

# BLUE BUFFALO® - FEAR FREE® TREAT LADDER FOR DOGS

HIGH DISTRACTION

HIGH STRESS



With a high level of stress or distraction, offer highly valuable, favorite treats.

**IN GENERAL, SOFT SEMI-MOIST OR WET TREATS AND FOODS TEND TO BE THE HIGHEST VALUE FOR MOST DOGS.**



With a moderate level of stress or distraction, moderate value treats and reinforcers help gain the pet's attention and create a positive association.



With a low level of stress or distraction, lower value treats and even non-food rewards help reinforce desired behavior and keep a dog calm and distracted.



LOW DISTRACTION

LOW STRESS



The (human) food sources represented in this image are for visual purposes only and represent the increasing treat value needed as situations of fear, anxiety and stress increase. Always confirm that any treat offered to pets is safe for pet consumption.

# HOW TO BEST USE THE BLUE BUFFALO® – FEAR FREE® TREAT LADDER FOR DOGS



## AT HOME:

1. **Establish a benchmark.**
2. **Each dog has individual preferences.** Use the Fear Free Treat Ladder for guidance as to where to start with each patient once visiting your practice.
3. **Have your clients assess their dogs' preferences at home,** using novel and familiar treats, during various levels of distraction, to determine and share back with you their pet's preferences.



## AT YOUR PRACTICE:

1. **Before you begin any examination or procedure, assess each patient's Fear Free Treat Ladder.** Each patient will have their own preferences and those may change in stressful/distracting environments.
2. **To begin any examination or procedure, start providing moderate to high level reinforcements.** The veterinary hospital is already a moderate to high level distracting environment for most pets.
3. **Use the 2-refusal rule.** If a dog refuses a particular food, reward, or distractor twice, move up to the next rung of the ladder and try a different reward.
4. **If the dog refuses high value treats, assess the patient's FAS level.** Stress suppresses appetite. Pre-Visit pharmaceuticals should be used concurrently with the Fear Free Treat Ladder.

## MORE TIPS FOR SUCCESS

- Use treats with all patients to foster positive emotions rather than neutral or negative emotions.
- Use familiar treats—they can provide a dog security and comfort in an uncertain situation.
- Most dogs prefer food, although some prefer toys, petting or brushing.
- In high stress or distracting environments, use high value treats.
- In general, soft semi-moist or wet treats tend to be the highest value for most dogs.
- In general, hard dry crunchy treats are lower value for most dogs.
- Record each patient's Fear Free Treat Ladder in their medical record. Assess change preferences during examination and procedures pending the level of stress.
- The Fear Free Treat Ladder is specific to each animal and may vary with circumstance or time.

