The Gun Dog Supreme

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SPRING TRAINING

Aleksander of Cattail Storm works his way through forced retrieve steps for owner/handler Judy Coil.

Photo by Jon Coil

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Be prepared. It's a theme that Charles Dahlstrom applies in his article on canine first aid or more accurately on the human hunter's failure to be ready when the need arises.

Spring testing is under way; the fall ones and hunting season aren't that far away either, and the time to start working with your dog is now. On the cover is our role model, Judy Coil; she didn't wait for balmy spring weather to start training Aleks in northern Minnesota, so the rest of us have no excuse. Here she's applying the techniques from The Best Trained Gun Dog by Joan Bailey. We've included a brief excerpt in this issue, but you'll want the whole book.

In the December 2008 issue of the GDS, veterinarian, Anna Ziedens enlightened us about OCD; in this issue I relate my experience and that of other owners in coping with the condition.

Of course, hunting with our beloved griffons is what we live for, so there's a tale about bird hunting too. Hope you enjoy this issue.

Rem DeJong

Griffon Rescue

Home needed for WPGCA dog, Arikara of Coyote Hills (whelped June 23, 2006). Arik was diagnosed with OCD; arthritis set in the knee within six months and he is therefore, a beloved housedog with a wonderful disposition and happy, friendly temperament but he has limited mobility and absolutely cannot be hunted.
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Facing OCD

by

Rem DeJong

[**Editors Note:** For a technical article on OCD, see: Anna Ziedens "Osteochondritis Dissecans (OCD)" The Gun Dog Supreme 83 No. 6 (December 2008): 5 – 8. This article is also available to download from http://www.gundogsupreme.org. Click on the "Resources" tab.]

I can't say exactly when it began. There was no big injury, no yowling or yipping in pain, just an occasional limping on the way back toward the car from our twice-daily walks. Sometimes Burley (**Burley of Salmon River**) would roughhouse with his buddy Buster the pitbull and they'd tear up and down the trail together; then it might be worse. Once home, Burley would limp into the house, but after some rest it would go away. Just the wear and tear of puppy-play I thought.

The limp wasn't always there, but it was becoming more frequent as Burly approached seven months of age and his first hunting season. Shortly before our September 15 grouse opener, I took Burley to a nearby pheasant preserve. I was excited by his hunting drive—he pointed a couple birds and retrieved two that I shot. He also eagerly tracked several that I let go because they flushed wild without a point. However, when we got home after this stringent workout, he was limping more than ever. Something wasn't right; I immediately made an appointment with the veterinarian, and the next day we got the bad news. Burley had OCD in both front shoulders. Dr. Aho showed me the x-rays, and it didn't require a degree in veterinary medicine to see a little flattened area on each leg bone where a smooth curve should be. Surprisingly, even though he seemed to limp mostly on the right foreleg, it was the left leg that appeared to have the most damage. Surgery was recommended and the sooner the better.

The vet explained that he would operate on the left shoulder first and do the second two weeks later. Burley would need to be confined to his crate for a full month. A leash was required any time that he was out of the crate, and such outings were strictly to empty out. He had to be lifted up and down the steps. He would gradually be allowed more exercise, always on a leash, for several weeks. The surgery was not cheap--$650.00 per shoulder, plus a variety of medications including antibiotics, painkillers and a dietary supplement. But, the vet assured me, a full recovery from OCD for shoulder injuries such as Burley's is the expected outcome.

Burley's first hunting season was now down the tubes. By the time he would be able to go afield again, the snow would be deep, the grouse in the trees and the woodcock long gone. Several griffoners, including Dave Read from Holland, MI were scheduled to come up bird hunting with me here in Michigan's U.P. I immediately called Dave and gave him the bad news. He groaned and empathized with my plight. Dave had been through all this with his dog, **Ammo of the Hundgaard**, and he knew what I was up against. Ammo had gotten in one hunting season, but around seven months of age began displaying an occasional limp. The vet prescribed some medication and cautioned about over-doing exercise, but Ammo did get to hunt some his first year. The problem did not go away, and by age 12 months, Dave took Ammo to the School of Veterinary Medicine at Michigan State University where the doctor could perform ar-

Ammo of the Hundgaard on Point
Fully recovered from OCD, a strong, healthy Ammo holds steady on a woodcock.
Photo by Dave Read

throscopic surgery, which generally has a faster recovery time than athrotomy does. Unfortunately arthroscopy was only feasible on one shoulder. The price tag was considerably more than what I endured, and Ammo still spent several weeks crated in solitary confinement. The good news was that by April of 2006 he was able to run in his NAT at the Heartland test and earned a perfect score of 28 and a Prize I.

