

# Is Positive Only Dog Training Just Dogma?

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Positive ONLY Dog Trainers are failing too many dogs with ineffective repetition methods.

The Bad Ideologue of our Time

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## Dog Training Methodologies

Today I am addressing the issue of dog training methodologies, which cause a number of disturbing conflicts in the world of dog training and behaviour, mainly propagated by non-professionals with an ideological misunderstanding of science and moreover practical experience of urban dog life. I state clearly that I operate on the principals of science and operant conditioning.

General dog training methods without doubt have changed for the better and the concentration on reward-based training, which I have always championed, is better for dogs. I love dogs; that's why I want to enjoy the full enchantment of their characters by means of a good social connection.

Reward dog training is not new; it's always been here. I was reading a book from the 1880's and most of the training methods were reward based, which was surprising because the treatment of humans at that time was pretty brutal in Britain.

I shall proffer an example of training that has always been executed by trainers in Britain: Olfactory led training – known as scent work with dogs. You cannot force a dog to use its olfactory system in scenting/tracking; it can only be induced via a reward generally with an exciting voice tone and end game. Trainers from previous generations trained that system and have continued to-date. It's not new or recently discovered. As a teenager I trained many dogs of different breeds in competition for searches and

tracking people and an array of (discarded) objects in competitive obedience, working trials as well as with operational Police dogs.

When dogs receive reward reinforcement for their actions, their sense-associated endorphins increase which is linked with the external motivator, such as their trainer/owner whose own endorphins ignite too coincidentally. Confident and stimulated dogs become interested, which increases their feeling of well-being. I will not go into the science here in all its complexities other than to state in principle the below:

## Positive and Negative Reinforcement and Punishment brief

	<b>Reinforcement</b>	<b>Punishment</b>
Positive	Something is added to increase the likelihood of a behaviour.	Something is added to decrease the likelihood of a behaviour.
Negative	Something is removed to increase the likelihood of a behaviour.	Something is removed to decrease the likelihood of a behaviour.

My take and lifelong experience is this – a dog will only wish to repeat a behaviour that is rewarding and decreases or ceases a behaviour that is unrewarding. Humans are much the same. I wrote that over thirty years ago in articles and books but experienced it by observations in my teens with my working trials dogs in competition, as mentioned above.

Ideally a reward-based training regime is the best. Having trained a minimum of over 15,000 dogs (not including behaviour cases) in my lifetime and mostly one to one dog training in public, often under the most difficult circumstances, one has to use flexible training methods to be successful in an urban environment. Dog Law is also watching today and that without equivocation can activate whilst you are trying to rehabilitate or train a difficult dog.

# The confusing myriad of amateurs versus professionals and lack of clear skill boundaries is endemic in the dog world.

The first matter to address is sorting the wheat trainers from the chaff trainers and the many conversations my colleagues and I have had with pet dog owners can only lead to one conclusion: The professional trainer with quantitative full-time experience as well as courses completed, and the life experiences of practice are the minority. They deal mostly with the dogs that have especially challenging behaviour issues. It is unfortunate that most “positive only” trainers are the hobbyist type who dabble at the edges and are certainly not qualified as industry professionals. They are often the loudest on social media having endless time on their hands; they often appear narcissistic and need attention – social media is of course heaven for them. Their virtual signalling is their elixir of life.

Over four decades I have met and chatted to many of these hobbyist trainers, and many do a good job within the limits of their knowledge and time invested in learning – they are, on the whole, part-timers averaging about 2 to 5 hours training/instructing a week, which is fine for beginner classes and basics. They are not professional trainers, however, nor can they be by sheer logical accumulative knowledge be described as a professional. Conversely, the good ones don't make false claims or train outside of their knowledge base and don't spend their life attacking others online for attention.

## Bad idea pathogens

Too many “positive only” trainers propagate “bad idea pathogens”, that are killing common sense and rational debate in the area of dog training and behaviour. Many regurgitate a lot of ineffective training claims through their frenetic activity – spending more time on social media than actually training dogs and making statements of purported fact that are generally unsupported by results or court level evidence. They seem to share the toxicity of many Internet trolls, being driven on by attention seeking and moralising negative behaviours.

