kibble or dried biscuits. A routine 'job' can be a behaviour the dog knows well, or is still learning, but knows well in a certain context.

For example: practising loose lead walking in your garden, where there are minimum distractions, or waiting politely for you to put the food bowl down before eating.

time for a pay rise

Whenever we increase the difficulty of the training task, it is time to give our dog a pay rise!

Once you start adding in distractions, distance, or duration to a training task, you need to increase your dog's pay. Just like jobs in the human world, the level of skills required for a role tends to result in a higher salary, the same is true for our canine companions. The only difference is that, in the dog world, our canine companions get to set their own pay scales - depending on how difficult the 'job' is for them!

To help your dog succeed, you need to find the pay rise that works best for them. Every dog is an individual and, for some, a tennis ball, a special toy, or playing their favourite game may be a more effective pay rise.

bonus time

Once your dog knows their 'job' and can reliably perform it on a regular basis, you can then switch to paying a bonus. The idea of a bonus is that it keeps your dog motivated and ready to perform their 'job'. Your dog may not know when the bonus is coming but if you give them a bonus every now and again, it certainly gives a reason to continue doing their 'job'!