

The Gun Dog Supreme

NEWSBULLETIN of the WIREHAired POINTING GRIFFON CLUB OF AMERICA
EDUCATION & RESEARCH FOUNDATION

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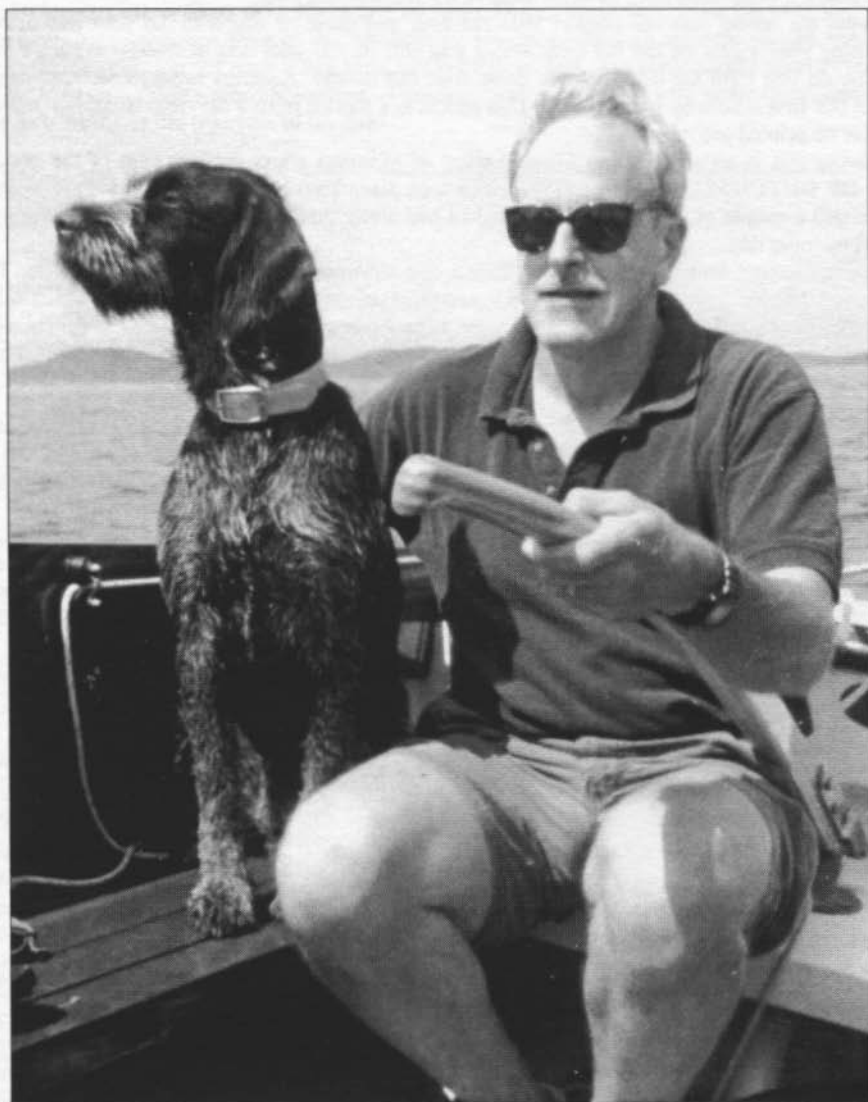
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A Letter from the editor

I know, some of you are probably wondering what's up with the cover photos of Griffons and boats on the last two issues? What are the chances of that happening? Probably very slim, but it just so happened that I was sent both of the photos from the owners/families and 1) not having any maritime articles of Griffons planned in the near future and 2) not wanting to waste such beautiful photos I decided to put them on the cover. After all, summer is the time for boating and it is just another prime opportunity to spend time with your hunting partner. Besides wasn't he/she the one who found and retrieved that crippled duck and came back with that grouse you thought you didn't hit. Or what about that chukar you thought you lost, as you watched it fly down the mountain side, only to have your Griffon bring it back to hand. I think feats such as these deserve a leisurely boat ride.