I place these aberrant trainers in three classifications using the red traffic light code:

Green – state that they are “positive only”, but use correction and negative reinforcement, when necessary, even if rarely. These are using the term “positive” in a very flexible manner often for marketing purposes.

Amber: are more ideologically programmed and are unrealistic in claiming results especially with difficult dog cases, but despite failure, continue the mantra of “positive only”. They are frequently deluded and disabled by intelligent thought.

Red: fanatics occupy this space and I feel these ideologues are dangerous. They do more harm than good, confuse owners and are intolerant of reality, others’ opinions and are generally ineffective beyond basic commands, which in fact most pet owners can train their dogs to do without any trainer’s assistance.

## Dog education organisations

Are dog organisations generally good and well intentioned? Yes. However, the fact you belong to an organisation does not guarantee expertise as a dog trainer for the public and less so professional knowledge levels.

However, organisations such as The Guild of Dog Trainers [www.godt.uk](http://www.godt.uk) have set minimum standards to attain the status of Master Trainer.

The Guild of Dog Trainers offers in-house education courses to enable learners to acquire a variety of skills essential to those aspiring to be professional dog trainers. In addition, there is the opportunity to attain the highest academic and vocational training offered by the Cambridge Institute of Dog Behaviour and Training (CIDBT) [www.cidbt.org.uk](http://www.cidbt.org.uk) This is a unique higher educational partnership in the UK. Both organisations are supported by The Pet Education, Training and Behaviour Council, which was the first of its type in Britain to set minimum standards in dog training and behaviour. See [www.petbc.uk](http://www.petbc.uk) for further information.

In addition, there are many professional dog trainers who are not members of any organisation and are highly skilled; I call these the independent trainers. The successful ones need recommendation and as such, like all good dog trainers, produce satisfactory results hence why they are successful.

# The Professional Standards for Dog Trainers and Behaviourists in the UK

In most professions a person who is not trained professionally cannot control or influence a professional body's aims and standards – think of vets, electricians, engineers, etc. The people who set the standards for these professions are not part-timers who practice engineering at home working a few hours a week and thereafter be allowed to attend and influence professional meetings/committees on professional standards. It is simply not tolerated, however at various national meetings I have observed and attended – these hobbyists extol their opinions on dog behaviour training and without reservation can state are absolutely out of their knowledge depth. Opinions are fine, but not all are equal. Animal behaviour academics have also attended such meetings and are wholly unqualified to sit at the table at the behest of their mates and too are often clueless and as inexperienced as their cohorts.

The dog training and behaviour world is like the Wild West, which is why pet owners are so often confused. I have witnessed this nonsense at the Companion Animal Welfare Council (CAWC) meetings. Dog training hobbyists who frequently could not train or manage their own dogs and are absolutely not professional, were enjoined by clueless academics with doctorates in snakes, blackbirds and many other species – apart from dogs! – attempting to formulate dog training and behaviour protocols for professionals like me. Absolutely outrageous! But the academics got in first. They know how to work the system and set the agenda to suit themselves despite never working in the dog industry, so it's not just some hobbyist trainers who interfere, academia also has its pervasive unqualified Trojans trying to wrest control of the dog industry for their own self-interest and especially in the dog behaviour discipline and monopolise a control. It's often about power and academics love power. However, as Yogi Berra wrote: **“In theory there is no difference between theory and practice. In practice there is”**.

It's not surprising that the public experience great difficulty in finding a qualified dog trainer through this morass of misinformation and disinformation.

# The more difficult dog behaviour and training challenges

Often a difficult dog has to be trained speedily and within a time frame set by owners, whether we like it or not and within their ability to afford that same advice; these are patent facts, often ignored by ineffective hobbyist trainers. These hectoring “positive only” types berate dog owners about how patient they need to be, shouldn’t own a dog if they’re not prepared to put the work in and so forth – this hectoring cuts no ice with a pet dog owner who understands the reality of their situation as by the time a professional dog trainer/behaviourist meets these pet dog owners their charges have normally been through the mill of endless “positive only” trainers proffering no solutions and with failures because of the ineffective one size fits all ideology. When positive/reward does not provoke change what do you do next? These ideologues have no answer.

