This first week we will be introducing your dog to odor right away using a game called "It's your choice". This will teach your dog to choose odor for reinforcement. This is the first step to developing commitment (value) for odor and is a game we use throughout the dog's career.

Time Commitment: Plan for 2-3 times a day for no more than 2 minutes each session.

Supplies Needed:

- Soft treats
- Small tin to put scented qtips in
- Cold tin
- Plastic container with holes drilled in lid to be used and labeled as a HOT container

Week 1: Intro to Odor

Game 1, Part 1: “It’s your choice” with a tin

1. Prepare your tin with 3-5 qtips inside. Use a lower number if your dog is sensitive to smells or seeming to not want to go near the odor tin.

2. Pick a familiar area in your house that will be your primary training area when introducing new exercises.

3. Have treats available on you or in nearby dish.

4. Get your dog.

5. Pick up the tin with one hand, and grab a handful of food in the other.

6. Sit on the floor or in the chair.

7. Place your hands 12-18” apart at dogs nose level. Keep hot tin hand open with palm up and your food hand closed.

- Your dog will likely spend some time trying to get the food out of your food hand. Wait dog out.

- When your dog investigates the other hand with the tin, IMMEDIATELY mark their behavior (“yes”, “click”) and THEN give treat by bringing hand with food to tin and feed at source.

- If dog stays at source/tin, keep feeding at source.

- Make sure to anchor your tin/source hand. Hold that hand still and bring the TREAT hand to source.

8. Switch hands, repeat step 7 for another minute or so.

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9. Take a break (don't over do it, should be short session). Repeat later in day.

10. If you have been using 5 qtips, reduce to 2-3 by weeks end. 3 qtips seems to be the average used in most cases.

Here's Lyra demonstrating her first nosework lesson:

Here's Drac at 4 months old on his first 2 days of learning nosework:

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Troubleshooting:

1. If after giving it some time and your dog is too distracted by your food hand, you can just put out the tin hand for a few times with your treat hand at your side or behind your back and mark then feed immediately for checking it out. The objective is to have your dog "find" odor and get reinforced at source. Once you have had some success with this, you can try having your food hand out to give your dog a choice.

2. If your dog gets stuck and doesn't offer any behavior. You can use your FOOD hand to lure them back in or out of a stuck position. Or shift your position to get them to move. NEVER lure them with the tin.

3. If your dog is a little put off by the odor and won't eat near the tin, go to Game 3 and use a vented plastic container. The container will act as a bigger "target" and you can place your treats right on top of the container.

4. Engage some play drive by taking off and trying to get away from your dog in a fun game of chase and then hold out your hands with food and hot tin.

Make sure to mark and feed IMMEDIATELY when they check out your hand with odor. They are finding it by accident and will repeat what led to reinforcement.

Game 1, Part 2: "It's your choice" on the ground

Play the same game as when holding the tin and food, but place the tin on the ground.

1. First just place the tin on the ground and feed when your dog checks it out.

2. Then place your choice of food out by holding treats on the ground about 12-18" inches area from the odor tin.

3. You can also put the treats on the ground but cover them. You can feed from your other hand or from under the cupped hand. This will work some impulse control too!

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Game 2: Two Tins!

Now we will test that our dog doesn't think any container (or any tin) pays. We will now put a cold tin (a tin that has NEVER had odor in it or been stored with odor tins) and a hot tin on the ground. Place the tins 1-2 feet apart and reward for checking out or staying at the hot tin. If you don't have an extra tin, find any small container about the same size as your tin. You can usually find something equivalent at a local craft store - since it will always be a "cold" tin, no need to have vented holes in it.

Here's a video of Drac choosing between 2 tins for the first time.

Game 3: “It’s your choice” with a container

Repeat the same steps above, but put your tin in a small vented Tupperware container. Hold the container in one hand and your treats in the other. This is your first introduction to search containers!

Here's a video showing this with Raika using a vented plastic container (with odor tin inside). At the end of the video she does place it on the floor for an additional test. (This will lead into next weeks lesson).

Pre-test before you proceed:

Before you proceed to the next lecture, test that your dog goes quickly to source within three seconds, without offering additional behaviors like barking or positions. If you pass, you are ready to proceed to the next lesson.

Here is Drac's pre-test before moving on to the next level. This was his 5th session of nosework!

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