Anyway, the spring regional chapter tests are over and those of you who ran your pup in NAT are now setting your sights on the fall tests where you will be run your dog in IHDT. What do you train for? How do you train for it? Where do most dogs fall down? Answers to all these questions can be found in our first article by Joan Bailey. This article is a reprint from a previous issue, but it is one that can never be printed too much.

Following this is an article from Glenn Lehrer of Montana about the last hunt of the season with **CERA OF DUTCHMAN'S HOLLOW**, which took place 7 years ago. Seeing how most hunting seasons are still a couple of months away I thought I had better throw in a hunting story to keep you going until opening day.

Lastly, is a letter Glenn Lehrer received from a dog nutritionist in regards to the book *Food Pets Die For* by Ann Martin. A review of this book appeared in the December 1999 GDS which may have alarmed some of you. After reading the book and that book review Glenn decided to find out the dangers for himself and contacted 2 DVM-dog nutrition researchers and 5 veterinarians. All had a similar response.

Mike Lockenbie

⇒ **p.s.** A reminder for those looking for the test results: spring test results are published in the August issue and fall test results are published in the February issue.

UPCOMING TRAINING DAYS

Northwest Chapter: August 12th
Dennis Carlson (541) 386-4830
carlson@gorge.net

Rocky Mountain Chapter: August 14th
-None Planned-

Heartland Chapter: August 5th and 6th
John Pitlo (319) 872-5764
jvpitlo@clinton.net

Northeast Chapter: August 5th and 6th
Rick Molt 207) 563-5675
tina@tidewater.net

FALL TEST SCHEDULE

Northwest Chapter: September 29th, 30th
October 1st
Dennis Carlson (541) 386-4830
carlson@gorge.net

Rocky Mountain Chapter: -None Planned-
Vic Jaro (208) 736-9381

Heartland Chapter: September 16th, 17th
Jon and Judy Coil (218) 647-8451
jcoil@paulbunyan.net

Northeast Chapter: September 22nd - 24th
Jane McKenna (207) 666-8260

COVER PHOTO: Looking so regal as to be captaining the boat, **BRISTOL OF ALDERBROOK** keeps watch as her owner, Ted Silver, steers the boat. This photo was taken in August of 1999 as they sailed toward Butler Island in Maine's Penobscot Bay. (Photo by: Josh Silver)

NATURAL ABILITY IS OVER TIME TO GET READY FOR INTERMEDIATE

By Joan Bailey

It's April or May and you have just returned home from the spring field test where you ran your wonderful young Griffon in Natural Ability. No doubt your dog qualified, or if not he or she missed out on only one segment of the test. Perhaps you had trouble getting your dog to go in the water. Or maybe your dog didn't track the pheasant. If a dog doesn't track a live pheasant it's almost always due to lack of exposure *ON WILD BIRDS, and other critters*. It doesn't matter *what kind* of wild birds, just so that they are wild and not pen-raised. They can be quail, chukar, pheasants, grouse, or woodcock. The other critters your dog will encounter on daily runs are rabbits, squirrels and such.

As you know, from reading *How To Help Gun Dogs Train Themselves*, from the time you receive your pup in spring or summer, through the first hunting season, continuing *after* the season, you should have been taking your dog out once a day for EXPOSURE. In fact, you could forget nearly everything in *How To Help Gun Dogs Train Themselves*, if you exposed your dog to wild game (birds and fur) on almost a daily basis for the first year of his life.

EXPOSURE, EXPOSURE, EXPOSURE.

Now you are back home from the natural ability test, and you must begin working towards the Intermediate Hunting Dog Test in the fall, which is only six months away. Unlike the natural ability test, you must do more than exposure work, though that is still vitally important.

