

# COMING WHEN CALLED

- originally written for Pet Patter in SNAP London



Q. We have been having some trouble with Angel, our blue heeler cross. When she gets away, she doesn't come. She is very comfortable with our street, and runs all the way down our block. I even had a bone today, so when she escaped, I was holding out the bone, calling her, but she was just romping around, quite enjoying herself.

A. Whenever a dog escapes it is a very scary situation. The first thing that we want to do is try to understand why exactly she is running around enjoying herself so much, then we come up with a solution. Did it seem as though she was enjoying running away from you and having you chase her? Or was it the running itself that she seemed to enjoy? Have you practiced her recall on the street in that environment?

When I think back to all of the times that I have seen pure joy in my dogs it is often while running. If a dog does not get that chance to really run, then sometimes when they get loose they get lost in the ecstasy of running and can't seem to really even hear their owners. The dog park is a wonderful place for friendly and well socialized dogs over 6 months of age to get a chance to really open up and stretch their legs.

Some dogs that receive sufficient exercise will still run off when they get loose because they enjoy the chase, or being chased with items in their mouths. You will know that is the reason when you see that little twinkle in their eye as they stop and wait for you to almost catch up, and then take off again.

In order to resolve recall issues in dogs who enjoy playing 'keep away' we actually put the game on cue and therefore give them a 'legal' time to play the game so that they don't have to initiate it at inappropriate times.

I would put keep away on cue if she really likes it by making the cue really obvious, arms outstretched, wiggling fingers and saying "Im Gonna get you!" then chasing her, until you throw your arms up and say "all done!"

After giving her the "all done" cue, you can then start the keep away game again by recalling her. When she comes (which she will because she will be on leash the first few times that you play) then you can turn on the game again with "im gonna get you!" By playing this game and giving her an outlet, she will learn that coming to you only turns on the game, and the game is only played when you give the cue.

When you are in a situation where your dog has gotten loose and is still making eye contact with you, always try running the opposite direction and then pretend you are hunting something really fascinating on the ground-they often can't resist joining in on the hunt!