

Review

In FOCUS: Crying for Control

A DVD by Deborah Jones, Ph.D. and Judy Keller

By Martha Faulk

A few years ago for *Clean Run* I reviewed the book by authors Deborah Jones, Ph.D., and Judy Keller upon which the In FOCUS series of DVDs is based. I was enthusiastic about the In FOCUS program as outlined in the book, and I'm even more enthusiastic about the series of DVDs developed to illustrate both the theory and the practice of the program. DVDs are the perfect medium for illustrating training techniques because you get to see how action and timing affect performance.

The first DVD in this series, also reviewed for this magazine, is *In FOCUS: Foundation Work*. The foundation work is designed to help you to understand and practice the steps necessary to build a strong relationship with your dog through reward and reinforcement. It's highly recommended viewing before you undertake the more specific programs of "Crying for Control" and "Need for Speed."

Because Jones and Keller divide the world of performance dogs into those that are "having too much fun" and those that are "not having any or enough fun," they have produced separate DVDs to help handlers with both kinds of dogs. *In FOCUS: Need for Speed* presents a training program for dogs that are tentative performers and will be reviewed in an upcoming issue.

In this DVD, as in their book, the authors describe the "crying for control" dog as one that loves agility so much that his obsession becomes a major training challenge. These crying for control dogs need to learn self-control to get what they want and to be able to focus on the handler who can deliver the reward. A crying for control dog becomes extremely excited at the mere sight of dogs doing agility, and he would happily do the

agility course on his own without any direction from the handler. Most crying for control dogs share a keen interest in movement and action, and that's why they love agility so much. Jones and Keller further explain that just because a dog makes mistakes on course does not mean he's a crying for control candidate. They emphasize that fast, driven dogs need expert handling, and that a lack of solid training is not the same as having an "on-the-edge personality."

I adopted my rescue Australian Cattle Dog RebaRae because of her enthusiastic personality and athleticism. But, when I began to trial her, our problems included running out of the ring to steal food, zooming through the course of her choice when I lost eye contact with her, and (I hope I've said this delicately) goosing the judge in the derrière. The helpful advice from both the Foundation Work and the Crying for Control DVDs has resulted in a 100% qualifying rate at a recent trial.

If you have one of these crying for control dogs, the good news is that it's never too late to implement the In FOCUS program. You'll want to preserve all the drive, desire, and enthusiasm that your dog has. You'll learn how to do that by practicing the Premack principle: convincing your dog that his best opportunity to get what he wants—a chance to do agility—is to do what you want.

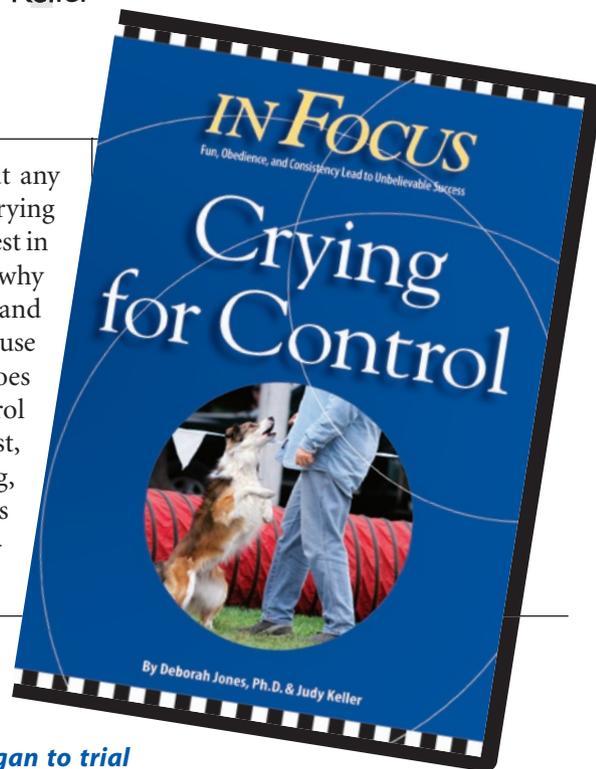
Using both food and toys for the crying for control dog is important for training, and Jones and Keller explain that although physical games such as tugging are a good way to keep your dog engaged with you, food rewards can have a calming effect. Food rewards delivered in a calm, quiet manner can help lower the dog's arousal level.

Gaining and keeping control is the key to successful agility experiences as the DVD illustrates in a number of steps, which are summarized under the major points below.

Impulse Control

It's vital to teach your dog to control his impulses, such as running away and stealing food. He must learn impulse control before taking food or a toy and before being allowed around agility equipment.

- **Gaining and Keeping Control:** A solid stay at the start line, usually a sit, is essential for the crying for control dog. Jones and Keller demonstrate how to reward the position you desire even as you move away from the dog and how to proof it with distractions.





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- **Maintaining Focus While Heeling:** Your dog must learn impulse control while moving. This control is practiced by moving with your dog close to your side—maintaining heeling—through all the agility obstacles without your dog taking the obstacles unless you give the cue for the obstacle.

- **Achieving Successful Agility Runs:** Your ultimate goal is to have good control over your dog when he is off leash. You want to be sure that he is capable of handling the responsibility of listening and responding to you.

There are three prerequisites for success described in this section:

- **Warm-ups:** For your dog to be in the proper mental and emotional state of mind, he needs to be calm and controlled rather than frantic

- **Start lines:** Anticipation of the agility run can be very hard for crying for control dogs, so you must pick a desired stationary position and heavily reinforce it

- **Collection points:** Positions around the course where you'll use eye contact with your dog to reconnect with him

I especially liked the demonstration of techniques involved in “collection points.” Jones and Keller illustrate how to reconnect with your dog by teaching him to come into you before and after doing an obstacle. They emphasize that the dog must come to either side that you ask for and look up to you for permission to continue. Although you might feel this could slow down your dog in the beginning, it will result in greater control and speed because the dog will learn to pay attention to your directions and not blast through the course. Other subjects discussed and illustrated are “Managing the Crying for Control Dog at Trials,” “Working through Regressions,” and “Enjoying Your Crying for Control Dog.”

Since I've been working the In FOCUS program, I've seen incredible results with my rescue Australian Cattle Dog, RebaRae. I adopted her because of her enthusiastic personality and athleticism. But, when I began to trial her, our problems included running out of the ring to steal food, zooming through the course of her choice when I lost eye contact with her, and (I hope I've said this delicately) goosing the judge in the derriere. The helpful advice from both the *Foundation Work* and the *Crying for Control* DVDs has resulted in a 100% qualifying rate at a recent trial.

I don't think agility can be more enjoyable than having your crying for control dog running with you as a team, at last.




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Martha Faulk, a lawyer and author who lives in Fort Collins, Colorado, teaches agility through the Larimer Humane Society. She competes with her two rescues, RebaRae, Australian Cattle Dog, and SallyAnn, Australian Shepherd. Her Border Terrier, EmmaLou, MX, MXI, and USDAA Performance National Standard semifinalist in 2005, is now retired. Contact Martha through marthfaulk@msn.com.