You must continue daily exposure in the form of runs in different places, but now you will begin to ask and demand a little more of your buddy who is now in his early teens. Here are the things you will work on:

1. Retrieving
2. Retrieving
3. Retrieving

It is retrieving where nearly every IHDT dog falls down, unless handler and dog have worked on this aspect of the team. From around 13 or 14 months of age your dog has probably started not bringing birds to you. He runs out and picks up the bird, or just stands by the bird, and looks at you. You say "Fetch," and he continues to stand and look at you. Or, he picks up the bird, starts running back to you, but gets half way or so and starts running away from you. Or he may circle you, and circle you, and circle you. And you are getting more and more frustrated.

If you don't get a handle on this now, you are going to have bigger problems later. The reason the dog is reacting this way is because he is a teenager and he is trying to exert his independence. And he's also challenging the pecking order. He's wondering if he couldn't take over as leader of the pack. Sounds familiar doesn't it! So what to do? First, go back to *How To Help Gun Dogs Train Themselves*,



ANGUS OF CHERRY POINT with proud owner, Dave Checketts, during their NAT at the Rocky Mountain Chapter test weekend this past spring. (Photo by: Tina Molt)

turn to page 196 and read "The Awkward Age--This Two Shall Pass."

Now you have a better understanding of what is going on with your teenager, and how to handle him or her. Somehow you are going to have to enforce the retrieving command. You can do this partially by conning the dog into bringing the retrieved object to you (see page 207, 2nd edition, in *How To Help Gun Dogs Train Themselves*, "Emotional Development of Puppies," or the August 1993 GDS.) You can also begin a modified, or full force retrieving. (See *The Training and Care of the Versatile Hunting Dog*, \$11.00, from Dick Austin, 4400 Cordova Pl., Fremont, CA 94536, tel: 415-794-1633.) This is the time to get this book anyway, as you'll learn how to complete the whoa training, and many other valuable training tools.

You can use all sorts of variations on these suggestions, but you **MUST** do something or you will end up with a wonderful dog that does not retrieve game to you, and you will lose game in the field, and fail the IHDT.

One of the most important things to do is: **TO BUILD ON THE DOG'S NATURAL RETRIEVING, which in reality is his strong genetically bred desire to please you.**

SOME REMINDERS FOR RETRIEVING:

1. **Enforce commands.** This means: Don't give a command you cannot enforce. If you say "Fetch," once, then that means fetch. Do not give any more commands. Go to the dog and make him fetch.
2. **Be firm, but gentle.** This means that when you go to the dog to make him fetch, you do it firmly, but compassionately. **YOU DO NOT COME DOWN HARD ON YOUR YOUNG DOG AT THIS POINT IN HIS TRAINING/CONDITIONING.** Every situation is different and every dog is different. It may be that you simply have to go to the dog and encourage him with your voice such as, "Come on Rover, get the bird," while you pat your thigh and turn your body towards where you had been standing. That's just one example of a gentle way to enforce the "fetch" command at this point. There are a hundred other scenarios.
3. **Do not praise the dog before the task has been completed.** This means if you had to walk out to the dog and had to encourage him to walk back to the spot you were standing in, you do not praise him until he reaches that spot, and you have taken the bird from him.

All this can be applied to the drag track too, as the dog completes the drag and brings the bird or rabbit to you. Take the bird, and then give the praise **IMMEDIATELY**.

Duck Work:

There are two other areas you must work on if you are to pass the IHDT. One is exposing your dog to live ducks. Again, check back in *How To Help Gun Dogs Train Themselves* for the initial manner of doing this. Once your dog has had a few opportunities--say two or three or four different times--to chase a duck, then you want to give him or her a chance to **TRACK** a duck. This means releasing a duck properly (without the dog watching), then putting your dog on the track properly, and letting him work it out. Try to make the first experience easy, so that the dog is successful.



