

FROM THE BEHAVIOR DEPARTMENT AT



“Should I Use the Dog Training Methods I See on TV?”

Television has popularized pack leadership based dog training. While entertaining and appearing successful; the methods demonstrated are unscientific, fear evoking and poor models for long term behavior modification.

Please carefully consider the following:

1. Dogs are actually not trying to assert pack leadership, dominance or become “alpha” leaders over people. In most situations dogs are doing what appears appropriate to them at the time based on principles of learning, past experience and conditioned responses. Canine attempts to take over the family are myths not supported by scientific evidence.
2. The use of pinning, holding down to the ground or jabbing in the neck is punishment and can easily become excessive and abusive. Motivation for a dog’s aggressive response is more likely to be defensive than dominance. Force or intimidation will not diminish fearful or defensive behaviors.
3. Most dogs with behavior problems are experiencing fear and anxiety. Attempts to gain control by choke collars, prong collars or shock collars will often worsen these conditions.
4. Exercise, stimulation and enrichment are good for all dogs but will not cure an underlying fear or anxiety condition. Excessive exercise may be unsafe for dogs with underlying medical conditions.
5. Positive reinforcement methods including food reward training and operant conditioning are scientifically proven to be the most effective for prevention and treatment of common behavior problems.
6. Dogs are “man’s best friend” and they deserve humane, gentle and scientific based training methods. Our children observe how we treat our dogs and will imitate our actions; a positive reinforcement training approach is family friendly and promotes a good relationship between dogs and children.
7. Visit the American Veterinary Society of Animal Behavior web site www.AVSABonline.org for more information.
8. Behavior experts including the American College of Veterinary Behaviorists and the American Veterinary Society of Animal Behavior have repeatedly denounced pack leadership and punishment-based training methods.

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