

My Contribution to Cesar Millan's New Book

September 16th, 2010 by [Dr. Ian Dunbar](#)

Cesar Millan's new book — [Cesar's Rules](#) — features a number of trainers describing a variety of reward-based dog training techniques. The book is both comprehensive and representative with chapters on history of training and learning theory (Bob Bailey), training dogs for TV and film (Mark Harden), off-leash lure/reward training (myself), gentle physical prompting (Martin Deeley), and cancer detection dogs at The Pine Street Clinic. Cesar Millan's name and fame now showcase reward-based training techniques of other trainers to the dog-owning public. It's kind of like a vestigial book version of Dog Star Daily's [America's Dog Trainer](#).

Kelly, Jamie and I gave it a lot of thought before agreeing to volunteering our time to be interviewed — weighing up the pros and cons of association versus exposure. Obviously, any book with Cesar's name on it is destined to be a best seller, no matter what the content. Since any content is guaranteed enormous exposure, we thought, why not have reward-based training techniques get the exposure. I was very reassured to find out that my respected colleague and good buddy Bob Bailey was also involved and I finally agreed to be interviewed and filmed after being given full veto power over the manuscript, photos and filming. However, with the exception of the photo (mentioned below), veto-power was unnecessary. In all the times that I have been interviewed and filmed, I have never had my words and actions presented so accurately — almost word for word.

I have always thought, that I can do so much more good for dogs by engaging those who use dog training techniques of which I strongly disapprove, rather than simply preaching to the choir. Having read the book, I am glad that I decided to be involved. I was given free rein to say what I liked and do what I liked — an extremely unusual arrangement when dealing with television production companies. I mentioned over and over that I consider touching a dog to be an earned privilege rather than a right and that training should always be off-leash and hands-off. I have always taught people, to never touch a dog to force him to comply but rather, to touch him afterwards as a reward if that's what he enjoys. I have always taught people to try and see the dog's point of view and to be patient and give the dog time when resolving behavior and temperament problems.

I sincerely hope that through this book so many more dog owners will be exposed to reward-based training techniques and specifically that they will get to enjoy the rewards of reward-based training. Namely, that people learn how to proactively teach their dogs what they would like them to do, rather than providing no instruction and then feeling the need to punish their dogs for breaking rules that they didn't even know existed.

The interview was filmed and hopefully, it will show on TV so that Hugo's speed and Dune's reliability can help advertise the easiest, quickest and most enjoyable way to teach off-leash verbal control — lure/reward training. Cesar lure/reward trains his dog Junior using first food (not very effective) but then a tennis ball that instantly transforms the dog into a motivated guy. Then Cesar got to work with Hugo, starting with basic luring by teaching him in Spanish.

I have only two criticisms about the book. First, I don't like the title because I usually let owners decide on their own rules for their own dog. I consider household and lifestyle rules to be a very personal choice. However, publishers, and not authors, choose book titles and obviously they want to choose a title that will sell the book. Second, there is a really silly choice of photo in the chapter on Hands-Off Dog Training with my hands on Dune's collar. Duh!?! It looks like I am forcibly restraining Dune from goosing Cesar. I have been assured that this photograph will be replaced after the first printing.