

TRAINING TIPS WITH HAL ROEMER



Tess has adjusted very well to being a northern dog and absolutely loves the snow. We have stayed busy with fishing trips to North Dakota, Minnesota and of course our home state of Wisconsin, as well as hunting excursions to Iowa, the upper peninsula of Michigan and northern Wisconsin. She is even turning into quite the little ice fishing companion.

Regardless, she is everything that I was looking for in a dog. She is extremely mild-mannered, obedient, and (I have to admit) just a little bit spoiled. And does she ever have energy!

I'm writing you because I have a bit of a problem. To keep us both in shape we've been hunting pheasants at a local game farm since our season ended in December. Tess loves to hunt and now that she has figured out why she is out there she doesn't miss too many birds. Her pace is perfect and she will go a lot longer than I can. The problem is that as of about a month ago she stopped retrieving dead birds. She will bring back anything I throw, from a ball to a dummy with bird wings taped to it, but she will not bring back a bird. I can't even get her to pick up a dead bird anymore, much less bring it back to me.

Have you seen this with any of your dogs? Are there drills that you would suggest that I try? I'm really looking for any suggestions that you might have and I don't want to do anything that might negatively impact her desire to hunt.

- Tom Rosenthal

Not being able to see your dog in person, I can give some general advice of what I do for similar situations. Most of my young dogs have gone through a phase of not wanting to pick something up. We've got fire ants down here, and once in a while a puppy will pick up a dummy covered with ants. Abby would not pick up a black and white dummy for anything for quite a while after getting a muzzle full of ants. I'd suggest back off on birds for a week or so.

Keep working her on the balls and dummies, with lots of praise. Keep it fun. I like the idea of using the bird feathers, and you might try some scent as well. Also,

get a few "Doken Dummies". You can buy them on line from places like Gundogsupply.com

The key thing is not to push. You want her to WANT to pick the bird up. Something happened that changed that.

You've been working her on pheasant. Do you have access to birds (not pheasants) like pigeons or quail? I say not pheasant, because she may have been spurred or pecked by a rooster. That can be a rough experience for a young dog.

When you start working her with birds, keep your emotions in check. It's probably not going to happen right away. Keep a positive attitude.

When you start back with birds, find a place out of the way of distractions. Fresh kill a bird and try teasing her up with it. If she doesn't react, don't push it. Put the bird away, and stay with dummies for a while longer.

If she reacts positively and with interest, get her really teased and worked up, then throw the dead bird a few feet away (less than 10'). Get down low and treat her like a puppy, with lots and lots of praise. But only do it a few repetitions then quit. Hopefully, she'll be begging for more. That's what you want. It'll be a temptation to keep going, because it'll be so cool that she's picking up a bird. Don't do it. Make her want it. You can repeat the drill several times each day, but keep it short.

Once she gets past the short retrieve puppy phase, continue working her with dummies with feathers combination, but add a fresh killed bird in the mix. Tease her up with a dummy with feathers, and throw a short distance; when she retrieves it, give her lots and lots of praise.

Then throw a bird, (remember to tease her up with the bird), but keep it short, about 10' at first. If she doesn't retrieve it, literally turn your back on her and let her stew for about a minute. Dog's get this message loud and clear.

Then throw a dummy with feathers, with lots of praise when she makes the retrieve. Try that a few rounds and she may get the idea.

However it goes, end on a positive note with a good retrieve, and try to end with her begging for more.

If she retrieves or works in the water, you may try throwing a bird in the water for a retrieve. That works for me on puppies sometimes, alternated with dummies.

If you have access to other bird dogs, working around other dogs that are re-

trieving birds can get a dog going.

Keep your emotions in check, don't get disappointed. This is a puzzle that you're trying to figure out. It's just a matter of hitting on the right combination. She knows how to do it, but some thing happened to put her off birds. Be careful and gentle. Lots and lots of positive reinforcement.

- Hal



Max is now 7 months old. We have certainly enjoyed having him as part of the family. For the most part, Max does what we ask, but I'd like to know of anyone in our area who could refine his skills and obedience. I've been his primary trainer and time constraints, on my part, hinder my efforts. He continues to want to jump on Jacob, our 8 year old son, and this is unacceptable. For the most part, this occurs when Jacob releases Max after school. The dog is very obedient to me on this issue, but I'm bigger than an 8 year old. On rare occasions, Max won't come when called. It's as if he's distracted, for whatever reason, or may suspect I'm putting him in his kennel. He loves to retrieve, loves to play, will return to his kennel when instructed (for the most part), and will stay in his kennel when the gate is opened until instructed to come out, etc.

