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Slick Way To Train Animals: “Click And Reward” Technique

Even old dogs can learn new tricks with “Click and Reward”, a slick and quick animal training technique developed by Jim and Amy Logan, Chattaroy, Washington. The professional animal trainers have released two videos on the subject, hold training clinics at their northeast Washington ranch and have a third training video in production.

“Traditional training is based on not doing the wrong thing out of fear,” says Jim Logan. “Once you work with clicker training, you find how much quicker it is to train with operant behavior. It is a positive experience for the animal.”

The Logans have primarily used the technique to train llamas but they say it can be used on any animal, making them easier to catch, halter or lead. The Logans have trained llamas to put their noses into halters, move chess pieces with their mouth on command, travel through a 12-15 point obstacle course unaltered, enter a trailer and many other activities.

The training sticks with animals, too. Five years ago they used it to train a llama to pick up litter and put it in a garbage can. But then they never did it again. “This year we pulled him out of his pen, tossed some papers out on the ground, set out a garbage can, and watched him go to work,” says Logan.

The technique itself isn’t new. It has been used successfully on everything from falcons to bull elephants by a number of professional animal trainers since the 1960s. “The key is to break down behaviors into small bits,” says Jim Logan. “Then you use a reward to shape their behavior to get them to repeat the act. As you work with them, they get to the point where the act itself is the reinforcing reward. It is similar to being told you have to exercise and then over time you learn to like it.”

In one example offered on the Logan’s web page (members.aol.com/snowridge1.index.click) the animal is rewarded each time it even looks at a target item. If the animal moves toward the item, it is again rewarded. Eventually, the animal becomes a willing partner in the training process.

A hand held clicker is used to signal success to the animal. Initially, it is used whenever a reward is given, conditioning the animal to relate the sound of the click to the reward. Eventually it becomes a reward. Logan recalls a bird trainer using a laser pen as a clicker, while training a high flying



The Logans have trained llamas to move chess pieces with their mouth on command.

falcon to fly at different levels.

The Logans have spent several years traveling around the country putting on clinics teaching the basics of Click and Reward training. Over the next year, they plan 6 to 7 clinics on the road, as well as training camps for small groups at their ranch. They are also developing a new program for training groups of animals at the same time to carry out the same action. They have used it to train four llamas to enter a room on the invitation of their young niece, lay down when she opens a book and reads to them, and then lay their heads down on the floor when she finishes reading and announces nap time!

“They see others doing the behavior and learn from them,” explains Logan.

For more information on Click and Reward, check out the Logan’s web site or contact them for more information on their videos and training programs. The videos are Vol. 1: Clicker Training Basics; and Vol. 2: Applied Training & Undesirable Behaviors. Each volume costs \$54.95 and comes with two clickers, an instruction booklet and priority shipping.

Contact FARM SHOW Follow-Up: Jim and Amy Logan, Snow Ridge Llamas, Rt. 3 Box 78, Chattaroy, Wash. 99003 (ph 888-332-5425; Web site: <http://members.aol.com/snowridge1.index.click>).



The first thing you see when you approach Al Shipp’s home is a lighthouse and a tall wooden yard arm for flying a flag. Lighthouse measures 12 ft. in dia. and 32 ft. high.

“LIGHTHOUSE” BRINGS BACK PORT-OF-CALL MEMORIES

Navy Retiree Builds “Lighthouse” Home

Al Shipp of Shipman, Ill., spent 20 years in the Navy, mostly in submarines. So when he retired, he wanted a home with some Navy features and a sea motif. His wife, who trades in antiques, was all for it.

What they came up with is a “lighthouse” home on a hill, complete with a tall wooden yard arm for flying a flag.

Shipp designed the 12-ft. dia., 32-ft. high wooden tower himself. It has three floors, with the first floor used as a dining room, the second floor as an office, the third floor as a bedroom. There’s also an observation room on top with a blinking light in it.

To add to the naval theme there’s a submarine “snorkel” sticking out of the ground about 150 ft. from the house. The snorkel is an 18-in. dia. aluminum air duct that extends about 7 ft. above ground. It connects to a 12-in. dia. plastic pipe that runs underground to the house. Outside air is drawn through the pipe by a fan during summer. The air cools off underground and is blown into the house to provide “free” air conditioning.

Also fitting into a marine view of things is Shipp’s 32-ft. long “gazeboat” – a 32-ft. long houseboat that’s complete with a phone and electricity. “My wife wanted a gazebo for the yard. When she found this retired house boat I knew just the place for it,” he says.



Submarine “snorkel” sticks out of ground about 150 ft. from house. Snorkel connects to a 12-in. dia. plastic pipe that runs underground to house. Outside air is drawn through pipe by a fan during summer to provide “free” air conditioning.

He also made a steel submarine mailbox complete with a propeller on back. “It’s a cozy place to live. We really like it,” says Shipp.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Allison Shipp, 9327 Ridge Road, Shipman, Ill. 62685 (ph 217 854-7245).



A 32-ft. long houseboat with phone and electricity serves as a gazebo in the yard.