

## DOOR BOLTING DOGS

Most people who have a "door bolter dog" say, "He/She bolts out the door and won't come back when called!" They feel there is only one problem, when, in fact, they have two problems. Problem #1 is the dog bolts out the door. Problem #2 is the dog won't come back when called. If they didn't have Problem #1, it wouldn't matter if they had Problem #2. And, if they didn't have Problem #2, it also wouldn't matter if they had Problem #1. So, we are really looking at two distinctly different, but intertwined behavior problems.

This discussion is going to relate to Problem #1 of bolting out an open or opening door or gate. Problem #2, coming when called, is the empirical command the dog must learn through training.

Most dogs feel they have the right to be first-in and first-out of all doors, ahead of the people. In our downloadable article entitled "Exiting and Entering Doors," we discussed teaching the dog to SIT before the door opens, which is the beginning of establishing an appropriate social structure with regard to exiting/entering doors.

After the dog has learned to SIT-STAY (off-leash) at the door while you exit the door without him, toss a treat for the dog to release him from the STAY command. Never close the door and leave without somehow releasing the dog.

Another counterconditioning method to address door bolting is to diminish the importance of the people going to the door. Get up from your chair, head toward the door while rattling your car keys, wiggle the doorknob. If the dog follows you toward the door, stop, turn around, go back and sit down in your chair. Repeat again—get up from your chair, head toward the door while rattling your car keys, wiggle the doorknob. Again, if the dog follows you toward the door, stop, turn around, go back and sit down in your chair. Keep repeating the same process until the dog does not follow you toward the door. No commands are necessary. Do not try opening or going through the door until the dog stops following you.

The Humane Society offers three Puppy & Dog Training Classes each week—Wednesday at 11 AM, Thursday at 7 PM and Saturday at 1 PM. The class is a 6-week session; each once-a-week class is about 1 hour. For information contact Connie at 772-388-3331, Ext. 19.