BRIGAND OF CLOUDY SKIES retrieving a duck, for owner Bernard Constantin, during his IHDT at the Northwest Chapter test weekend in the spring of 1999. (Photo by: Jeff Dillon)

If, after the dog has found and has been chasing the duck for a few minutes (no more than five),

when you can *safely* shoot the duck in front of the dog, do so. This *rewards* the dog for his work and cements the bond in your team. Your dog will want to work *with* you, because he knows you'll fulfill your part of the team effort.

If you live any reasonable distance from the headquarters of a regional chapter club, call the president and find out the date for the summer training/exposure day. There will be ducks and plenty of experienced help on hand, which makes the duck work infinitely easier than doing it alone. If that is not feasible, contact a chapter or national officer. They will try to put you in touch with another club member in your area who can help you. It's much easier to do this duck work with a few other people and dogs.

Drag Track:

The third thing you must work on is the drag track, or the retrieve of dead game from a drag track. This is where a dead bird is dragged about 120 meters (or 165 steps), out of your sight. The dog is sent to retrieve. I PROMISE YOU THAT IF YOU DO NOT TRAIN FOR THIS YOUR DOG WILL FAIL AND WILL NOT QUALIFY IN IHDT. MORE DOGS DO NOT QUALIFY IN IHDT DUE TO FAILURE IN THE DRAG TRACK, THAN IN ANY OTHER CATEGORY, AND 99% OF THE TIME, THE FAILURE IS BECAUSE THE OWNER DIDN'T SPEND ANY TIME ON THE DRAG TRACK.



ANGUS OF CHERRY POINT and owner Dave Checketts starting the Track of Live Pheasant portion of their NAT this past spring at the Rocky Mountain Chapter test weekend. (Photo by: Tina Molt)

The good part is that dogs love to do this, once they have been taught and shown what is expected, and if their retrieving training is progressing well. Check *The Training and Care of the Versatile Hunting Dog* for how to train for this. It's very easy to train versatile dogs for this because they love to do it, and once they learn it, it reinforces retrieving without hardly any pressure.

One More Thing About the Drag Track

It is the drag track where most dogs fail in IHDT. Why? In addition to inadequate training, there is one more reason why dogs sometimes fail here. When the dog and the handler are faced with a test situation there are some additional things happening that especially affect this portion of the test.

The judge who drags the game is a stranger to the dog. The handler is nervous; he wants his dog to succeed. Some handlers are more nervous than others, but ALL are up tight. This is instantly communicated to the dog. The handler starts the dog on the drag, the dog knows that something is not just right with the Boss but doesn't know what. The dog may start out on the track, senses something is wrong, turns off, takes a couple of sweeps, halfheartedly searching, and comes back to the handler. Or the dog might go all the way out to the bird, which is out of sight of the handler, go past the game and head back to the Boss with no bird.

Why does the dog, who has done plenty of drags before, fail to pick up the game, and go whizzing back to his handler? Although he has done countless drags at home with his handler, this situation is different: Boss is up tight, and the person who laid the track doesn't smell like the Boss. The dog gets out there, usually out of sight of the handler, and panics, and thinks he should get back to home base as quickly as possible.

There are ways to overcome these difficulties, and at the same time, by increasing his confidence in his dog, the handler will get over some of his nervousness too. During the last few weeks before the test, have someone (that THE DOG DOES NOT KNOW) lay the track. Do two or three tracks over a period of several weeks, which are laid by total strangers to the dog.

And just one thing more about drags. DON'T DO TOO MANY OF THEM. ONE OR TWO TIMES A WEEK for the last 3 or 4 weeks before the test IS PLENTY. If you do more drags than that, a young dog may stop pointing.

