



About Food Reinforcements – Treat Ideas

In the beginning I like to use extra special treats. I am generous with the food reinforcers I offer. In time I seek to find ways to *reinforce* my dog that is not exclusively dependent upon food. I may incorporate other types of reinforcements like *fun games*, *social contact*, and *life rewards*, ie. *the opportunity to play outside or sit on the sofa*. **Use of reinforcement with food is going to comprise the bulk of my training throughout the life of my dog.** Would you work for no paycheck? **Have your treats ready, precut into pea-sized bits in advance of your training set.** Be aware that some dogs, just like people, may have allergic reactions to some of the foods listed. Some dogs may become overly aroused in the presence of certain foods. You should determine what is most appropriate for your pup and the situation. **In each training context ask your learner what foods are reinforcing for them.**

- ❑ ***Cooked Chicken or Turkey with tryptophan to calm might be a better option for some dogs***
 - ❑ I buy a large package of chicken thighs. Use double boiler to cook. Rinse (to degrease for handling). Cut up cooked chicken into pea-sized pieces. Freeze in small containers to use as needed. Note: chicken breasts can be crumbly and don't always make the best training treats for this reason.
- ❑ ***Stewing Beef***
 - ❑ Empty package of stewing beef into a microwave-able container. Microwave on medium heat, stop to stir for even cooking. Dice into tiny pea-sized pieces. Freeze in small containers to use as needed.
- ❑ ***Freeze Dried feeding options: Meal-Mixers or Vital Essentials Mini Nibs***
 - ❑ For healthier treat options try Instinct or Stella and Chewy's or Instinct Meal Mixers or VE Mini Nibs. My dogs LOVE these! Check out this *The Whole Dog Journal* article: <https://www.whole-dog-journal.com/nutrition/the-best-healthy-dog-treats/>
- ❑ ***Basic Dog Food Kibble (dry food)***
 - ❑ Reinforce the dog with their own dinner kibble around your home. Always remember to ask your learner if their kibble serves as a reinforcer for the task you are asking them to learn.
 - ❑ You may shake 'n bake dry kibble with a pinch of minced garlic or toss with a moist food (ie. chicken) to marinate.
- ❑ ***String Cheese***
 - ❑ Simple to dice up into pea-sized pieces or use as slivers for some training. Note: cheese is not a "complete" diet, use in moderation. Use common sense regarding quantity and watch for constipation or loose stools.
- ❑ ***Baby Food: Turkey, Chicken, or Beef***
 - ❑ For certain behavior modification needs or basic training where a long-duration form of reinforcement is desired this is a good item to have in your toolkit of motivators. Chicken, Turkey and Beef varieties are my dogs' favorites. An unopened jar can be kept handy in your training bag. Can be frozen to last longer.
- ❑ ***Cheese Tortellini or Meatballs from the store freezer section***
 - ❑ Cook these items up and dice into multiple pieces for more treat variety. Use in moderation.
- ❑ ***Training treats on the market (BilJac, Merrick, Tricky Trainers or Wellness wellbites)***
 - ❑ A number of training treats are available on the market. Look for those that use whole ingredients and not *fragments* in the ingredients lists. Avoid products listing poultry or meat by-products, meat meal or poultry meal. Be cautious about anything that has a lot of additives such as artificial colors, sugar, and flavors. **Note: some of these treats contain vegetable glycerin, which when given in large quantities may soften your dog's stools.** Consider using these treats in moderation.
- ❑ ***Yogurt***
 - ❑ Yogurt may be used and delivered to your dog in much the same way the baby food is used as a long duration form of reinforcement. Put it into a small container, like a baby food jar, let your dog lick away.