I have heard of cases where they suggest euthanizing the dog and dogs have been killed at the vets not because the dog cannot be assisted but by ineffective ideology. They simply do more wind bagging, stating the truth is anathema, can’t possibly admit a massive knowledge gap. As Albert Einstein stated, “Genius has its limitations unlike stupidity”.

Difficult dogs presented to me are not my ideal cases, but that is the reality of practice in dog behaviour and people alike, not all people are as flexible as I would like, but that is the situation presented, not the one I chose. Another tactic “positive only” trainers use is to feign their love of dogs and exaggerate how we all need to hold hands and see it from the dog’s perspective, its sounds great and fluffy, but useless if the behaviour stays unchanged especially when criminal law is being broken, families are being destabilised and the dog is on final countdown. Sometimes I arrive on the scene just before the dog is about to be re-homed, euthanized or other awful final solution and that’s why time is critical for behavioural change. Aggression is a most difficult area and hardly any dog rescue centres take aggressive dogs in my experience despite their claims to the contrary. Attempting to re-home an aggressive dog is most difficult and rescue centres can be prosecuted in civil and criminal law if they get it wrong.

In general, I have occasionally to use, where applicable, equipment to assist the management of difficult dogs, I do so because owners pay me for help in changing their dog’s aberrant behaviour. The overwhelming majority of these dogs thereafter lead happy fruitful lives until old age with a great owner relationship. If using reward only worked, I would use that as I am a

reward based professional, but that is not always viable in such complex cases, especially in a difficult environment where a dog lives. I deal with critical cases, Urban comes to mind here. My job is to do my best to secure that dog's future and life; in such circumstances a piece of food is not a solution hence why I am called in.

## My dog training styles

Dogs without doubt contribute much to our eudaimonia and by return when training my own dogs from puppyhood, I use reward via voice tonality, toys, touch and much close interaction; the most powerful being psychological inducements to focus the dog on me in all situations in order to illicit the training responses I need at that time. In those same circumstances, teaching the dog, whether distracted or not, that I am worth watching because of the fun we can have together, that's it in a nutshell – well a big nutshell. Early puppy conditioning is critical.

## Early dog / puppy training development

At first when training my puppies, it's should always take place in really friendly induced conditions, in the house and garden until I can transfer the same training into areas with more distractions, the very environment they will have life experiences and within the social boundaries of dog law and their peer canines. The end game is a trained dog in all situations without constantly giving food, the main default of too many amateur trainers, which I call the three FFFs: Frenetic Food Feeders. If reward is used incorrectly or too often, positive reinforcement can cause dogs to become set in their ways and when the reward is not forthcoming, they regress – and quickly. However, if dogs are accustomed to positive reinforcement for a specific behaviour, they may be resistant to change because they think they might not be rewarded for a different kind of behaviour. Dogs need to learn and understand that reinforcement is related to pre actions not just their behavioural action at the time, this is a critical psychological component often misunderstood.

Of course, as a dog trainer I have been willing to spend inordinate amounts of time until I gain the best trained puppy/dog. That is not the same for many pet dog owners; their dog is a pet and the time they are willing to put in is not comparable to a trainer and surprisingly to some hobbyists with demands on their time. Fitting in with a dog behaviourist and trainer is not often a priority compared to say caring for their family and other mandatory daily duties. These are simple plain facts of modern life and will affect your advice as an expert.

I don't know a trainer or behaviourist who would disagree that reward based induced training methods are superior to negative training styles, but that said "positive only" has its limits when serious aberrant behaviour is an established and well-practised behaviour in a dog whether inherent and compounded or learnt – that's the crux of dynamics related to situational training.

Positive ideologues simply have no solutions for a dog which chases deer, attacks other dogs, attacks people, won't come back for a reward, chases cars and many more problematic embedded behaviours other than endless lecturing with a bag of food. We are not talking about training a dog to take a treat to sit in an empty room and declare "look it works!"

