



APBC

ASSOCIATION OF PET
BEHAVIOUR COUNSELLORS

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ADVICE SHEET 10

Clicker Training Your Pet



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Introduction

Clicker training is a really great way of teaching your pet new things in a positive way and making learning fun for both of you. You can clicker train any animal, including dogs, cats, horses and rabbits.



What is clicker training?

Clicker training is a positive training method based on rewarding an animal for good behaviour. Your pet learns to understand that the sound of the click means “that’s right” and that a food treat is coming.

A click is more effective than your voice for two reasons. Firstly, your mood will influence how you sound and can make your voice inconsistent. Secondly, by the time you’ve praised your pet they might have moved on to something else. A clicker gives a quick, clear and consistent signal to your pet.

When animals are rewarded for the right behaviour, they’re more likely to repeat it and look for ways that they can offer that behaviour so they get a treat, making training more of a game than a chore for them - and you!

TOP TIP: The click must be an absolute guarantee that your pet will immediately get a reward. So the golden rule is: every time you click, give your pet a treat, even if you clicked at the wrong time.

First things first

All you need to get started is a special clicker and some food treats.

You can buy clickers online and at most pet shops and they only cost a couple of pounds. Before you start using one, check to make sure dogs the treat should be about the size of your little fingernail and ideas include cheesy treats or fresh chicken. If you’re training in a park where there are lots of distractions a really tasty treat, like ham, will help to keep them interested.

For cats you could use bits of shredded chicken or a piece of wet food on a teaspoon and there are lots of healthy bite-sized treats on the market especially for horses, like dried apple. For rabbits, try tiny pieces of carrot.

TOP TIP: During training sessions, your pet could get lots of treats so make sure you manage their overall diet so they don’t become overweight.

Getting started

Find a quiet area where you and your pet can concentrate. With your pet beside you, click once and then immediately give them a treat. Don’t point the clicker at your pet or click too close to their ears. Repeat this a few times until your pet becomes alert to the sound of the click and looks to you for a treat.