Don't forget through all this retrieving work, both on drags and water work, and retrieving of game on land, PRAISE IS VERY IMPORTANT AND IT MUST COME AT THE RIGHT MOMENT, WHICH IS EXACTLY WHEN YOU ARE REMOVING THE GAME FROM THE DOG'S MOUTH. I saw a wonderful dog recently in an IHDT test, and the dog was falling down consistently in all the retrieving tasks. When he DID finally bring a bird to the handler, the handler took the bird, and only 10 or 15 seconds later as an after thought did he say a one "good boy, and that was only because a judge reminded him. That was not positive reinforcement. The timing was off and did no good.

So:

1. Exposure, Exposure, Exposure
2. Retrieving, Retrieving, Retrieving
3. Duck work
4. Drag Track
5. Praise at the Correct time!

You've got a great dog. Don't let him down. Don't let the breeder down. Don't let the program down that produced this fine animal for you.

A Bonus For Your Efforts

After you have gone through the summer, working with your dog on the above items, you will find a wonderful benefit this fall when hunting season gets underway, because as Jim Seibel always says, you will have a better, safer hunt with a properly trained and conditioned dog. As Jim says, it is so critical to be able to control your dog in the field, or anywhere, to avoid injury. And, if you hunt with other people, a well-behaved dog that adds to the hunt, rather than distracts, will be appreciated.

I remember when I prepared my dog for his Utility test. I ran him in October and qualified, and left November 1st for a month of hunting in Nebraska, and was amazed at what a better hunter he was, and how much more enjoyable it was for me. So, you will reap years of pleasurable days in the field, with few or no lost birds if you do your work this summer. Good luck and good hunting!



BADGER OF DRUMMER'S RIDGE Posing with 3 grouse after a successful hunt. (Photo by: Mike Rackouski)

If you have questions or need advice or help, call any of the following judges, officers, and/or the breeder:

Dennis Carlson (OR) 503-386-4830	Joan Bailey (OR) 503-629-5707
Tawna Skinner (ID) 208-756-4658	Anita Andrus (ID) 208-756-4658
Vic Jaro (ID) 208-736-9381	Glenn Lehrer (MT) 406-586-0015
Gary Pool (ID) 208-324-2473	John Pitlo (IA) 319-872-5764
Ken Hurtig (WI) 608-356-6481	Jim Seibel (MI) 616-789-1020
Steve Grieser (WA) 360-738-4088	Dean Umphrey (IA) 319-293-3783
Greg Hurtig (WI) 608-522-5810	Rick Molt (ME) 207-563-5675
Mike Rackouski (WI) 715-682-0383	Ed Bailey (Ont. Can.) 519-856-4988
Bob Matsuoka (ID) 208-734-5212	Joe Nadeker (CA) 916-223-5331

**AND P.S. - IF YOU JUST RAN YOUR DOG IN IHDT -
AND HE DIDN'T QUALIFY - DON'T DESPAIR, HELP IS ON THE WAY**

If your Griffon didn't qualify in IHDT, chances are very likely that he fell down in the retrieving aspects of the test: retrieves of the various birds throughout the test, or in the drag track. Your dog has all the necessary natural ability, it's the training for retrieving that's the problem. That means there is nothing wrong with your dog. It's you that needs some help. So go back and work on retrieving as we said above. Use all those training and conditioning tools we talked about earlier. Work on all this for the next six months and come back again in the fall (or spring), and I'll bet your dog will qualify with a high score. Don't forget to call someone for help if you don't understand something, or are having trouble. Better to catch a problem in the beginning than to let it become a huge problem over time.

**IF YOU RAN YOUR YOUNG DOG IN NATURAL ABILITY THIS
SPRING IT'S IMPORTANT THAT YOU RUN HIM OR HER IN IN-
TERMEDIATE HUNTING DOG TEST THIS FALL**

By: Joan Bailey

You may have gotten the impression that you can wait to do your dog's IHDT until spring. That is not the case. It's very important that you run your dog this fall, if at all possible.

This particular testing system was designed to evaluate each dog from every litter so that the most informed breeding decisions can be made. The reason to run the dog in IHDT about 6 months or so after NAT is because it provides an opportunity to see how the dog is developing, how he is taking to training, how he is absorbing his ongoing conditioning and exposure at this time in his life.

