

Spring Training

Introducing the Remote Trainer



Spring is a perfect time to reflect on your dog's performance during the past hunting season and determine if there are things that you care to improve.

As a hunter and dog guy the most disconcerting things to me come under the heading of obedience, or the lack of, which includes, a flat out refusal or halfhearted response to basic commands like come, sit and hold.

Unwanted habitual behavior like whining, barking, lack of desire, gun shyness, sloppy or hard mouth, come under problem solving especially with older dogs that have been allowed to perpetuate this behavior.

My father was from the old school and believed in well-mannered children. I was told that kids should be seen and not heard. I respected my dad's authority and his ability to enforce it. I believe most of my dogs respect me as well.

Respect promotes greater attention, which is universally accepted as the key to training.

Let me paint you a picture of what I feel is an acceptable performance for a one and a half or two year old hunting retriever. A dog should come when called, sit and stay while birds are working and be steady to shot and fall. They should enthusiastically retrieve the bird, return without delay and place the bird in your hand. Anything less is personal preference.

Three key components of this scenario are, Come, Sit and Hold. In a hunting situation these trained responses should ultimately be conditioned which means they will require no verbal command.

In this issue I am going to show you how to get attention, greater respect and a more reliable response using a remote trainer. The procedure is called Collar Conditioning and requires prior training of any command you wish improve and enforce.

I typically use traditional methods to teach the basic commands such as sit, heel, and come, and then use the remote trainer to reinforce these commands. The dog understands what is expected but now you have a reliable and instantaneous way to communicate what you want and that you want it now.

The benefits of using a remote trainer to train your dog are:

1. the intensity of the stimulation is adjusted before training actually begins, and it is mild enough for the dog to perceive the stimulation without intimidating or scaring him

2. the electrical stimulation is unique, and consistent, so will not be affected by your mood or coordination, nor will your dog acclimate to it (like pulling on his leash)
3. the signal you send to your dog is received instantly-- there is no time delay
4. the dog will receive the signal regardless of distance, and will therefore develop a healthy respect for you whether on or off lead

Begin by placing the collar high on the dog's neck. You should be able to slip two fingers under the strap when properly fit. The buckle and "D" ring should be at the back of the dog's neck and the receiver underneath next to the throat. Move the receiver up and down to be sure the contacts are not obstructed by the dog's coat.



Set the transmitter to the "M", momentary mode. Set the intensity to number "1". Press the stimulation button and see if you get a reaction from the dog. You probably will not notice any reaction or recognition of the collar until about level 3. Once you are convinced the dog feels the collar stimulation this will become your dog's recognition level. Remember each dog is different so it is important to adjust the collar for your dog's unique temperament. If your dog vocalizes the setting is too high. We want to get his attention and motivate him, not punish him.

Lets start by teaching your dog to pay attention and give you some eye contact. We usually begin by teaching the dog to catch a treat from the front sit position. . Do not move around or make unnecessary gestures

with your hands. Lift your hand that has the treat until the dog stares at the treat on a direct line of sight too your eyes.

Be slow and deliberate this will help the dog remain in place and focused. Be sure to say, "sit" before you toss the treat. This will help you



as you begin to introduce the collar. If your dog leaves the sit position remove the treat from your hand and place him back in the sit position and firmly command, "sit", then start over.



Once your dog is attentive it's time to introduce the collar. Place him in front of you in a front sit position, say, "sit" and give him momentary stimulation at his recognition level. Momentary stimulation is often referred to as a "nick". The nick is preset at about 30 milliseconds of duration. No

matter how long you press the button, your dog will receive only one preset nick at the level of intensity you have chosen. Repeat this several times saying sit and simultaneously giving him a nick. If he becomes nervous, lower the intensity level.

Once you are comfortable with your dog's progress it's time to condition the "come" command. We always use a 20' rope through the entire conditioning process this insures that we are able to guide the dog through the correct behavioral action as the stimulation is applied.



Begin by walking your dog on the rope. Continue to walk until your dog hits the end of the leash. At that exact moment tug on the leash, give the come command and nick the dog with the collar. Repeat this several times if you can. Typically after

you do this a few times the dog will stay closer to you. At this point drop the end of the rope that you are holding and let the dog drag it. Repeat the process with the dog dragging the rope. When you are confident the dog understands the collar correlation you can increase the intensity level by one numerical setting. You should notice a much quicker response from your dog.

As with all obedience responses after a dog is conditioned for a specific response it's time to "proof" or test him. Begin to introduce distractions such as kids or other dogs. I would recommend using the 20' rope to insure the proper response. Call him to you, if he comes to you give him lots of praise. If he ignores you nick him with the collar and ask him to come. If he still refuses increase the intensity level, try again and tug on the rope. It's important that you understand that as the level of distraction rises you will need to increase the level of intensity to meet

or exceed the distraction level. Once the dog turns and comes toward you be sure to return the collar to the previous setting. As he approaches you let him know what a good dog he is for listening to you. Continue to work through various levels of distraction. You will begin to notice his level of confidence, self-control and attention increase.

Please be careful using the collar while retrieving at this stage. In the next issue I will show you how to teach your dog to hold something in his mouth on command and be able to enforce it with the collar. Once your dog completes the next lesson he will be able to come, hold reliably and deliver to hand.

Go slow, be patient and offer lots of praise!



Deep Run Farm, is a retriever Training, Breeding and Boarding facility in Goldvein, VA. Jack and his partner Phyllis Giroux, DVM are living their lifetime dream. Visit them on the web at DeepRunRetrievers.com and feel free to email Jack at jmjagoda@aol.com with questions.