I have solved all the above and many more complex behaviour issues always having a powerful component of maximum reward in such circumstances. Whether using a long line, face collar, check on a lead, voice admonishment commands, all are useful and essential in many circumstances. The dog, like a child, has to link sounds Yes and No as approval and disapproval to guide its development in our complex society.

## The algorithmic "positive only" ideologue.

These people spend much time using discursive construction of truth, ideology and thereafter the emergence of post-truth narratives in contemporary dog behavioural training psychology. It's a form of canine Marxism, except most of the adherents would not understand the politics of that destructive ideology; their primary academic reading is Facebook.

They seem ideologically possessed and can be predicted easily, in fact everything that they are going to say is an algorithmic substructure of their "positive only" dogma, which is usually predicated on several repetitive axioms, and which automatically generates speech content on what they are about to say. This alleviates any responsibility for thinking on what they are about to say but allows them to believe that they have full control and knowledge about the entire positive training dictum without a moment's thinking. That is an ideologue and the reason why they are a danger to dogs and owners alike; they don't think they are separated from dog training problems in the real complex world, their way is the only way and everybody, however skilled who does not believe in such ideological junk, is bad. They are the Mecca of one-style-fits-all dog training served in a pompous, smug, self-satisfying style. They ooze social media narcissism.

I have always seen my job to educate dog owners and students to understand the dog's mind, its instinctive drives, to train dogs using the most efficient and successful styles to achieve the model outcome and with genuine kindness. I use operant conditioning as defined by science, which has component parts of positive and negative, it's how humans and all mammals learn.

## English Criminal Dog Law trumps all dog training methodologies

Our society is ruled by criminal and civil law and the egregious dog laws trump all training methods that may expose the dog owner to prosecution if unheeded. Most dog owners overwhelmingly live in urban environments, many don't have vehicles and their training of a difficult dog with aberrant behaviour can break the dog laws as they stand today in public or in a private dwelling.

Most dog owners do not have a secluded field or training space, spending all year using spurious, ineffective "positive only" methods. Even those owners who have limited empty spaces still have to re-engage into urban landscapes with the corresponding difficulties at some point. They are daily exposed to dogs and people – not all social interactions on their terms, but as presented in real society. They often have family and other time restrictions. The Law is watching them, and they frequently walk in constant fear of a confrontation with other dogs and or people; most have already had several bad experiences and have worked out where not to walk if possible, what time of day, in the least crowded area if any. They don't need a patronising "positive only" trainer to tell them the blindingly obvious and paying for it accompanied by "give it a treat". They need advice that works. In essence they are the experts of their specific dog's reactions in society and are asking for behavioural advice that works – not "don't walk near dogs, find somewhere quiet, he needs space". How strange that the owner never worked that out.

## The following critical factors determine training/behaviour methods used but not all:

- The dog behaviour problem is as seriousness as the owner views it
- Time frame dictated by circumstances and seriousness of the behaviour
- The criminal and civil law consequences for the dog and its owner if any
- The safety of the public and family who encounter dogs out of control, if any
- The owner's willingness to follow a long and or short-term programme
- The dog's living circumstances, and family members involved
- The outside environment it moves in, and social interactions daily encountered
- Any current legal actions to be or are triggered at the time
- Long- and short-term desired outcomes

I must have heard several hundred stories from clients who have the same formalistic prelude from the positive ideological trainer, which in general contains the following:

### Their modus operandi

- "I am kind and absolutely positive
- I love dogs
- I use methods that are gentle – anybody who disagrees is bad
- This may take some time to alter your dog's behaviour (which is a euphemism for forever)
- I need to explain your dog's needs (ignoring the owners)
- You have to follow all these rules (meaning put your kids and life on hold)
- Nothing negative must happen (ignoring the massive negative that the dog may lose its home)

They go on and on in this ideological lecture until the dog leaves the room out of boredom and when it comes to methodologies, they are applied whether **workable** or not. When they don't work, press repeat and keep up the ideological non-working algorithm, because there is no more to offer through this vacuous simplicity. They have no genuine empathy for the dog's owner, only their own agenda: It's not about dogs it's about them, self-delusion and belonging to the "woke brigade of intolerance".

