Guide Dogs for the Blind

Puppy Raising Department

Ground Tether Game #2
Ground Tether Introduction for Young Puppies
8 to 16 Weeks of Age

Goal Behavior (what the desired behavior looks like)

With a variety of distractions just out of reach, puppy chooses to not pull against the tether, keeping the leash loose with no pressure on their collar. (Handler is standing on the leash, creating fixed pressure to the puppy's collar.)

Puppy demonstrates impulse control around a variety of distractions by choosing to remain close to the stationary handler, keep a loose leash, and relate to the handler.

Ground Tether Game #2 sessions are to be completed by the time the puppy is a maximum of 4 months of age, effectively preparing the puppy to respond to fixed pressure from the hand held leash.

Training Session Objectives (what we want to achieve in each training session)

Continue to build a strong history of food reward for choosing not to pull against fixed collar pressure, around a variety of distractions.

Continued marking and rewarding of desirable behaviors while gradually expanding the time between rewards.

Session Set Up (description of environment and/or equipment needed and preparation)

- Controlled environment; distractions are "under control" (difficulty can be decreased or increased) with all enticements out of reach of the puppy.
- Handler stands firmly on the leash with balls of their feet.
- Leash length from handler's feet to puppy is approximately 2 feet;short enough that if the puppy jumps up on handler, the puppy feels collar pressure; long enough so the puppy's collar will be loose if the puppy stands close to the handler's legs.
- Handler has suitable food rewards.
- Real world distractions (i.e. leaves, tissue, friendly people, food) are organized for session use.

Video reference (supporting documentation)

GDB DVD "Ground Tether Game #2"

Key Handling Points (Behaviors to Reward)

➤ Handler remains stationary and allows the puppy to react to the ground tether, marking and rewarding the following desirable behaviors:
1. Ceasing pull on the collar (progressively: wait for a few seconds before marking increasing the duration the pup is "not pulling" before marking.)
2. Looking at a distraction, but not moving towards it (high rates of rewards for initially not moving towards distraction.)
3. Looking to the handler when distraction is presented

➤ Handler strives to offer rewards close to their legs to support loose leash behavior.
➤ Increasing challenging distractions are introduced out of reach of the puppy.

Note: distractions are meant to challenge the puppy's impulse control while still at a level that the puppy can be successful.

➤ When a new distraction or more difficult version of a distraction is introduced, the puppy's initial decision to offer desired behavior demonstrates effective learning is taking place.
➤ If the puppy continues to pull towards every new distraction, the puppy has not had a sufficient reward history for making the desired choice to "not pull". Distraction difficulty should be lowered to allow for more successful repetitions prior to raising the difficulty again.
➤ Attempts to pull towards a distraction should become few and far between, with the majority of decisions from the puppy being the desirable behavior.

Completion / Next Steps
Once the puppy demonstrates offering to keep a loose leash with challenging distractions, the next step is for the handler to hold the leash, continuing the same type of training session but with the handler creating the fixed pressure: Hand Tether Game