

when dog points 'em out,
the sport of bird hunting can be...

DOGGONE FUN!!

Editor's Note:

The following article was sent to The Perquimans Weekly and requested that it be printed in our paper for the many bird-dog lovers in Perquimans County. It was published in the Rocky Mount Telegram.

BY BILL STANCL
Telegram Sunday Editor

other dog trainers are the dogs that come from Field Trial stock, because they are bred to a fast pace and a wide range.

"Field trial dogs are not pleasant walking gun dogs," Hawley insists. "The pleasant dog, one that the average bird hunter is going to enjoy,

does not range over 225 feet. When we get those that range too far, we weight them down. That part of the training takes two people. One guy

goes on ahead to turn the dog when he gets to the end of where you want him to range."

According to Hawley, it's natural for Pointers and Setters to range wider as they get older. But he adds that firm control on the dog and some re-training, with weight, if necessary, will get them back into the range the hunter wants. "Dogs have different gaits, just as people have different gaits," he explains.

"Dogs are smarter than most folks give 'em credit for," he emphasizes. "Some learn faster than others, and each dog is worked differently. Their personality differs, just as the personality of people differs. You kind of have to think like the dog and anticipate what he is going to do so you can be ready to correct it."

Hawley ties out some of the dogs, explaining that it's a method of making a dog bolder. But he adds that a man-shy dog and a timid dog must be handled with kid gloves. "A kennel is good for a finished dog and puppies," he says.

As for how long it takes to train a dog to be a hunting companion, Hawley says it varies with the dog.

"Some dogs learn faster than others. I've had some dogs ready for the experienced bird hunter in two weeks. But it takes an average of three to five months to train a dog. And even that depends upon the dog."

Hawley believes the most important part of a dog's life is from birth to eight months old. "You can take a puppy that's handled right and you will never have to give him the harsh discipline in the field that you will a puppy that has not been handled right."

And Hawley is suspect of dogs that are "naturals."

"A born natural looks good, but he is not a dependable dog. You can take a puppy that will do it all when he is six months old. But the next year he will be harder to break than the dog that can't do anything at six months old. I believe a force-broke dog makes a better, more dependable hunting companion."

Hawley says that a dog is still a puppy until he is three years old. "A dog that is broke too quick is not a good bird dog!"

Three popular hunting breeds are started in their training at different ages.

"My method is that when a Pointer is 12 months old it's time to get serious with his training. A Setter is trained seriously when he is 18 to 24 months old. A Brittany should be trained from 13 to 20 months old.

For started dogs (those dogs that are beginning serious training) Hawley spends an hour each day with each dog "til we get them to handling." Sometimes Hawley is running four dogs at the time, so the training time goes up to four hours per day.

"Some folks are lax on discipline," according to Hawley. "But there are times when a dog needs strict discipline, just like a child needs strict discipline."

After all the hard, long hours in the yard, the kennel site and the field, when is the dog ready to be the hunting companion that he should be?

"When he will handle to all commands. ... "STOP" "WHOA" cut when you call him, honor another dog's point and retrieve. ... only then is he a bonafide hunting bird dog."

To train a dog you have to think like a dog. And, one thing, for sure, you have to work like a dog.

Earl Hawley of Rt. 1, Rocky Mount knows this better than most folks. He trains bird dogs. Actually, he not only trains bird dogs for the sake of training, but he trains them to be a close walking, pleasant hunting companion.

Hawley knows the A, B, Cs of bird dog training, and says the key to the whole program rests with the Ps. "The name of the game is Patience and Persistence," says Hawley. "Those are the two main things you've got to have to train a bird dog."

You need more than that; you also need the knowhow. And Hawley has that. He is not the only bird dog trainer in the area, but his training methods have paid dividends to a lot of hunters over the past five years.

Hawley started training bird dogs as a hobby. But it's more of a profession now, especially with bird hunting season drawing closer. He has been training dogs regularly for the past five years.

"I never was able to afford a bird dog when I was growing up," he explains. "When I was 15 years old, my cousin and I traded some mink hides for a bird dog and she turned out to be gun-shy. Later, we got some rabbit dogs and some coon dogs. We noticed that one of the coon dogs would sniff out birds, so we used her for bird hunting."

The kennel area at Hawley's home averages 20 dogs at any given time. But Hawley, and Jack as many as 30 dogs in training at the same time. The dogs in the kennel range in age from six months to five years.

Proofs

"Let me show you what two weeks of training can do for some young dogs," Hawley said. So we climbed into his pickup truck and two dogs were called from the kennel and loaded into the carriers on the back of the truck. We went into a field near his home.

Hawley called out the dogs, one at a time, and they hunted the field. Always under his voice and hand signal commands. In a few minutes he secretly planted a quail in some high grass. In a flash the dog was on point. The other dog did the same thing.

During the short hunt, whenever Hawley commanded the dogs to "Whoa" the dogs stopped immediately. They did not move again until he signaled them.

Hawley has some definite methods and opinions on training the dogs left to his care. While he doesn't agree with some of the old standard methods, he also doesn't agree with some of the new methods of quick-training a bird dog. "Dog trainers are like automobile owners," he explains. "Everybody does not like the same automobile and everybody has a different method of driving. I use the methods that have worked for me, while somebody else uses methods that work for them."

Hawley, when asked about the best breeds of hunting dogs, again explains that it's a matter of individual taste, depending upon what the hunter wants from a dog. But he continually emphasizes that most hunters want a pleasant, close walking gun dog as a companion.

"There are good bird dogs in all bird dog breeds, and even in those that are mixed," he says. "But I will go so far as to say that for a good close walking field dog the Brittany seems to be taking over."

Wide Rangers

One thing that tends to bother Hawley and



STAUNCH POINT—Man is dog's best friend when that man is the trainer. Here Earl Hawley, who trains bird dogs, shows the end result of the hectic training period with a Brittany holding a staunch point on a planted quail.

TELEGRAM PHOTOS

BY KILLEBREW



EASY NOW—This young Setter has the scent of the planted quail, and under the direction of Earl Hawley he moves in slowly and carefully to make the point without flushing the bird.



BACKING A POINT—The Setter has pointed the quail under the watchful eye of his trainer, and the Brittany honors the Setter's point by freezing where he is. Thorough training of this kind makes a dog a pleasure to hunt.