TWO FOOD GAME

By Sue Hogben

The two-food game is an adaptation from the two-toy game that is used in “Training in Drive” by Gottfied Dildei – a well-known IPO trainer.

**Why use it?**

When the game is played it builds drive, both going away from the handler and turning and coming ack to the handler. Both behaviours are greatly desired in obedience. Think of a basic behaviour in any retrieve exercise – the dog races out, grabs, spins back and races back to the handler. By using two food game you are building “muscle memory” for these actions. The game also allows many fun repetitions in order to build a strong positive reinforcement history for a variety of obedience situations.

**How to play?**

You must use chunks of food that can be thrown a fair distance (up to 10 meters) not break apart and be seen. Start by throwing the food away from your dog a short distance and tell him to “get it”. As he finishes the first piece of food, turn away from your dog, call him and throw another piece of food so that the dog will run past you to get it. Repeat. End the game by just waving your arms and praising/petting the dog. Turn both ways when throwing the food.

Watch that the dog isn’t coming back slowly and waiting you out to see if you are going to throw the food or not.

**Advanced and adapted versions**

*If your dog likes toys, then this game can also be played with two toys of equal value.*

The retrieve – throw the dumbbell. At various points of the dog returning with the dumbbell, turn and throw your food and start the tow food game. Do not worry if the dog drops the dumbbell, he is mean to!

An adaptation to the above is to throw the food as the dog is returning, then pick up the dumbbell and throw is again informally. Again, as the dog returns, throw food. This gives value to the dumbbell as well as builds drive out to the dumbbell and back.

**Fronts** – one problem many people have is to find a way to do a lot of fronts, while still maintaining interest or drive. Play the two-food game. When the dog is returning maintain a formal “front” position that you will have in the ring. Call your dog to you and get him to front. Help him initially, because till now he has just raced past you! Have him front perfectly, reward handsomely and start the game again.

You can throw the food short distances or long distances and you can vary the angle that the dog comes back to find more difficult fronts.

WARNING!!! Never throw the food if the dog is within 2 metres on his return, if you are holding a "front" position. The dog must understand that once he is in this "zone" he will be asked to front precisely.

You can turn to either your left or right when throwing food past you, or if you are brave enough and your dog is small enough, throw the food between your legs and let the dog race through! You will have to teach this as a separate exercise at first, using very short throws initially. When you do formally front the dog, always reward the good ones and praise profusely. This must be a lot of fun too!!!

**Other uses**

* Retrieving the scent articles
* Recalls
* Warming up both for obedience and agility
* Glove retrieves

Really think about what are you using to reward the dog with – if he goes crazy over a ball, then make the bargain – pick the metal scent article and you can have a ball thrown. This increases of value of disliked things.

**Another version**

Instead of throwing the food behind the handler, have the dog come back towards and around the handler, and throw the food forward. This encourages speed and enthusiasm in the dog returning to the handler, and some fast about circles around the handler. Be consistent in the direction of the turn around the handler when doing this.