

## **It's All About Leadership!** by Marcia Albert

The most important and rewarding thing you can do to improve your relationship with your dog is to be a good leader. If your pup doesn't feel that you are in charge, he will strive to be top dog. Well, that sounds fine, but HOW does one become a good leader?

### **Your dog works for everything that is important to him**

One of the most important steps to showing your leadership is to make your dog work for everything. In other words, he must understand that there is no free lunch.

An easy way to enforce this is to have him do a simple "Sit" before he goes out the door for a walk, a thirty second "Stay" before giving him dinner, a quick "Down" before you toss the ball for a game of Fetch, or "Give me your paw" before his last trip to his favorite tree on his way to bed.

### **You must be the one to begin and end all activities**

"Okay, Let's Go!!!! Yeah, Yeah, now. Hey, over here! Come on, throw the Frisbee!" Sound like your dog begging you to play? Does he nudge you? Paw you? Pester you? Hmmmmmm, when he wants you to play, that's just when you don't want to give in to him. Just as your dog must work for everything he gets, whatever he gets must be your idea not his. So when he pleads with you to play, ignore him until he stops. Once he's not actively trying to get your attention, wait a few minutes and then initiate play.

### **You control your dog's food**

Before feeding your dog, have him do a brief sit, or down stay. Then put his dish down and let him eat. If he doesn't finish in ten to fifteen minutes, pick up the remaining food. Making a point of putting food down at mealtimes rather than leaving food down all day (free feeding), is very important for three reasons. First, when you place the food in front of him he knows that you are the provider, and leaders provide. Second, meal time is a great time for practicing food dish exercises to prevent food guarding. Third, by doing a sit or down stay he is working for his food, which reinforces the fact that there is no free lunch! By the way, scheduled times refers to feeding your dog breakfast and, or dinner. Don't be concerned about a specific time, In fact, varying the time by an hour or so can be helpful. Then, when you are late getting home for dinner your pup doesn't become anxious about not being fed.

### **Because I said so.**

Where your dog sleeps is not nearly as important as will your dog move if you tell him to move? If your dog sleeps on the bed and you approve of his sleeping there, all well and good. However, Rover must move down from the bed when told "Off"; no questions asked on his part. If he is resting on the living room floor and in your way, he should move when told to. If he growls or refuses to move he should lose the privilege of sleeping on the bed or being in the living room. Teach him "Off" and "On". Make certain he understands what to do in response to those commands. Then let him on the bed or into the living room, and test him. Dogs must move when told to.