The bill is then demanded and when no dog training change takes place it's either the owner's fault or let's charge you again for another programmed patronising lecture, which is equally ineffective until the owner loses patience and realises this person is faking it. Some disappointed pet owners eventually find a good professional trainer after such a harrowing experience and the new trainer/behaviourist who is competent, versatile and gets a result from the starting point that is now worse for the new trainer because of delays.

Owners who are not lucky enough to find a professional skilled trainer believe their dog is beyond skilled help – having experienced a series of ideologues through the door and view all trainers the same. The dog is then disposed of in ways previously described.

How do I know this, because we currently have records of hundreds of these cases from CFBA members and other dog trainers from organisations like the BIPDT, GoDT and many independent trainers. Let me give you a few examples to illustrate the problem:

## Dog Behaviour Case: dog endlessly barking

My colleague was called to house where a dog was barking at every noise from inside the home and at people passing outside the home in front of the house day and night on a residential street. The owner had received many complaints and under the noise abatement criminal act (Environmental Protection Act, 1990) – all this was upsetting her family situation, notwithstanding the barking was driving her family mad too. It was obvious to any behaviourist that the dog was of a mildly fearful/anxious disposition. It had also learnt that barking over hundreds of occasions alerted the owner who came running and spoke (shouted) to the dog – a great reinforcement, but in essence it didn't need a reinforcement, it was barking as a base temperament defect. That's the quick version.

The owner, via a vet, was recommended an animal behaviourist from an organisation well known in the UK. The behaviourist told the owner that she was "positive only" in approach and the normal half hour of how she was nice, understood dogs and wrote a long rambling report that said nothing other than endless possibilities, theorised waffle and maybe another consultation.

The behaviourist's main recommendation was for the owner to blank out all her windows facing the street for a few weeks, so the dog had no eye

stimulation to bark. The owner did this, placing her house in semi darkness with lots of greaseproof paper and gaffer tape!

The husband came home and was not pleased with what seemed intolerable advice. However, because the behaviourist had a Clinical Animal Behaviour Degree he relented. It was true she had a degree in animals not specifically dogs, but little qualitative skills or experience just an academic theory degree. I will cut to the chase, after one week the dog still barked at exactly the same rate throughout the day and at similar levels, if not more; its barking was now intolerable and with the complaints, the owner was fearing impending criminal law action. After the owner sent repeated emails and calls stating that nothing had changed the behaviourist suggested another £350.00 chat as the pet insurance had run out. The husband took all the window coverings off and said the dog had to go.

My colleague from The Canine & Feline Behaviour Association subsequently arrived via a recommendation to the owner who was frantic to keep her dog. He assessed all the triggers and what could be achieved realistically not theoretically, in that time frame. He placed a number of behavioural redirection programmes in place and used Dog Training Discs to distract the dog with the word "No". Lo and behold the dog on that first day ceased barking within a few one-minute lessons, timing and noise association being crucial. He also pointed out what was blindingly obvious, but many "behaviourists" may not know, the dog's extraordinary hearing skill was the main trigger of outside pedestrian noise, not sight. The previous expert missed the obvious, which demonstrated why skill and experience cannot be replaced by theory.

My colleague introduced a few re directed games as follow-ups to the discs and Kong food release programmes to alleviate boredom too. And after a few days the owner stated that the average of 30 or more barking sessions had reduced to a few, which were instantly interrupted via the disc noise and command "NO". It was solved. The husband was relieved, and the dog stayed, and all worked out. Do note that there were other programmes introduced to work on the dogs' temperament, but the first dramatic change was that the dog no longer spent most of the day stressed with its owner's anger when it barked. Peace reigned and most of all the owner reported a much more calm dog and their relationship was now positive, the dog became more relaxed and so did the owners. The psychological behaviour and atmosphere of the owners being angry at their dog dissipated, inducing the dog to a calmer state.