Bad as it was for Dave and Ammo, I benefitted from the experience. Dave brought up Ammo's "recovery crate," which was a 4' X 3' X 3' oversized crate. As long as Burley had to be confined, the little extra space would make him slightly more comfortable. Seeing Ammo hunt also gave me hope too. He is one strong, happy, healthy bird dog with plenty of hunting drive and no sign of ill effects for his long post-surgery rehabilitation. Veterinary data confirm that full recovery from shoulder OCD is pretty typical. My vet had told me all that, but several days of hard hunting with Ammo made it convincing.

I cut my hunting hours short that week because, while Brinker and I were out gallivanting through the grouse coverts, poor Susan was home baby-sitting Burley. At least because Burley never had the chance to start hunting, he didn't know what he was missing, so my donning a hunting coat didn't trigger the yowling protest that Brinker would have emitted. Still, living with an eight month-old pup that must be confined to a crate all day isn't fun. The veterinarian had cautioned me that it is common for the incision

to develop a buildup of subcutaneous fluid. He showed me how to drain it, and Burley tolerated my poking him to occasionally drain the incision.

Many a November night found me shivering in my PJs in the back yard while Burley boy made the most of his five minutes of freedom by methodically sniffing out just the precise spot to tinkle. If the Breeding Committee can't eradicate OCD, I do wish that they would produce a griffon with a lot more milliliters per second flow than little Burley was demonstrating. Of course big brother Brinker wasn't any help either. Although pleased to once again be in total charge of his domain, he would try to engage Burley in play every chance he got. We quickly learned that when Burly was out, Brinker had to be confined. Episodes like this reinforce the importance of crate training your dog from day one. Although it was a nuisance to be confined so much, Burley was generally accepting of being crated. As he healed, he began playing a game of "digging" the plastic tray out of his crate, but for the most part he stayed quiet and tolerant of limited movement.

Doing Hard Time
Post-op rehab requires four weeks of crate time. Boring!
Photo by Rem DeJong

By December, the snow was too deep to even think of late season grouse hunting. I had a pheasant hunt planned for North Dakota, but my veterinarian advised against taking Burley. I became concerned when Burley showed signs of limping again, but an X-ray showed that the bones were healing nicely; it would just take more time. Brinker and I headed for North Dakota alone that winter while Burley played housedog.

There was one last chance for a wild bird hunt—the final weekend of the Iowa pheasant season. With Dr. Aho's blessing, Burley and I headed for south-central Iowa and a hunt with several club members. Burley took to Iowa ringnecks in a hurry. He was soon tracking with enthusiasm and by the second day, he held rock steady on a hen point. He retrieved several downed roosters, and any hunting instincts that had been dormant were on full alert now. Come April, Burley will go through his Natural Ability Test. Although his formal hunting experience is pretty lean, he has been able to go for daily runs where he stumbles across an occasional ruffed grouse, a few snowshoe hare, and plenty of red squirrels. We'll just have to hope for the best, but the long-term prospects for recovery from his shoulder surgery appear good.

Unfortunately, not every case has the positive outcome that Dave Read had with

Ammo or that I have had so far with Burley. Ammo's littermate, **Apache Chief of the Hundgaard** also developed OCD, but in the rear knee. Owner Joe Moggenborg first encountered OCD on a late season goose hunt with nine month-old Chief. They were hunkered down under a pine tree, and young Chief was entertaining himself by jumping for pine cones hanging from a low bough. Suddenly Chief screamed in pain and began hobbling on his rear leg. The problem was OCD in the rear knee, and as Joe sadly learned, the surgery on the rear legs is both a more complicated and more expensive proposition with less chance of success than front shoulder surgery. Joe estimates that the veterinary procedures cost him over $5000.00 by the time all was said and done.

Chief basically missed most of his first two hunting seasons thanks to OCD. Joe was beginning to weigh the pros and cons of keeping Chief or giving him up for a new hunting dog. Finally, by the 2008 season, Chief came around and has been able to perform reasonably well as a hunter. Joe says that he has been on several three hour hunts, but doesn't push it past four hours. Chief still has some discomfort—he squeals on a fast take-off from a dead start, but appears comfortable running in the field. Although he might not satisfy someone who accustomed to hunting hard day after day, it's acceptable to Joe at this point in time.