In Europe there is no choice. They only test NAT in the spring, and only test IHDT and UFT in the fall. To some extent our club has slipped away from the fall testing. Quite a few owners of young dogs have been told that they can wait until spring. But that is wrong. We need to see that young dog at this particular time of his development.

Another problem that has arisen with too many people postponing their IHDT to spring is that the spring tests are becoming too overloaded with IHDT dogs, which has presented lots of problems in getting enough judges, and testing space at some of our spring test sites.

So we urge everyone to do his or her IHDT in the fall if at all possible. If this is a problem for you, talk with an officer or chapter president.

Remember, the reason each and everyone of us is testing our dog is so that in 10 years there will be good dogs to choose from when we get our next pup.)

SEASON'S LAST HUNT

By: Glenn Lehrer

The last day of general bird season in Montana arrived with snow falling amidst gusts of wind from the northwest, signifying a potential winter storm. I had no classes to teach at the university until late afternoon. My schedule boldly said, "Take CERA pheasant hunting." Cera is my youngest Griffon, nineteen months old and has been my main hunting dog this season. My three and a half year old broke her leg the second weekend into the season, which proves the need for serious hunters to have more than one dog.

The area we planned to hunt is about 25 miles from our home in the Bridger Mountains near Bozeman. That 25 miles of road can become treacherous and drifted with snow quickly during winter storms. Doubts crossed my mind about going. Would the roads be safe to drive including the seven miles of gravel road? Would it be snowing so hard that Cera and I would not be able to maintain contact while hunting? Would there be enough visibility to see a pheasant flush after Cera pointed it? Would I be able to get home, change clothes, put equipment away, and get to class on time?

The doubts were erased after recalling how far along Cera and I had come this season working together as a team. Almost all of our communication while hunting is visual, mental or instinctive now. It's hard to explain, but this season of hunting every weekend for ten weeks, for six to eight hours a day, plus some afternoons during the week, has developed our close relationship to that of an efficient team, where each knows and understands what the other is doing.

Cera has all the qualities I want in a gun dog. She possesses a keen nose, strong pointing instinct, an incredible tracking ability, a desire to please, a cooperative attitude, great desire for game, a solid and even temperament, and a strong retrieving instinct to deliver game to my hand. And I will not own a hunting dog that is not a good family pet with a nice disposition. Both Cera and my older dog, Amie, meet all of my wife's and my expectations.

In addition to the pure joy Cera and I experience while hunting together, there was another reason for going on this dubious day. Cera and I needed one more hunt to put it all together this season and today was it.

We arrived at our hunting area at 9:30 a.m. Snow was still falling, but the trip had been uneventful and the wind gusts were not noticeable in the foothills where we were to hunt. About a foot of soft snow was on the ground. The temperature was 28 degrees and visibility was adequate despite the falling snow. The area we were hunting consisted of two sections of wheat and barley fields with a creek flowing between the fields. Feeding the main creek were two additional dry drainages. The creek and both dry drainages consisted of very thick cover including cottonwoods, aspens, willows, cattails, hawthorne, wild rose patches with grasses, and other thick ground cover. There's also a quarter section of low-lying ground between the drainages consisting of the same cover.



BELLE OF CLOUDY SKIES (Prairie Storm's Beau x Champagne Blaze of Dutchman's Hollow) with owner Cory Claussen October 1999. Team work paid off after hunting all day in unseasonable 80 degree weather.
(Photo By: Dean Rominger)

Along all the drainages the cover is 25 to 50 yards wide and so thick that it is difficult if not impossible in places for a hunter to cross to the other side. You cannot see the other side due to the 15 to 100 foot high trees. The grain fields along the edges of this cover make the cover ideal habitat for pheasants.