## Negative interactions with dogs that “positive trainers” execute but are ignorant of

- Taking a puppy from its mother (mild to critical separation anxiety stress): Negative
- Stopping dogs getting to other dogs, a natural drive: Negative
- Leaving a dog in a car and walking away – dogs are pack animals and get stressed initially: Negative
- Placing a dog on lead and collar/harness restricts a dog’s freedom: Negative action
- Stopping a dog chasing animals, a natural instinctive behaviour: Negative
- Keeping a dog in house with no free access 24/7 causes stress re defecation: Negative

Head collars and muzzles can be useful and are used by most dog trainers’ behaviourists and many positive only trainers, but very few dogs do not react negatively to such attachments to their head/face however introduced and many positive only trainers seem oblivious to the psychological harm they impose on a dog day after day. All muzzles face collars are not positive from a dog’s mind set – they are negative and alien. They maybe necessary and overtime a dog may become conditioned to accept them but that does not negate the initial negativity and often permanent fear and or rejection of the face coverings – for many dogs the experience is traumatic and even years later they still dislike the muzzles/face collars. Proffering a treat does not negate what I have described. These facts taken from our CFBA records of 5000 dogs monitored.

Long lines may be essential but without equivocation is negative by restriction, end tightening of the line and a sudden stop on the neck or harness. Harnesses can also cause a negative reaction on a dog hence why dogs initially try to remove them with their teeth, roll and rub against objects to get rid of the body clamp. The dog experiences the harness as a negative and most unnatural. All the aforementioned training equipment maybe necessary in some cases but to delude yourself its all positive is simply lack of reality and more to do with blind dogma as previously described.

Laws and social rules mean we have to enact the above, but do not mean the actions are positive; they are all negative on a dog’s free spirit and pretending you are “positive only” is not a truism.

# Social Media Negativity

Unfortunately, we seem to have landed in a place whereby dog orientated social media commentators are vindictive and scurrilous to the point of being vile where too many of them claim qualification or expertise and have an odious opinion. Not all opinions or qualifications are equal and voicing an opinion or criticising another should be based on full-time training and professional experience, not on the last unsubstantiated Tweet or Facebook comment.

These angry, driven people seem to be desirous of occupying the high moral ground which unfortunately for them is as shallow as their sociopathic tendencies.

I have worked with dogs and people all of my life and I am sceptical of the words “new” and “modern” in training, which generally means not new or modern just semantics and word games with endless non-evidenced claims at being better, kinder and the end game of narcissistic attention seeking on the internet by the trainer. I only engage with professional, skilled people who matter, gain results and who have a body of excellent work behind them and are not anonymous.

I am open to new ideas, but they do have to work and be practical for pet owners. Hot air claims are just that. One trainer claims he can train any dog out of its aberrant behaviour via games, now that’s positive is it not? That’s some claim, it’s not true of course and he cannot validate these extraordinary claims. Twenty-five years before his claim I trained dogs via motivational games and still do, that’s how we taught police dogs to track or attack criminals. So, what is it he states that is unequivocally untrue? He claims that **“All behaviour problems can be solved via by games”**. But his ilk attracts the naive and especially the “positive only” ideologues. Look, he can achieve miracles; follow the prophet of Facebook.

## Dog aggression a reality check

Another claim is that using food endlessly will stop a dog exhibiting aggression and solve the issue. First, only mildly aggressive dogs especially fear-based ones, can be influenced, but rarely cured by using food only; conversely, seriously embedded aggressions cannot be solved by food (treats), so that claim is also de facto untrue – at best it’s a momentary distraction, but not a focus changer. A pet owner following this nonsensical advice simply builds up the negative behaviours as time passes – their dog’s repetitive aggressive displays over a longer period of

time causes the behaviour to embed further. In essence the positive only dogma has compounded the aberrant dog behaviour and all too often after method failure, the “positive only” trainer culprit does not answer the phone or email request and goes into hiding like an ostrich.