Ariara of Coyote Hills resting after multiple surgeries

Photo by Susan Puckett

At the far end of the continuum from Dave Read and Ammo is **Arikara of Coyote Hills**, whelped June 2006 and owned by Gary and Susan Puckett. Also at about 9 months of age, Arik started limping after a morning of field exposure. X-rayed by their local veterinarian, Arik was diagnosed with possible torn ACL and referred to Kansas State University Veterinary Medical Teaching Hospital where the problem was pinpointed as OCD of right hind limb.

Like Ammo, Chief and Burley, Arik was the typical OCD canine candidate - a large, young, active male. Like us, the Pucketts reasoned that they would spend the money either way - to fix him or replace him, so they opted for surgery as we had done.

They also endured six weeks of kennel rest with a large crate staged in the middle of the living room. They added a ramp onto the deck to avoid any stairs and put up with yard privileges only on a leash. Arik needed more elaborate rehab care than required for shoulder OCD. Gary and Susan were instructed to provide hot packs followed by passive range of motion exercises three times daily. It took both of them to actually do the hot packs and ROM exercises even with a fairly cooperative dog - before work, after work and again before bedtime. Susan writes: "About the time we were feeling the need to be committed, literally, Arik started showing good improvement and it all seemed worthwhile."

In September 2007 at 13 months of age, Arik completed his Natural Ability test with a Prize II. Susan described feeling as if one of the kids was being accepted into college! Sadly, the euphoria was to be short-lived. At 14 months, Arik was walking in the yard and again, suddenly started limping—this time it was his left front leg. Arik was diagnosed with OCD in his left front limb. So what do you do now? Like so many griffon owners, the Pucketts are deeply committed to their beloved dog. Susan explains their decision this way:

> Another surgery? What were we thinking? Well, it's easy, really. They just swipe your credit card through the machine when you check the dog into the hospital! All we had to do was set that @#$%ing cage back up in the living room. We already had a lot invested, the back leg was working fine; he had a Prize II and our hearts. At this point there was no discussion.
>
> Recovery from repair on the front limb went much easier. Two weeks total kennel rest, hot packs and range of motion (Arik would just see the hot pack and flop down onto the floor), followed by two weeks in the yard on a leash and two weeks of short walks.

In spite of their care, the end result is disappointing. At age 16 months, Arik began limping on his right hind leg. X-ray revealed that arthritis has set into the right hind limb. The veterinarian cautions that any hunting or outdoor kennel life will certainly speed his crippling condition. Looking back, Susan Puckett assesses the outcome:

> Heartbroken, we take our couch potato home for a very different life than any of us had planned. Two years since the beginning of our ordeal and thousands of dollars later, we are still hard-pressed to say if we would have done things differently.

Four stories and a varied range of outcomes. These experiences highlight the challenges brought on by OCD that every owner must confront.

- Although surgery can completely restore functioning for many dogs, especially OCD in the front shoulder, there is no guarantee and the expense of veterinary treatment can be very high.
- Rehab is a long process that requires the whole family's commitment, several weeks of kennel care, rehabilitation exercises and lost hunting/exposure opportunities.
- Although the condition probably has a genetic component, the precise causes of OCD have not been identified. It's easy to feel guilty under the uncertainty and to second guess yourself—Did I do something wrong? Should I have fed pup differently? Did I run him to hard?

We breed our dogs to be hunting athletes and we expect owners to hunt them. So when a dog is disabled and unable to hunt well or maybe not able to hunt at all, what should an owner do? Some opt to lower their hunting expectations, but for others it means a decision to part with a dog for which they care deeply. Veterinarians, researchers and breeders, including our own Breeding Committee, are working to uncover the causes of OCD and doing their best to find ways to prevent this debilitating condition. For all who have experienced it, eradication cannot come soon enough.

A Blooming Mounty
by
Charles Dahlstrom

TJ of Plum Creek Poses on a Successful Kansas Sharptail Hunt
Photo by Owner Charles Dahlstrom

"Be…be…be prepared, the motto of the Boy Scouts." That chant from my adolescence ran obsessively through my mind like a punishing mantra as I trudged on through the crusty snow. The muscles of my arms and back burned with exhaustion from the strain of lugging the awkward weight of **TJ of Plum Creek**, my sixty-pound WPG. I twisted another turn on the crude tourniquet on TJ's foreleg and she whimpered weakly with the pain. She turned and licked my face, but after a few more labored steps the muscles in her neck softened and her head drooped again to hang straight down; the loss of blood was sapping her strength. I paused and slumped to one knee, resting her weight on my upper thigh. I sucked deeply on the frigid January air, trying desperately to replenish my own depleted oxygen supply. Looking down I saw the drops of warm blood congealing and then freezing into crystals on the surface of the crusted snow. Looking back on our trail, I groaned to see that we had gone only about 50 yards since our last rest stop; we had nearly a half mile to go to the vehicle.

