

## POSITIVE REINFORCEMENT DOG TRAINING

Positive reinforcement training involves rewarding desirable behaviours so that they are more likely to occur in the future. Your greyhound will find some things more rewarding than others. Before you begin you will want to find out what your dog finds most rewarding (and therefore motivating). Examples of rewards include food, toys, play, running, praise, patting. However, most dogs are food motivated so food treats work especially well for training. As a sight hound, greyhounds will also find chasing and playing with a synthetic lure inherently very motivating and these are an effective way to condition the dog to chase.

### LURE POLICY

The rules on lures used in the greyhound racing industry specify that an animal product is not to be used as or attached to a lure. See the following:

Greyhounds Australasia Rule 1 specifies that a 'lure' means any item, natural or man-made, that is used in any way, by any person with the intention or effect of encouraging or inciting a greyhound to pursue, attack or excite it by responding to such stimuli, and 'quarry' and 'bait' shall have a similar meaning.



*Greyhounds love food treats just like other dogs.*

The use of any live animal, animal carcass or part of an animal as a lure in greyhound training, education or racing is strictly prohibited.

This does not prohibit a small food treat being given (by hand or in a bowl) to a greyhound as a reward for performing a behaviour, such as showing interest in a synthetic lure, chasing a synthetic lure or releasing a synthetic lure on command. Appropriate food treats include processed foods such as kibble, minced meat, cooked chicken, cheese or commercial dog treats. An example of teaching a greyhound with food treats can be found at this link:



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BJvKW4wjg-Q>

✘ Please note that **you must not attach the treats to the synthetic object used as a lure**. Doing so would amount to a breach of GRNSW rules and policy that only allow the use of non-animal derived materials as lures. Greyhounds can learn the importance of chasing the synthetic training object without treats being attached to that object.

To view an example of a dog, which previously had no interest in an object, being motivated to chase the synthetic object using food treats as the reward follow this link:



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qZjOWRD44Mk&feature=youtu.be>



Further information on the lure policy is available at

[www.thedogs.com.au/DPage.aspx?id=380](http://www.thedogs.com.au/DPage.aspx?id=380)

## IMPORTANT PRINCIPLES OF POSITIVE REINFORCEMENT

### TIMING:

The reward should occur very quickly after the desired behaviour, within seconds, so that the greyhound makes the correct connection or association about the behaviour you want, and the reward it will receive.

To assist the dog in making the connection between the correct behaviour and the reward, you can use a clicker (or use a word like 'yes') to 'mark' the behaviour, or signal to the dog that what it is doing at the time it hears the clicker or the word will result in the delivery of a reward. If you would like more information on how to use clicker training please contact GRNSW.

### CONSISTENCY:

This includes ensuring that everyone who is involved in the training and care of the greyhound uses the same commands and training techniques. It is also important to remain consistent with which behaviours are desirable and rewarded and which are undesirable and are ignored.

### SHAPING:

It can take some time for a greyhound to learn certain behaviours. Therefore, it is important to reward the initial steps towards achieving the desired behaviour or something that is close to the desired behaviour.

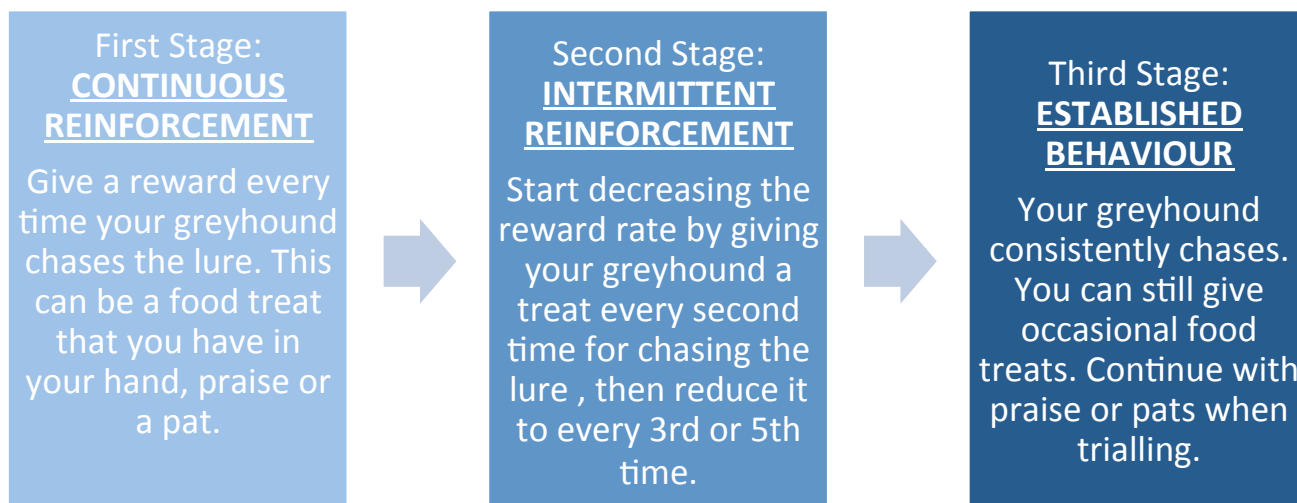
For example, if teaching a timid greyhound to enter a box calmly and willingly, it may be necessary to initially reward the greyhound for simply looking at the box. As the greyhound associates the box with food it will begin to approach and sniff the area, which will also be rewarded. Walking through the box with the lid open would be the next step to receive the treat. Ultimately a reward would be given for a greyhound entering a box with the lid closed. You may like to identify the types of treats that the greyhound finds highly rewarding and offer a 'jackpot' when they do something particularly well. So if your greyhound has been shaped to approach and enter the starting box and it jumps out particularly quickly (or if it is timid and chooses to enter the box of its own accord) you would give it a whole handful of treats, or something it doesn't usually get (cooked chicken or cheese if the usual treat is kibble for example).

