## The Muzzle Grab

This is a compulsive technique designed to diminish and eventually extinguish unwanted mouthing and biting primarily in puppies. The technique can be use on adult dogs of an appropriate size. It should not be used on aggressive or fearful dogs and is designed as a harmless primary aversive technique.

## The Process:

During play or anytime the pup begins unwanted mouthing, offer a firm "NO" (only say this once firmly but unemotional). Immediately with your non-dominant hand, grab a handful of scruff (the loose skin of the neck). This is used to restrain and control the puppy. With the other hand grab completely around the muzzle and hold the mouth closed. The immediate reaction is going to be the desire to escape. This is an instinctive reaction called an opposition reflex. You must hold on to the dog firmly enough to insure that it doesn't escape, but not so firmly as to cause it any pain. The dog will struggle mightily the first couple of times you apply this technique, but you must hang on until the pup, gives up, calms down and completely relaxes. At that point you release the muzzle and begin a scruff massage (kneading the area) with the hand holding the scruff. This is a relaxation technique that all dogs find this very relaxing. After a few seconds of this you can release the puppy and resume whatever activity the two of you were engaged in prior to the mouthing. After using this technique a few times, the initial opposition reflex (the struggle) will quickly diminish. Continued use of the technique will result in the mouthing beginning to all but disappear.

If you would like to know more about the root behavior and why it is effective, read: **Muzzle Grab Behavior In Canids** by Roger Abrantes phd.

JMP DGS/K911® 2015-01-05