Even in the fading light, the drops of blood were brilliantly visible and my memory flashed on a story told by a rank old Canadian hunting guide many years ago. Swede made no apologies for his dislike of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. I always suspected his love affair with cheap Canadian rye had something to do with this lack of respect for law enforcement. One night in bush camp after a few "belts of the good stuff," Swede had been nagging bitterly about the Mounties' woodsmanship: "Bloomin' Mounties…couldn't track an elephant through three feet of fresh powder

snow…(pause)…with its throat cut." Swede's rugged face had cracked with delight as he handed down this cruel judgment. In his harsh outdoor world few moments were sweeter than the opportunity to insult a rival's field skills.

I considered my rapid fire heart beat and breathlessness and had a moment of reflection on my mortality. If I keeled over with a heart attack, TJ would bleed out within minutes. I thought about the Kansas "Mounty" who would be assigned the task of tracking us down. My wife would be frantic with worry when I didn't check in with her by phone that evening. She knew the general area we were hunting and would contact the sheriff; but it's doubtful any search would be started that night. Maybe a concerned landowner would report our vehicle parked on the field crossing the next morning. If the Mounty on our trail was a bird hunter, he would make note that the northwesterly course of the track coincided with the prevailing Kansas winds. He would admire the crisscrossing pattern of TJ's search and would notice that she checked out the downwind sides of each piece of heavy cover. If he was observant, he would recognize the flurry of track activity near the plum thicket and understand that this marked the rise of a covey. The few downy gray breast feathers frozen in the snow would help him make sense of the scene. I imagined his thoughts shifting back and forth from the evidence of our quail hunt to the cruel reality of his assigned duty.

The Mounty would happen abruptly upon the scene of TJ's injury. The scramble of boot and dog tracks would be peppered with drops, streaks and pools of frozen blood. He would find the blood-soaked and frozen wool gloves and spot the side-by-side Beretta, blotchy with red stains, leaning against the oak tree. He would crack open the breach and puzzle over the meaning of the one spent round. He might conclude that TJ had gotten in the way of a covey flush and caught a load of birdshot, but if he took the time to backtrack TJ's blood trail he would find the single rusted strand of barbed wire that set off this course of tragic events.

TJ had been methodically working the creek bottom when I heard her yelp in pain. She came hopping awkwardly through the thick brambles on one front leg. Her other foreleg had a three-inch diagonal gash above the knee. A flap of liver-ticked hide hung down exposing the raw pink meat beneath; blood oozed down over her foot. In that instant my heart was jammed sideways in my throat.

I had been a dutiful boy scout in my youth and had even earned a Merit Badge for First Aid. "Be…be… be prepared" had echoed in my head. But I wasn't prepared. Today's hunt was a last minute, end-of-the-season decision. I had cleaned out my shooting vest the week before; at this moment the compact kit with sterile gauze, medical tape and forceps was sitting on the shelf in my den. I cursed my poor planning.

During my Army infantry training nearly 40 years ago, I had been a reliable soldier and learned the basics of life saving well. "Stop the bleeding" reverberated through my mind carried by the memory of the Drill Sergeant Wilkin's comanding voice. I pressed the flap of hide back into place, but the blood kept seeping out between my fingers; I knew we needed a tourniquet. As I took stock of the resources at hand, I noticed the long leather loops of my bootlaces. With one hand gripping tightly around TJ's leg to slow the bleeding, I untied the lace of my new Danners with the other hand. As I loosened the lace, I recalled with regret that my Swiss Army knife was lying uselessly at home on the shelf next to the forgotten first aid kit.

I thought disgustedly of myself: "Bloomin' Mounties, all right."

After considerable reflection on whether or not I had other choices or whether or not it was a wise move, I stretched the extra length of bootlace out away from my foot and used the full choke barrel of my side-by-side to shoot it off; at this range of mere inches probably the modified barrel would have sufficed.

Again, the memories of my military training came back to me: "tourniquet is placed between the wound and the heart." I later learned from the vet that it was TJ's vein that had been severed. Those actually paying attention during their anatomy class would have already recognized many of my numerous errors. In that area of the leg, the veins run close to the surface carrying blood back to the heart. Applying the tourniquet above the wounded vein required that I tighten the band to the degree that the artery deep within TJ's leg became constricted. The vet explained to me later that a small rubber band an inch below the wound would have easily stopped the bleeding. He also explained that a pressure dressing to the wound was the easiest and most effective, but of course one would have to remember to actually have the first aid kit in their pocket to have such supplies. But, live and learn, huh?