“Positive only” can mean so many different things to different trainers. Some use negative and positive, but state they are “positive only” which is confusing to say the least. Others claim “positive only”, but happily use a lead or long line for recall, which has a check action when the dog runs its course, but don’t realise that that’s negative according to the ideological nonsense of “positive only”. So, it’s worth defining each trainer’s claims so we know where we are.

My holistic reward-based approach is good but has to be combined with reality and real situations not ideology regurgitated on some Facebook page.

The Cambridge Institute of Dog Behaviour & Training have had a philosophical statement online for 18 years stating the following: “Any person who feels that they have dog training behaviour methods which are effective/kinder than any we teach are welcome to come to the CIDBT training institute to demonstrate such methods on camera. We will embrace such methods if they prove to be more efficient and work. To date not one dog trainer in Britain has offered to example such skills at the CIDBT, but thousands claim on social media they know better.

## The Dangerous Dogs Act 1991 and Positive only ideologues

A surreal dogma led hobby trainer may suggest you only EVER use a positive treat to get your dog’s attention when it displays aggression to another dog on the street, but can’t quite explain and blatantly ignore the realities of holding a large dog propelling its self-bulk forward with vocalised aggression and possibly with biting intent, one hand holding food is generally not workable whilst being dragged over, issuing commands above the noise of traffic and barking is most unclear especially when the only consequence for the aggressive dogs is a treat if proffered or the motivation to attack, or defend itself whichever is the greater motivation. And if the aggression is dog targeted the handler cannot control other dog’s episodic approaches to his aggressive dog – these are innumerable in complexity.

They may even recommend a dog harness so your dog can use three times its strength to pull you off balance unless you are an Olympic weight trainer, simultaneously telling you it's better for the dog (kind) and ignoring your struggles or inability to stay on your feet. It's this patent unwillingness to use common sense that's a serious issue for these hobbyists.

If the treat was the greater motivator well all the tens of thousands of aggressive dog's behaviour would be solved quickly and this article would be superfluous. Not so, back to reality, in essence the way practical training combined with psychological manipulation works is that "the motivation to induce a dog to follow your commands and or wishes has to be greater than the dogs drive to do what it wishes to do at that time and in that location". It's that simple!

There is nothing intrinsic in a dog's mind set to want to be trained, to do what you want or even to wish to please you in anyway. Its only inherent function is to follow its evolutionary instincts in each environment you place it in be it a field, a car or a park or killing your neighbours pet rabbit. The fact that the dogs have been domesticated does not mean it's not a wild animal; domestication modifies its natural evolutionary instincts sufficient for us to manage them. Like all pack group species that particular pack behaviour we manipulate in dog training to our advantage "The Pack". Unlike domestic cats which are a solitary.

The fear driven dog is being walked down the street on a lead its defensively aggressive but has learnt to execute fake and or fear vocalisation aggression as a pretext defence action and barks leaps at or barks or intimidates a person with a dog in that same street. The criminal dog law The Dangerous Dogs Act is now broken; the handler of this aggressor dog, commits the offence of owning a dangerously out of control dog in public. This is initiated via a complaint from the target person to the Police and or by third party too. The target person does not have to be bitten or even nearly bitten they simply have to state they were in fear of being attacked. Once, as a trainer, you tie yourself to an ideology that is the end of your learning.

## The law states Dangerous Dogs Act, 1991

A dog shall be regarded as dangerously out of control on any occasion on which there are grounds for reasonable apprehension that it will injure any person or assistance dog, whether or not it actually does so. (Section 10(3) Dangerous Dogs Act 1991).

Case Law: In addition: The dog trainer/handler is liable in case law. More than one person may be 'in charge' of a dog at any given time.

It does not matter what you the owner of the aggressive dog believes to be true of your dog's temperament. The dog owner of the aforementioned aggressor dog is liable to be arrested or summoned, fined and their dog possibly seized, thereafter the owner cannot visit the dog if the Police decide. All from that one action, on that street, on that day with your titbit following an expert's nonsense.

