

# *Are you Coming?*

by Carol Gannaway

When you call your cat to come in, if he dawdles around before he does in, no problem. You open the door and pet him as he walks in. You call your husband in for lunch he responds "Be there in a minute", no problem. You sit and have a pleasant lunch together. You call your dog to you and he looks at you and finishes sniffing around for a few moments then comes to you, some dog owners would berate the dog for his delayed response. Yes our faithful companion, the dog, is held to a standard like no other creature in our lives.

Or, maybe this is the how it goes at your house. You call your dog "Fido come!" and he sniffs a bit longer and then takes off running in the other direction or your dog comes but stops just out of reach and as you try and reach for the collar, off he goes. The game is on! These last two scenarios will require that you, as your companion's "advisor", should concentrate on retraining your dog to reliably to come when called.



This retraining process could take as long as a year. It depends on how much time you spend practicing with your dog. Where do you start? I think of the come when called as having your dog sit in front and look at you. So anytime your dog is sitting in front of you and looking at you, praise and reward him for a "Good come!" This is how you want your dog to end up when you call him, sitting in front and looking at you. You are going to want to work on this for a few days with lots of repetitions and delicious rewards.

During the next step in the training process you will have your dog on his 6 foot leash and when he is not paying attention to you, but not very far away, call him to you "Fido, come!" he should come and sit in front. Praise and reward, make it meaningful! If your dog doesn't quit what he is doing take a few steps backwards. To further encourage your dog to come your direction, you may want to pat your leg with your hands or open your arms. Fido should end up with a nice sit in front of you. Praise and reward.

Practice the above hundreds of times over the next few weeks, until your dog can think of nothing better to do when you call "Come" than to head your way and sit in front. Once this part is reliable you will want to add the use of a retractable leash or long line to your training so your dog will be further away. You will still have the security of the leash to help your dog make the correct choice to earn praise and reward.

Once the above is reliable and your dog heads your way every time you are ready for this next step.

You will need a 20 foot long-line you can easily make out of rope. This long line should have a snap hook on one end and a big knot on the other end. With the long line dragging behind your call him to you. Make sure you are standing close enough to the line so you will be able to step on it if needed. The knotted end will prevent the line from sliding under your shoe. Repeat this in as many different places and situations as possible. This is called proofing your training. Don't be surprised if during the training you have to go