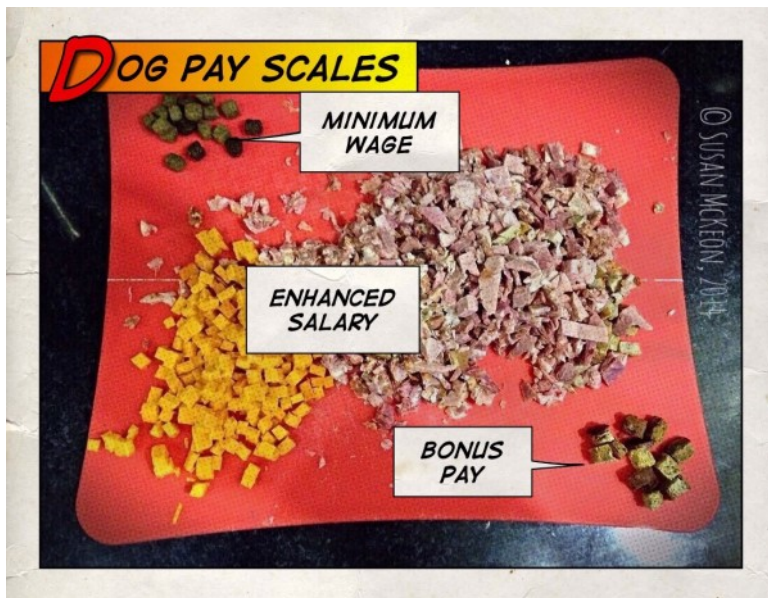# Using Food in Dog Training

'Dog Pay Scales'

Sometimes people are reluctant to use food when training their dogs; they feel that their dogs 'should just do what they are asked' or that they are 'spoiling' their dog by giving them food treats.

However, using food is the smart way to help your dog learn new behaviours. We like to compare the use of food in dog training to that of wages or pay and use the concept of 'dog pay scales' to explain it.

Basic salary

Routine jobs may only merit 'minimum wage' - represented by kibble in the photo. A routine 'job' can be a behaviour the dog knows well, or is still learning, but knows well in a certain context - such as practising loose lead walking in your garden, where there are minimum distractions; or waiting politely for you to put the food bowl down before eating.

Enhanced salary

When we start increasing the difficulty of the 'job in hand', we need to start paying an 'enhanced salary' (represented by chopped cheese and ham in the photo) - especially if we want to guarantee that our dog learns how to do the job well.

Once you start adding in distractions, distance or duration to a 'job' - you need to increase your dog's salary. Just as different jobs in the human world require different salaries and attract different candidates, the same is true for our canine companions. You need to find the right salary level that works for your dog - to help them succeed. (For some dogs, a tennis ball, or special toy/game may trump cheese/meat - you need to find the right salary for your dog!)

Bonus pay

Once your dog knows their 'job' and can reliably perform it on a regular basis, you can then switch to 'bonus pay' (represented by liver cake in the photo). The idea of the bonus pay is that it keeps your dog motivated and ready to perform their 'job' - they may not know when the bonus is coming but it certainly gives a reason to continue doing a job.