Normally we hunt this cover only once or twice a year when, due to weather conditions, we cannot drive to other areas of the state where birds are more numerous, and because we do not want this small area over-hunted. Also, this is a very difficult area to hunt, especially by one hunter-dog team. The pheasants can run and not be seen. They can fly out of the other side of the cover from the hunter, therefore dogs that are not thorough in working thick cover and that are not cooperative tend to work too far ahead and end up losing contact with their owner.

Some sort of an audible device such as a bell around Cera's neck was probably most appropriate on this last day of the season, but I thought the birds would be more likely to run and Cera is very good at checking back with me when we hunt, so I opted not to use a bell. I must confess that noise while hunting, which includes excessive talking, a dog bell, and especially the new electronic beepers really turn me off. The hunting sound experience to me should be the quiet footfall, brush rubbing on the hunting pants, Cera and Arnie busting through thick cover, a bird flushing from cover after the point, and on this day the quiet squeak of my boots compressing the new snow.

I loaded my Browning over-and-under and Cera and I started our last hunt for the year. My strategy was to work down one side of the main drainage looking for pheasant tracks either going or coming from the cover into the grain fields. When we saw tracks or when Cera picked up a scent, we would then work that area more thoroughly. It has been my experience that pheasants seem to gather after the snow starts flying and if we found the area they were using for cover, we could be in for some action.

This was the end of Cera's second hunting season, but because of all the hunting I do she is an experienced hunting dog already. She's had over thirty pheasants, a dozen sharptails, a dozen Hungarian partridge, and a half dozen ducks shot over her during this season. There have been only two pheasants that went down that she could not find. Many of the birds retrieved were tracked several hundred yards. One pheasant shot during a Cody, Wyoming, hunt with my son-in-law included a track of almost a half-mile including a hundred yards of lunging through a foot of water and a thirty-yard swim across a beaver pond. Now you know why I love bird hunting with a good gun dog! A retrieve like that was worth a whole weekend of hunting even if we had not seen another bird.

As we worked down the edge of the cover, Cera would make half circle casts into the brush, testing the air for scent. She would start into cover next to me, work ahead of me thirty to a hundred yards, swing back to me, work ahead of me thirty to a hundred yards, swing back to me, and start the cycle again. When the cover was so thick, making it difficult for us to maintain visual or audible contact, she would come out through the cover to check back. If the cover was open in places so that we could maintain contact, she would not swing back all the way to the edge of the cover.

We worked this way for an hour, covering a mile of the creek without any game contact. We saw fresh deer prints, as well as some rabbit prints, but no sign of pheasants in the vicinity either by track identification or by scent. During this time we worked silently together as a light snow continued to fall. No sounds other than our movement broke into our experience. Despite our lack of success in finding birds, whenever Cera and I came back into contact we both were full of anticipation because we were doing what we loved most.

At this point we found an opening in the cover where we could cross the creek and begin to head back to the truck. Half our hunt was over and on our way back we would work both sides of one of the dry drainages connecting with the creek bottom we had been working. This drainage is about a half mile long and it's cover averages twenty to thirty yards across.

We proceeded along here for about two hundred yards with no bird sign when suddenly Cera, who was off to my right about forty yards, froze on point. I moved up to her location about five yards into the thick cover and a hen pheasant got up. Cera maintained her point as I moved in front of her and a cock flushed. I could not shoot as thick brush was between the low-flying bird and me. Elation filled my veins for Cera's find and point, but a bit of sadness came too for my inability to complete the process of bagging the bird. Once more the wisest and wariest of upland game birds was able to elude the hunter. The longer I hunt birds, the more respect I have for the pheasant. Good at evasive tactics and hard to kill, it is, in my opinion, the worthiest of all game birds I have hunted with my dogs.