TJ and Charles Dahlstrom on a Happier Hunt
Bet Charles remembers the first aid kit next time.
Photo by Charles Dahlstrom

Well, we plowed on through that crusty snow that evening and finally reached the vehicle. I was splattered with blood from the chest down and completely winded. My heart was intact, but pounding like a trip-hammer. We raced for the nearest town. The vet stitched TJ up, gave me the brief overview in canine vascular medicine and we (rather I) was back trudging across the field in the dark within a couple hours to retrieve my side-by-side, the blood-stiffened wool gloves and the various articles of clothing I had shed along the way out of our near disaster.

TJ has healed well. Hopefully she will work a little more slowly and carefully in the heavy cover…if not due to wisdom then maybe from age as she creeps into her latter years. I believe I have learned a few things as well. My first aid kit is a permanent fixture in my hunting vest; I even added a few rubber bands. I took the time during the off season to study a book on canine first aid. And I pledged to never again make sport of the woodsmanship of others. I discovered that a bit of poor planning, an aging memory and some bad luck can make many of us look like "a Bloomin…er…a novice dog handler."

Ahead of the Storm

by
Rem DeJong

It All Came Together For Bo—Just before the storm
Atta-boy Bocephus of Cattail Storm pointed his first rooster ringneck for proud owner Clay Hooley. Where else? Well in a cattail slough, of course!
Photo by Rem DeJong

Is it the same for you as it is with me? The birds we bag mostly blur together in a haze of memories, but the misses—oh, now that's something else! They get recorded in living-color and high-def accompanied by mental color-commentary that goes something like: "You stupid #$%^@! How the hell did you miss that one?" And of course there's no shortage. A recent mid-December pheasant hunt in North Dakota added an especially painful portrait to the growing collection.

It was late afternoon, several hours and many miles of slogging through cattail sloughs since the last rooster flushed. Not that it bothered **Brinker of Indian Creek**; he was bounding through switch-grass toward a knoll that still held a small patch of standing cornstalks. He was acting birdy, and I struggled to keep up. Cresting the hill, I saw he was already locked up on point in a weedy tangle on the far side; I lumbered forward. "Please let it be a rooster," I prayed to no one in particular. I should have added, "and let me hit it," but I didn't. Brinker shifted left and froze in the very definition of intensity. I stepped into the red, leafy vines five yards ahead. Nothing. Brinker never flinched; his eyes were riveted on tangled weeds between us. I stepped closer and a gaudy old rooster with 30 inch tail-feathers pumped skyward from beneath my feet. He let out a raucous cackle and swung east with the rays of the setting sun highlighting every bit of that gorgeous plumage. Maybe he was too close; maybe I had too long to think, but I was sure that rooster was mine. "Damn!" I muttered, as the first shot touched nary a feather. The recoil of the second punched me backward, but the ringneck sailed on unscathed. Brinker gave chase over the next rise and I hoped against hope that maybe he'd come back with that bird. You know—one of those lone BB heart shots where the bird suddenly drops out of the sky. It was not to be.

What do you say to a dog after he's busted his furry little butt for hours, enduring cattails, ice and barbed wire? He makes a beautiful point, the bird goes up right in front of your nose and you just flat out miss! Sadly, Brinker's had more than his fair share of practice. He glared at me briefly with that "What the heck's with you?" look, then whirled into the cattails looking for more birds. Thank God, Brinker can't talk, and his enthusiasm is so contagious that I can't stay down for long.

Meanwhile, on the other end of the slough, Clay Hooley had a totally different perspective on this, the second day of our hunt. His pup, **Atta-boy Bocephus of Cattail Storm,** was busy living up to his kennel name. A vapor cloud of cattail fuzz and snow powder traced the trail of the busy little dog as he snuffled down the track of another bird. This time, the hen made a run for it and flushed far ahead, but he had been consistently pointing plenty of birds, and Clay was thrilled that "Bo," a dog that would not point for anything in his Natural Ability Test, was now just doing what comes naturally to a good bird dog.

Early that morning, Clay and Bo had reached a hunting milestone: teaming up to bag a wild North Dakota rooster off of a solid point. We had dropped off a third companion, Max Warren, to hunt a creek bottom with his seven month-old German shorthaired pointer, Duke. As we crested a hill, I had seen a rooster dashing for cover in a long, narrow cattail slough. I drove on by so as not to alarm the bird, and stopped at the next section road where I told Clay of the bird's whereabouts. He and Bo set out to ambush the bird while I drove on a few hundred yards to another chunk of promising cover.