That should make the ideologue think when training other people's dogs, but they don't, they simply follow more of the same, unfortunately for the pet dog owner and to their dog's detriment. How do I know this? Because I have worked in the criminal court circuit for 30 years plus and am Home Office trained in criminal law and dog law. I meet many people in court as a result of circumstances I have just alluded to. I always advise pet owners who have had this awful amateurish training advice to issue a civil action against the trainer for damages; one cannot just ignore this mistreatment of loving pet owners, because the trainer means well or apparently loves dogs, these trainers need to learn more and note their limitations.

The Dangerous Dogs Act, 1991 does not decree that the owner of the aggressor dog and or the "positive only" trainer accompanying them can try to dissuade the dog in the middle of this aggressive action via a treat, as if one can realistically place a treat in front of a dog's nose whilst it is surging forward in a microsecond. The law says you will control it, meaning STOP the dog immediately; pull it back/stopping the leap immediately; stop the growling immediately. These are negative actions pulling or checking the dog back under operant conditioning and what thousands of dog owners do each day in Britain knowing their dogs' trigger points as they try to manage such dogs in public or private. And all this in a noisy urban street where commands are not even audible to the dog's ears when it is growling, barking or set on its course of action. That is reality. Of course, many or most of these dogs are not going to bite and some are muzzled, but the law does not allow for what might be the outcome only on the initial perceived aggressive action by the target person. As stated from my descriptions the law is technically broken.

# A pet dog owners rights

Any pet dog owner who is indoctrinated with the accompanying diatribe of how “positive only” trainers are lovely, kind, the best, love dogs, do not use any lead force to bring their dog back to their personal space immediately should demand the following: Tell the “positive only” trainer to sign a legal agreement that they accept full lawful responsibility and accept all legal consequences including fines and paying for the dog’s incarceration if seized, as well as court prosecution and defence costs. That is the starting point for the dog owner. I tell owners to get a signed statement to that effect. Strange when asked to sign, the ideologue trainer disappears making the normal excuses. If “positive only” works, what’s the issue? It’s them fiddling around the edges of dog behaviour purporting to be an expert, which they are not. That is why I believe them to be dangerous and very unkind to dogs and pet dog owners and wholly responsible for dogs with mild aggressive behaviour becoming out of control through inadequate advice over time.

Of course, a trainer who uses necessary force to stop such aggressive behaviour is not placing the pet owner in such circumstances, is obeying the law and does not have to sign any document.

In my Court experience, if you tell a Judge, you were a “positive only” trainer and attempting to dissuade the dog from its aggressive action by being kind and with treats – it will be viewed as negligent and irresponsible – you will feel the full weight of the law and suffer a criminal record too if found culpable in civil and or criminal cases. Be warned “positive only” trainers. This law also applies in all dog training venues and even your home or garden.

Humans with our large brains comparative to animals, understand consequences theoretically should not need negative reinforcers. In a light-hearted way I used to teach students that when a driver goes through a red traffic light he’s fined – NEGATIVE – if he drives through a green one he receives no reward. Why don’t we give people a fiver for driving through a green light POSITIVE? Because some will always drive through a red one, because the fiver is not always a motivator!

**We have thousands of laws that all have negative outcome if broken. Negative reinforcers do work. Dogs don’t have the luxury of a complex mind that can foresee consequences of an action other than by immediate experience, so like a young child they need clear black and white boundaries that match their brain limitations given at the time of an action.**

If you are a fair, kind, good dog trainer who uses mainly rewards, but embraces the notion that there should be no consequence for unwanted behaviour, the dog will continue to respond in that manner. It knows no different unless corrected.

I have advised a number of trainers to use law to expose people who libel online. It's worth reading such laws. Each time I have issued legal proceedings the outcome has been excellent for me, not so good for the libeller.

Do I let dog owners off the hook for their errors of judgement in dog ownership? No, I am very aware that they choose the wrong breed and/or don't put the research in before purchasing a dog. After over 20.000 client cases I would be remiss to not mention that. However, humans have natural drives and behaviours, which means they make plenty of errors and once they ask for help our job is not to be negative by berating them, but to show skill, compassion and most of all teach an operable set of skills which change their skill set and thereafter the dog's behaviour in the quickest time frame. That is a professional canine educator.

**Colin Tennant, March 2022**