Let me know your thoughts. Perhaps we continue to train or you may have recommendations of someone who could help.

- James Fuller

I'm a Boykin owner and have trained several over the last 12 years or so. I'm not a professional trainer, but have been told by them that know, that I do a pretty good job.

It sounds to me as if you are doing a fine job with your dog. At 7 months old, he sounds to be very good in his basic obedience.

He's also figured out that you are the boss, and that your 8 year old is not.

Since he knows his obedience, I'd suggest working him on his drills, with your 8 year old helping out. Keep it short and simple. Use sit and stay for 3 or 4 repetitions. Make sure you explain fully what your child will be doing before starting the training session. Kids can get distracted easily, the same as puppies.

If the jumping on your child is a safety concern, I would suggest keeping the dog controlled with a lead for the first release after your son gets home from school; but have your son give the dog the 'sit'

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Texas Trace Training Event

We have hosted ten fun training days in historic Chappell Hill, Texas, with the most recent held May 9 of this year. We co-host this event with Classic Labs Kennel and always look forward to a great day outdoors with Boykin and Lab owners, their families and of course their pups. For those without a Boykin but awaiting arrival of their puppy, we welcome them to come out and run one of our Boykins and experience the day and the training.

Linda Palmer Weld, a retired, nationally renowned trainer of Labrador retrievers, leads the day of training which includes Companion, Obedience, Gun Dog (Retriever) Training as well as Trailing and Agility training. Doug Growden, a hunt test/field trial judge and well known trainer from Katy, Texas, conducts flushing/retrieving training with live birds, shooting and hunt test simulation. Roslin Copeland and Ginger Hurley conduct the introduction to Agility training.

At the last event we also had an exceptionally knowledgeable and gifted vet, Bill Howard, who was very helpful and instructive during our round table discussion group.

The day begins at 8:00 am with a Blessing of the Animals and goes all day ending with several toasts to the sunset with Sangria or margaritas or beer as we have done every year whether we can see the sun or not (and usually no longer can see much at all after several toasts).

At the last event we had over 50 people, 35 Boykins, 30 labs, 3 English Cockers, and 1 English Setter. FYI -- All the Boykins and Labs are AKC registered. The longest distance traveled was a woman who flew in from Canada to pick up a puppy but stayed to participate and contribute to the event.

We have witnessed several converts from English Cockers and Labs, one of which even took a Boykin home. At one event, we brought an 18-month old Boykin rescued just one month prior to the event suffering from kennel dog syndrome. He is turning out to be a pretty awesome dog with a great personality. He had not been swimming until the day of the event and that day he made a bumper retrieve jumping off the bank, 4 to 5 feet off the ground/water and a distance of 12 to 15 feet. And he wasn't even trying – only took a few steps. And to think just one month ago he was suffering from kennel dog syndrome. He is now house trained, crate trained, retrieving bumpers,

exposed to birds and has been shot over. He will be hunting birds this season.

It was a great day and great fun was had by all. It was a successful event and everyone wants to know, "When is the next one, how many times per year do you do this, and can we do this again next weekend?"

- Greg Copeland



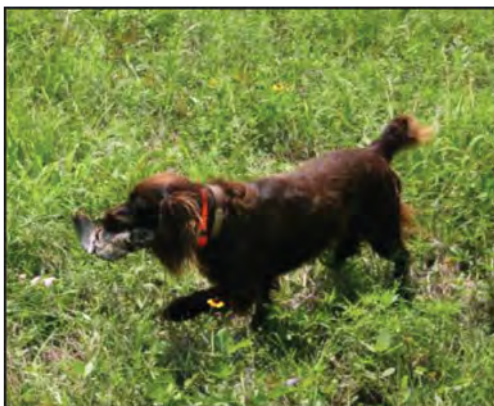
The Directors



Texas Trace "Diesel" held the point for several minutes.



Group at the water.



Texas Trace "Diesel" retrieves the bird.



"Playtime"



Texas Trace "Nash" working hard.



Puppy gets bird!