Brinker and I had barely left the truck when a single shotgun blast rolled through the early morning calm. It had to be Clay, and it was. When I caught up with him a couple hours later, he was still grinning from ear to ear. Somewhat sheepishly, he held aloft the mangled carcass of a rooster while Bo danced around his feet. Bo had picked up the rooster's scent in the cattails and after a short track, pinned the bird with a solid point. When the rooster burst out of the weeds only a few yards away, Clay didn't wait to nail it, and Bo retrieved his first pheasant.

We took some photos, but they were hardly required to preserve this memory. Just

say “pheasant” or “North Dakota” to Clay now and it’s like hitting a switch. “I wasn’t going to let this one get away if I had to crawl on my belly! We had worked through half a dozen or so little patches of cattails with no luck, then all of a sudden I saw Bo become real focused and methodical about every step he took, and that's when it happened. He worked it around the point of the cattails and locked up right out on the edge where I could see him perfectly. I walked in, the bird flushed, and we had our first bird together. Man, that little span of maybe 45 seconds made our whole trip worth-while!”

Now, before you start packing your bags to come out here too, I should make clear that this was North Dakota in December, not South Dakota in October, and this was Marge’s old farmhouse, not some fancy lodge with a name like “Thunderstik,” where presidential hopefuls go for a photo op and an NRA endorsement. Marge runs a no-frills, no-nonsense operation. Tried, tested and true from seventy-some winters on the North Dakota prairie, she makes a few bucks by renting out the old house, which stands in the shadow of her slightly newer dwelling on 1100 acres of crop and grazing land. You pay $30.00 per person per day. It’s clean, warm and dry; you turn the lights out and the heat down when you head out for the day, and you eat what you cook. No, you won’t find yourself hobnobbing at the bar after a leisurely afternoon hunt with CEOs, debating the merits of a .460 Weatherby vs. a Holland & Holland .470 for dispatching Cape Buffalo in Zimbabwe. There’s no satellite dish; the TV gets Channel 13, Public TV and that’s it. Evening entertainment at Marge’s place consists of sitting around in your socks, swapping stories, and sipping a brew while the griffons snore at your feet.

This particular hunt had gotten off to a great start. Clay and his dog Bo had driven up with Max Warren and Duke the shorthair. Never having been here before, my hunting companions didn’t know what to expect on that first morning hunt. On the other hand, because I had hunted here several years, I didn’t know what to expect either; that’s just the way it is in the late season. Pick the wrong dates and a blizzard can trap you indoors playing pinochle all week. In our case, the single-digit temps and 30-mph winds that Heather, the worried weather woman, fretted about never materialized; we had highs above freezing and lows around 20. We were lucky on both the weather and the birds.

As we finished dining on U.P. pasties that evening, Marge paid us a call to settle up with Clay and Max. Duke, the shorthair, chose this time to demonstrate that he was not nearly as housebroken as his master alleged. As Duke was hoisting his leg on the living room carpet, Marge was fortunately preoccupied with paperwork so she never noticed Max grabbing his pup in mid-whiz and hustling him into his crate while I slid a recliner chair over the evidence. As soon as we said goodnight to Marge, we whipped out the stain remover and cleaned up the rug. But that was only a portent of things to come. Banished to his crate, Duke spent the evening polluting the air with the foulest gas imaginable. Heaven only knows what he had found to snack on out there in the field that day, but it definitely didn’t agree with him now. As a British comedy played on Public Television, we rested our tired feet, talked of dogs and hunting with occasional expletives directed at poor Duke and his rumbling digestive system.

Our final day began with Brinker making a phenomenal track when I crippled the first rooster of the day. The bird had dropped on the edge of a cattail slough, and as he began the track, Brinker ran into a half-dozen hens before he had gone 50 yards. He started over and took the track to the roadside, made a hard right and tore up the frozen ditch. The last I saw of him was a brown speck bobbing over a hill and back into the

cattails over 400 yards away. I jogged up the road to where he had disappeared and waited. A few snowflakes hissed by, but there was no sign of a dog in the somber slough that stretched to the gray horizon. I was beginning to worry that Brinker might get disoriented in that maze of tall grass. I began blowing my whistle, but there was no sign of the dog. I blew more frantically and was about to fire a shot in the air when that brown, bobbing head reappeared. As soon as he saw me, Brinker stopped dead in his tracks; he crouched with ears cocked and a look that I've come to recognize as: "Come help me!" Usually it means there's a chipmunk in a hollow tree or some other critter in a brush pile that needs stomping. He bounded off, stopping to make sure that I was following, and led me about 100 yards deeper into the field. Triumphantly, he scooped up the now dead rooster and came trotting in. If I'd just had more patience and laid off the whistle, he probably would have brought the bird all the way the first time. With twists and turns, the track had to be well over half a mile.

