**Q. My puppy has started to mouth me whenever I offer her a treat, it hurts! What can I do?**

A. Good question, it is surprising how puppy teeth can hurt whatever breed size, and mouthing does need to be stopped. Puppies should learn not to snatch! A good method is to teach your puppy a ‘leave it’ command, in a way that they learn not to bother trying *and* recognise that the ‘leave it’ means the ‘take it’ command is coming! This method uses operant conditioning, where the puppy learns a new behaviour from the outcome of its own, if the puppy does it right they get rewarded if they don’t they have nothing! Ask your puppy to sit facing you. Present a pea sized treat in a closed fist, thumb facing upward, about 9 inches from your puppy’s mouth at a height that they can stay sitting. Allow your puppy to try to take the treat and ‘at the same time’ keep your *hand still* and ask your puppy to leave it. Use a soft voice and don’t say anything else – at all! Try not to let your puppy use their feet or jump up and hopefully they will not mouth you for too long either – if needed you can wear protective gloves! As your puppy stops or looks away or toward you, then open your hand and at the same time, say the command ‘take it’. Watch your puppy’s behaviour very carefully you must open your hand the moment they have stopped trying to get the treat. If you are carrying this out correctly then most dogs learn this exercise within 10 to 12 exercises or less. The outcome is they no longer try to push you for a treat but wait for the ‘take it’ command. You can build this exercise to a sit and recall too, by gradually teaching your puppy that they stay in one place and ‘leave it’, when you open your hand you do so when it is by your side, and then when you take a step away, then a bit further. Like all training do not try to rush your exercises, you will most likely set yourself up to fail!

**Q. My husband and I have just taken on a rescued Cockerpoo for our family. I have three children from age 7 upward. We were recommended to use a ‘clicker’ to train her, but we are not sure where to start?**

A. Using a clicker for the family to train is brilliant because the clicker sound stays consistent whoever is training and incidentally, whatever mood you are in! To start your training, you need to do something called ‘charging her’ to the clicker. This applies classical conditioning, in other words you must teach her that the clicker sound has a value to her. Like the lead predicts a walk, the clicker predicts a reward is coming. Later in her training the clicker will be a ‘marker’ to tell her she has carried out a correct response. For the second part of her training see the next edition of Rescue Magazine. There are different viewpoints on how to do this, but I apply a simple exercise, I am not worried what the dog is doing at the time, but it is easier sometimes if you ask your dog to sit in front or to the side of you. Have several pea size treats (large breeds need bigger offerings) but they need to be kept somewhere away from you, like in a treat bag. Have the clicker in your left hand if you are right handed or vice versus if left handed. In most cases the clicker should start by being behind your back or in your pocket so that it has a softer sound. If you have a ‘sound sensitive’ dog the sound of the clicker can make a dog fear training and if they startle sufficiently, you will have lost the opportunity. Carry out this exercise for at least 10 times and then have a break. You should have a ‘start’ training command and a ‘finish’ training command in place, so your dog knows when it needs to concentrate and work and when it can relax and switch off. When you have carried out several short exercise at pairing the clicker with a treat then you need to ‘test her learning’. When you have finished training allow her to wander off or take part in another activity, with the clicker hidden, press the clicker and she how she responds. If she has learned about it, she should look at you or come to you. If not start again the next day and build your training slowly. Training the use of a Flicker is similar if you have a deaf dog.