

Defining Humane Dog Training Update
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Earlier in 1998, we reported on the first meeting of the National Council on Humane Dog Training, convened by the American Humane Association (AHA) in Englewood, CO. Approximately 25 expert dog trainers, veterinarians, veterinary and applied animal behaviorists and animal care and control professionals met for two days to define humane dog training and discuss related issues.

The Council agreed to a working definition of humane training as: enhancing the lifelong relationship between people and dogs by:

- eliciting and/or rewarding desired behaviors
- rarely using punishment (always striving toward its elimination and
- never causing harm.

The Council also agreed to pursue the development of standards, or a code of practice for humane dog trainers. Delta Society, which focuses on expanding awareness of the positive effects animals can have on people's health and quality of life, recently agreed to fund this project.

A group of 45 experts, primarily dog trainers experienced in a positive reinforcement approach to dog training, plus professionals in related fields, is currently being selected. This group will divide into working groups, will meet in the fall of 1998 following the annual conference of the Association of Pet Dog Trainers (APDT) in Valley Forge, Pennsylvania to create a first draft of a standards document.

This draft will be circulated for broad peer review and subsequent revision. In addition to the National Council, AHA, Delta Society and APDT, some of the other involved and/or supporting organizations include the National Association of Dog Obedience Instructors, the Humane Society of the United States, the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, the American Veterinary Medical Association's Animal Welfare Committee and several service and guide dog training schools. Given the design to include input from many points of view, the standards are expected to be finalized by January, 2000.

*Since this article appeared, two publications have come out of this initial project.

1. Professional Standards for Dog Trainers: Effective, Humane Principles. Published by and available from the Delta Society, www.deltasociety.org
2. Guide to Humane Dog Training. Published by and available from American Humane Association, www.americanhumane.org