By late afternoon, we three hunters were totally pooped. The dogs had pointed lots of birds; even Duke the gasser, had made amends for the previous night by making a fine point on a rooster that Max then bagged. We loaded up and headed for the house. As we bounced down a rutted section road, thoughts of a cold beer and hot supper evaporated when we crested a hill and saw dozens of surprised pheasants scurrying for the cover of a small cattail slough. I stopped and Clay pulled alongside. "Wow! Did you see all those birds?" he exclaimed.

Tired muscles and sore feet were forgotten; there was just enough daylight for one more push. With bird scent everywhere, the dogs crashed into the cattails and the air was soon filled with pheasants bursting from the brush. Hen after hen high-tailed it for distant cover, but where were those roosters? Brinker's beeper switched to point mode deep in the thickest stuff. "That better be a rooster," I muttered. In spite of birds erupting all around, the steady beep-beep-beep told me Brinker was going nowhere. I was no more than a couple yards away when the cock bird cackled and rattled his way up through a cloud of cattail fuzz. No time to think now; just point and shoot. The bird dropped dead and Brinker made the retrieve. Brinker wasted no time; that bird was barely in the game bag when the beeper collar was back in point mode. Once again, I wallowed through the brush in the direction of the dog. Cattail fuzz filled my nose and mouth, but Brinker made the misery worthwhile. He was locked up solid on another rooster. It took flight into the setting sun, but crumpled thirty yards out with the first shot. The misses of yesterday were now forgotten. We whooped over our good fortune and headed for the trucks.

Back at the farmhouse, Marge poked her head in the door. "You boys should know that there's a blizzard warning for tomorrow," she cautioned. "They're calling for maybe a foot of snow in the afternoon and 70 mph winds." So it was settled; no sense in getting caught in bad weather. We'd head for home first thing in the morning, just ahead of the storm. It was too cold to grill out this night, so Clay fried the brats in butter on the stove. Who needed a five star resort now? We toasted the young dogs' first points and recounted the thrills of birds shot and birds missed. There could be no better way to put a season to bed.

Basic Steps of Force Retrieving
by
Joan Bailey

Excerpt from Chapter Four of How to Have THE BEST TRAINED GUN DOG by Joan Bailey

[Editor's Note: ! This article was graciously provided by Joan Bailey from her new book. To see more details or to order your copy, see *www.**swanvalleypress**.com*.]

"…For all retrieving exercises always be sure that the object (dummy, bird, gloved hand, dead bird) is placed in the dog's mouth carefully so he's comfortable, and the object is not causing pain. A quick and easy solution is to run your bare fingers around his gums, making sure the dummy is not pressing his gums or his tongue down onto his teeth—ouch!

Step 1. The dog tolerates your hand in his mouth.

Attach the leash to the dog's collar and have him sit beside your left knee. Then gently drop the leash and take hold of his mouth with your left hand. Using your thumb and middle finger, press against the side of his lips so he opens his mouth. Say "Fetch" and

Photo 1. The proper way to put your gloved hand into the dog's mouth.
Photo by Joan Bailey

immediately put your gloved right hand, palm up, into his mouth (Photo 1). The backward movement of his head is prevented with your left hand. Keep your hand in the dog's mouth for 10 seconds (count silently to yourself).

Be sure to use a soft glove such as a gardening glove. (The right hand should not be inside the dog's mouth further than ½ to ¾ of an inch behind the canine teeth.) After a few seconds, say the command "give" or "out" and withdraw your gloved right hand. Encourage the dog with quiet praise. Repeat this step until he tolerates your hand for up to 60 seconds. Increase the time gradually: 10 seconds, 20 seconds, and 30 seconds up to 60. (See Photo 2.)

Photo 2. The dog holds your gloved hand in his mouth—10 seconds the first time.
Photo by Joan Bailey

Limit the training session to only 10 minutes. If you don't succeed in the dog tolerating your hand for 60 seconds within the 10-minute session do it for a length of time that the dog will tolerate, and continue at the next session until the dog will tolerate your gloved hand for 60 seconds.

Step 2. The dog tolerates the wood dummy and other dummies in his mouth.

