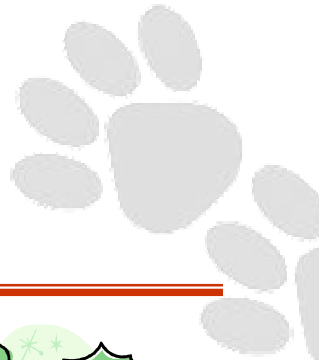




# SAN TAN CANINE TRAINING NEWSLETTER

NATHAN BRAATEN • 602.320.2890 • By Appointment



## CLICKER TRAINING



Animal training is all about effective communication. The more precise, consistent and accurate that communication is, the quicker the animal learns. Training teaches you to concentrate on small movements and “capture” these behaviors, much like taking a picture in a moment of time.

Clickers come in many shapes and sizes, but basically a clicker is an inexpensive toy that makes a cricket-like sound. Most clickers are small matchbox-sized boxes. A clicker is used to communicate to the animal, quickly and precisely, that what they did was exactly what you were looking for, at the exact moment they did it. And it signals to the animal that they are about to be rewarded for what they did.

### HERE IS HOW IT WORKS

Initially, a clicker has no value to a dog, so you have to make it mean something. To give value to the clicker, you simply click and give your dog a piece of highly valued food like chicken, cheese, live treats and so on. Food is one of several “primary reinforcers” that dogs respond to and it’s the easiest thing to use in this process.

Other primary reinforcers include physical affection, play (like fetching a ball), and water. If you click and give your dog a piece of food and repeat this ten to twenty times, the clicker now becomes associated with the food. This process is called classical conditioning. And the clicker now becomes known as a “secondary reinforcer”. In the dog’s mind, the click has actually taken on some of the quality of the primary reinforcer. In this case the food.

### CLICK FOR “GOOD DOG!”

The clicker is quicker and more precise than saying “good dog” because people have a tendency to remember to click with more consistency and precision than when using verbal praise. Actually, it takes longer to say “good dog” than it does to click. In addition, because people say “good dog” so often throughout the day, this phrase often has less value than the special clicking sound.

### CREATING POSITIVE ASSOCIATIONS

Your dog has made associations with these activities and has learned that something good is about to happen. As a result, the dog really focuses on you in anticipation of what’s about to happen. He will often offer behaviors like sitting or lying down or spinning in circles as if to say, “What do you want me to do? Sit? Beg? Jump? Get you a beer?” In other words, your dog is really excited to do what you’re about to ask because you have something he really wants.

With this in mind, whenever you show your dog a clicker, you flip that same switch in her head that says something good is about to happen. So your dog really looks forward to the occasion of training sessions and becomes intent on paying attention.

### MOVING ON TO LIFE REWARDS

Clickers are used to teach your dog a new behavior. When he knows what to do and does it when asked, the clicker is no longer necessary. A life reward is anything your dog wants that isn’t food related.

Clicker training is all about positive reinforcement.



*Season  
Greetings!*



# SHOULD YOU LET SLEEPING DOGS LIE?

Sleep not only gives your dog time to recharge his batteries; it also serves as an escape from stress, boredom and anxiety. How much, when and where your companion sleeps depends on many factors, from the state of his health to the decibel level of noise outside the house.

Other influences include the weather, how active your household is, and whether or not he's hungry.

## GOOD SLEEP, BAD SLEEP

Sleep is critical to an animal's health, just as it is for us, so you should understand the sleeping patterns of your dog. If he's sleeping more or less than usual, it could be a sign of illness.

- Dogs are more prone to hypothyroidism, which slows their metabolism and increases sleep time.
- A dog that is incontinent or in pain will sleep less. This is more common in older pets who are arthritic.
- When your dog gets immunizations it can make him sleepy. Minimizing vaccines can help correct this issue.
- Antibiotics, corticosteroids, and antihistamines also cause drowsiness. If your pet is on some kind of conventional medication and seems to be snoozing too much, ask your veterinarian if sleepiness is a side effect of the drug.
- A dog may sleep less if he has fleas or food allergies and his skin is itching. Some dogs have contact allergies from sleeping on surfaces they're sensitive to, such as bedding washed in a particular laundry detergent.
- Senility can cause sleep disturbances in older dogs. Senior dogs can develop Alzheimer's, which causes restlessness and make them wander at night.

### HINT

*Like most of us, dogs don't like to be wakened suddenly when they're in a deep sleep. A dog may act aggressively or bite if surprised by a loud noise or someone touching him.*

## HE MUST BE DREAMING

You may sometimes notice your dog moving his legs and twitching while asleep. A dog might whine, wag his tail or move his legs as if running, in fact he's just dreaming.

Animal behaviorists have tracked brainwaves in dogs that are similar to those in humans. During REM (Rapid

Eye Movement) sleep, the brains of humans and other mammals process information in much the same way they do when awake and conscious.

Puppies spend more time in the dream state than adult animals. This is because, much like human babies, they are processing all the new information they're gathering during the day.

## WHERE SHOULD HE SLEEP?

Most dogs prefer to choose their own favorite sleeping spots. Some of these places may seem strange to us, but keep in mind that the animal has selected them for a reason – perhaps because they're quiet and out of the way, or in a place where he feels safe and protected yet can still keep an eye on the household if he wishes to.

Animals may lose interest in certain spots and more to new ones over the course of their lives, but be aware of any unusual changes. A dog that suddenly starts sleeping at the back of a dark closet or under the sofa when he formerly chose more open areas may be unwell.

### HINT

*Environment plays a big role in how much your dog sleeps, especially during the day. A dog in an active, noisy household will sleep less than one who is left alone most of the day. Interactive toys and daily exercise will guard against lethargy and excessive sleeping due to boredom.*

## WHAT ABOUT YOUR OWN BED?

Many people like the warmth and comfort of their dog next to them on their beds at night. Some animal behaviorists claim that sleeping near your furry companion strengthens the animal-human bond, but other experts disagree.

If you'd rather not share your bed with your dog provide a warm, soft nest for him with a purchased or homemade pet bed near your own. This way, you can still sleep in the same room at night, if you wish.

Even animals with their own designer beds may continue to prefer yours. It's not just because he likes your mattress. Your bed has your smell on it and that's the main attraction. If you want to keep your bed off limits, place an article of your clothing in his bed or sleeping area so he can snuggle with it.

Just like people, individual dogs differ in their sleep habits and patterns. Some sleep more or less than others. Some like to stretch out in the middle of the floor, which others prefer to curl up in secluded spots. As long as you know what's normal for your pet, and stay alert to any unusual changes, it's okay to let sleeping dogs lie.

**GIFT CERTIFICATES  
AVAILABLE, CREDIT CARDS  
ACCEPTED**



**PROFESSIONAL &  
EXPERIENCED  
LICENSED & INSURED**