## REINFORCEMENT SCHEDULE

When your greyhound is initially learning a behaviour reward it every time it does the behaviour (continuous reinforcement). Make sure that when you give the dog the reward (whether food, toys or play) you also use praise and petting. They will associate these with the reward and they will remain an important part of your training.

As the greyhound reliably learns to perform the behaviour, choose to only reward those responses that are particularly good with food and use praise and petting for a good try. You can also encourage a better 'work ethic' by varying how many times you give a reward. For example if you give the dog a piece of chicken for coming when it is called, you will vary when you give the treat. It might be every 4<sup>th</sup> time it comes back, or every 3<sup>rd</sup> time, or 5<sup>th</sup> time. In this way the dog never quite knows when it will get the food and it will keep performing the behaviour in the hope of gaining the reward. This is called an intermittent schedule. Don't reduce the reward schedule too rapidly or you will bring about frustration.

By adopting an intermittent reward schedule your greyhound will continue to work for the praise and an occasional treat. You will not need to carry around a pocket full of treats but your greyhound will perform reliably and consistently.



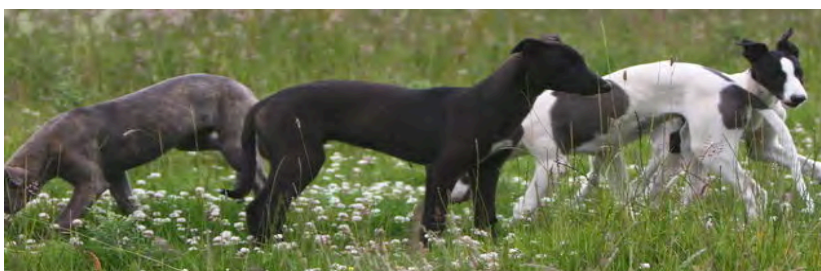
## HELPFUL TIPS ON ENCOURAGING CHASING

### PUNISHMENT

Punishment is applying a negative consequence to a behaviour that you want to stop. Punishment (or aversive training) is totally unnecessary and can have undesirable consequences for a dog's confidence and learning capacity. In the case of punishing non-demonstration of a desired behaviour, such as chasing, using punishment is particularly ineffective because it usually creates an avoidance response in the dog, which is exactly the opposite of what we are trying to achieve with a dog that, for whatever reason, is not showing a lot of chase motivation.

### SOCIAL LEARNING

Some Trainers like to introduce young greyhounds to the track by pairing them with an older greyhound who is experienced in racing.



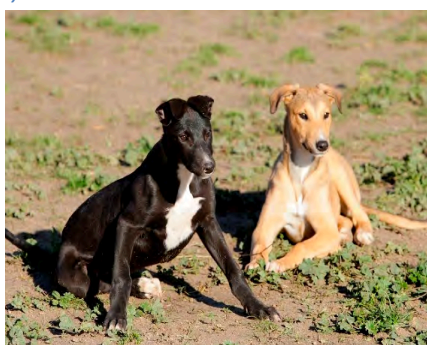
*Greyhounds find fellow canine companionship rewarding and this can also be a reinforcer for encouraging chasing behaviours.*



*Greyhounds find pats praise and play rewarding. This is a good immediate reward to administer after they have been chasing a synthetic lure.*

### HUMAN INTERACTION

Greyhounds enjoy pats and praise, so it is good to be ready with positive encouragement at the end of the trial track with encouragement. In the initial stage, if you are training a greyhound with a synthetic lure on a string or in a bull ring, you can pat your Greyhound at the first sign of interest in chasing.



*Young greyhounds free galloping in a paddock and then given opportunities to chase a synthetic lure and catch it.*

### CONTROL FOR NEGATIVE EXPERIENCES

Greyhounds should associate racing with rewards and fun. Avoid having the greyhound injured or hurt during boxing or in the catching pen with careful supervision. If Greyhounds are racing with a follow-on lure, do not yank it abruptly off the lure (in case of injury) or punish them if they are persistent in chasing the lure.