Use the same position as in Step 1, but use the wood dummy instead. (See Photo 3.) Make sure the dummy does not pinch his gums or lips. When he holds the wood dummy for up to 60 seconds, use the stuffed skins of different birds. This may take up to two days.

Photo 3. Place the light wooden dummy into the dog's mouth.
Photo by Joan Bailey

Step 3. The dog holds the dummy and a stuffed bird skin.

As soon as the dog tolerates the hand, dummy, and stuffed bird, stroke the top of his head gently a few times with soft praise while looking directly into his eyes. (See Photo 3.) Professional trainers know that this makes the dog concentrate on you. Be alert if the dog attempts to drop the object, by using your left hand on the collar immediately to stop it, and quickly give the command "Fetch."

As training progresses, remove the right hand carefully from the dummy with the command "fetch." (See Photo 4.) Anticipate your dog's every attempt to drop or discard the dummy by quickly using your right hand to stop him, combined with the repeated command "fetch." And remember to always say the command "give" each time you want him to release the dummy into your hand.

Five to twenty repetitions will be necessary to bring the dog to the point where he will hold a dummy or stuffed bird for about one minute. In between these repetitions you should practice the sit and heel. It is extremely important to have frequent variation

Photo 4. The dog holds the dummy while your left hand softly pets him. Your right hand held is held under his chin as a visual aid to prevent him from dropping the dummy.

Photo by Joan Bailey

to avoid boredom in the dog and to relieve any tension. Frequent variety requires the dog to pay strict attention, and to concentrate on the Boss.

For example you can have the dog hold the dummy or bird for 60 seconds. Then switch to walking around, heeling for three or four minutes. Then come back to step 3 and continue for 5 more minutes.

Usually three days at the most will be required for the first three steps. Some dogs and some trainers can do it in one day, but whether it takes you one day or three days, or even longer is not important. What is important is to avoid all intimidation. The pressure is quiet, determined and direct, but without great harshness. On the other hand give lavish praise as soon as the dog complies with your wishes.

For a successful hunting dog it is especially important that the dog releases or gives the dummy only on the verbal command “give.” Anticipating the give when the dog sees your hand must not become a signal for him to release (give) the dummy. Here is how to avoid sloppy retrieves:

Note: This excerpt includes steps 1, 2, and 3, out of 10 steps.

Upcoming Events

Heartland Spring 2009 Test April 24-25 at Mazomanie WI Test Site. Call Jim Crouse (614)562-1860. Download details and reservation info from Heartland Chapter page at: http://www.wpgca.org.

Heartland Chapter Michigan Monthly Training Days. Call Jim Crouse (614)562-1860 for dates or see Heartland Chapter Page at: http://www.wpgca.org. Begins April 18th.

Rocky Mt Exposure/Training Day July 18. Call Mike Vance at (406)587-8603 or see Rocky Mountain Chapter Page at: http://www.wpgca.org.

NE Chapter Spring 2009 Test May 15 - 17. Call Kevin Jester at (732) 244-5078 or see chapter page at: http://www.wpgca.org.

More About
How to Have the Best Trained Gun Dog

In the December issue of Michigan Out-of-Doors, Tom Huggler writes, "Whenever people ask for my favorite book on dog training, I have long recommended titles by the late Richard Wolters…Now, I also suggest Bailey's new book, which explains simple-yet-effective methods that are natural and do not require electronic aids. The author, who lives in Oregon, has established a reputation as a great contributor to what is now a plethora of books and information about the best ways to train dogs.

"Larry Mueller, hunting dog editor for Outdoor Life magazine, calls her "One of America's great dog people," an accolade I believe comes not just from Bailey's knowledge but from her ability to communicate simply and clearly. She does this not only with words but with helpful black-and-white photos.

"Owners of flushing, pointing and retrieving breeds will learn plenty from this slim, non-nonsense guide."

Huggler writes for the Pointing Dog Journal in his regular column "Eastern Encounters," and has written many popular books and produced videos on hunting pheasants, quail, woodcock, and grouse. He has won numerous writing awards.

With a new pup in town, you sleep with one eye open.
Elle of Auger Falls age 13 Billie Jo of Valley House age 7 share an uneasy nap with Annabelle (Ali) of Ancient Kennels.

Photo by Ann Pool

Northeast Chapter WPGCA Fund Raiser

For a limited time, the Northeast Chapter of the WPGCA is offering an opportunity to purchase some great "Griffon Gear." All proceeds benefit the Northeast Chapter of WPGCA. Fill out an order form on line at **http://www.wpgca.org.** For additional information, contact Kurt Soneson. (Email ksoneson@gmail.com or call 207-825-3858.)