

## Mental Stimulation of Cage-Rested Pets

- Make the sessions short: 10-20 minutes max
- Do not keep going until you both get tired and frustrated
- A 20 minute training/interactive session can be as tiring as an hour's physical exercise.
- It promotes calm focus that will help with all behaviour
- END ON A POSITIVE NOTE, WITH LOTS OF PRAISE

### Car Trip

If your cat or dog enjoys a trip in the car, why not take them for a drive? However, to avoid injury, dogs should not be allowed to sit unrestrained in the car. Small dogs and cat can be taken in the car in a travel basket and larger dogs should be safely restrained in the boot or with a harness seat belt attachment so they can't jump on/off seats. Windows down, sniffs, smells, visual and nasal stimulation, countryside or coastal. Have a five minute lead walk at your destination for toileting and take a different route home. Most dog's idea of heaven!

### Food

- Make your dog work for an important resource - food!
- Don't feed them from a boring food bowl. There is little stimulation associated to this.
- Dogs in the wild will problem solve and work for their food.
- Scatter Food: Dry food can be scattered in the cage/crate, hidden under towels, placed in rolled up towels.



### Interactive Toys

- Good old fashioned Kongs/Buster cubes can be utilised in many ways, for feeding meals or treat times.
- Kong fillers can be purchased.
- Peanut butter smeared inside is an old favourite.
- Wet food/dripping can be frozen to last longer on hot summer days.
- Cheese can be melted in the microwave and allowed to cool and harden for extended fun.
- Nina Ottosson (Sweden) fun interactive games and puzzles. Available through [www.companyofanimals.co.uk](http://www.companyofanimals.co.uk) or from local pet stores.



## Training

**1. Targeting**—Teaching your dog to touch his nose or paw (or any other part of the body) onto a target.

- Be ready with treats in advance for this training game.
- Show the dog the target. The first natural instinct will be to sniff it; as soon as his nose makes contact with the target, reward with treat and praise (using a clicker and treat approach if preferable).
- You need to be quick with the reward, informing your dog that this is the action you want and to prevent the target being grabbed by the teeth.
- Practice until your dog is confident bumping the target with his nose to get a reward.
- Add a cue word, i.e. 'touch'. Make it more challenging by moving the target - further away, higher, lower, or propped in the distance.
- Teach them to touch different objects, touch for longer, use a different part of the body or touch a part of your body i.e. the palm of your hand. Anything non edible can be used as a target - aerosol lid, beer mat, post it note.



**2. High Five** —Teach your dog to high five.

- Be careful to support the paw, not hold it, as some dogs find it quite threatening to have their paws lifted and held and may cause them to withdraw it.
- With a treat in your hand, hold it on the floor in front of your dog, encourage them to paw at your hand, reward as soon as they make contact. It may take them time to figure out what action you want.
- Next hold your other hand open just above the floor, so that when the paw is lifted to pat the treat hand, it falls onto your open hand.
- Extend time of contact before rewarding and introduce verbal command 'High Five!'
- Praise and reward.
- Practice this repeatedly, over several sessions, raising the open hand higher each time.
- Move the hand with the treat to encourage them; give lots of praise and rewards.
- Repeat, adapting the open hand to be vertical with palm facing the dog.



Further reading and references;

Bailey. Gwen. 'How to Train a Superdog' DK 2009

The Company of Animals. 'Nina Ottoson Fun Challenging Games and Puzzles' 2009

Information of Nina Ottoson products; [www.interactivedoggames.com](http://www.interactivedoggames.com)

Whitehead. Sarah. 'Mind Games for Dogs' Best Behaviour Booklets 2010 available from [www.cleverdogcompany.com](http://www.cleverdogcompany.com)

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