

Counter Surfing

Practical Plan

1. Management - nothing is left within dog's reach unless it's left there deliberately as a training aid. In addition, dog does not have access to the kitchen if no one is home, just in case. (By the way, even with a houseful of politely trained dogs, I still do not ever leave pizza on the counter and then go outside!)
2. Training - Teach two behaviors in a solid, proactive manner - Off (put your feet on the ground) and Leave It (You can see it and smell it but you can't have it;-). They should be taught with the owner being proactive, not reactively while the dog is doing something "wrong" (you know how Leave It is typically taught - the owners wait until the dog is running through the house with underwear in his mouth and then they chase after him yelling "LEAVE IT!! LEAVE IT!") This doesn't work;-)
3. Re-conditioning - During 'training' sessions, irresistible smelly food is left at the back of the counter. Dog is left loose, and owner monitors the dog but does not hover. Perhaps have the dog wear a bell on his collar for a few weeks so it's easier to keep track of him. But watch the dog as soon as the dog starts to airscents the food up on the counter remind him to "Leave it" , then owner comes into the room and instructs dog "Leave It!" to make sure he can't get the food him , if feet end up on the counter teach the "Off" to get his feet on the ground but for me if the dog has jumped up on the counter you are very late in your speaking to the dog.
4. Re-direction - This is the most important part (aside from management, of course!). The very instant the dog's feet are on the ground, redirect him on to something appropriate AND EDIBLE - "Where's your chewy? Let's go find your chewy!". Now make a game of helping the dog hunt for one of his own chewies. Old marrow bones which had been stuffed with string cheese work great for this. When they find it teach them to bring to you so you can restuff them;-) Make sure there are several chewies available 24 hours a day for the dog. I actually let dogs leave chewies around the house, especially if I'm working with a new dog on this behavior.

This is a great method that gives the dog an alternative to counter surfing, not just suppresses it.