Cera and I continued our hunt with again no sign of birds until suddenly she went on point a bit further up the drainage. I moved in for the flush and another hen got up. Cera moved out tracking a ground

scent and I lost sight of her for about five minutes. When I spotted her she was on point around the bend, about fifty yards ahead from her last point. She was twenty yards into the cover. In breaking brush trying to get to her, a cock got up and flew out the other side of the cover where I couldn't get a shot. We moved on, and a few minutes later another point on a hen.



Dog tired! AUN OF THE HIGH COUNTRY relaxes after a good day in the field.

(Photo By: Bryan Rowder, owner.)

Two minutes after this, another point, but this time within five feet of the edge of the cover. "Lord, please make this one a cock," I prayed. When I moved in to flush the bird, two ruffed grouse got up. I shot at the one on the right. The bird dropped and Cera was off on the first of her retrieves for the day. She returned with bird in mouth, head held high, and tail wagging. I think Griffons smile when they hunt and retrieve.

Continuing our hunt she had another point in four-foot high cover at the end of the drainage. My flushing yielded no flying birds. In these circumstances I've trained my dogs to move in on the running bird when I tap the dog on the head. I tapped Cera; she moved into thick brush and backed out with a handful of porcupine quills in her mouth and chin. Immediately she began to brush at them with her paws. I put her on "whoa" and removed the quills with a small hemostat I always carry in my hunting coat for these occasions, which happen on the average of once each season. Prior to this incidence, Cera had pointed four porcupines this season, all of which I dispatched. My mistake this time was giving her the command to move in without checking the brush thoroughly for porcupines.

After removing the quills we continued our hunt down the other side of the drainage. The snow had stopped falling and the sky in places was turning blue. We were a half hour from having to quit hunting and head for home. Solitude, the fresh whiteness of the snow, and good teamwork had already made Cera's and my last day of the season a good one. After walking the edge of the cover for five minutes or so, Cera picked up bird scent and started tracking about twenty feet inside the edge of the thick cover. I moved quickly to keep up until she went on point near some wild rose bushes. I moved in and a cock pheasant exploded from the brush with snow flying in all directions not five feet from where I stood. I let the bird get out over the grain field a safe distance and shot. The bird fell about fifty yards from where I stood. Cera was on the bird in a second. A good retrieve, and a "good girl," and pat on the head were in order.

We hunted the last of the dry creek and Cera found game one more time just before the drainage emptied into the running creek. Her point was rock solid and I moved in front of her trying to flush the bird for two or three minutes without success. Upon giving her permission to move in on the game, she buried her head and shoulders under the snow-covered red willow roots and pulled out a live, but crippled cock pheasant someone else had shot in the leg.

Our hunt lasted only two hours, but produced two pheasants and a ruffed grouse. More than that it produced memories for me, and I'd like to think for Cera, that we would never forget. It was the right way for the last hunt of the season. The sky was almost completely blue, the air crisp and the ground covered with fresh snow as we made our way back to the truck. I was thankful for my decision to hunt that day, despite my doubts, and thankful for the rancher for letting us hunt his land.

January 11, 2000

Dear Mr. Lehrer,

You have requested information regarding the validity of the claims in *Foods Pets Die For* by Ann Martin. As is commonly the case in our world of competitive media, there is a little truth to the claims made, but they are so exaggerated and distorted that the resulting conclusions reached by the reader are not accurate or valid. I will try to answer each of the questions posed in your recent letter.

...3. Are there dry foods that fit the model described by Ms. Martin sold commercially?

Possibly, but not probably. It is possible there is a small rendering plant in some rural location in the U.S. that accepts dead animals such as road kill for rendering into meat and bone meal used to make inexpensive dry dog food. Is this product dangerous to dogs eating the food? Very unlikely, since the material is sterilized in rendering. Is the thought that dead animals are used to make meat and bone meal esthetically pleasing? No! But, it isn't dangerous and won't kill dogs as insinuated by the title of Ms. Martin's book.

... estimate the quantity of animal protein meal used as an ingredient in commercial pet foods annually in the U.S. It exceeds ten billion pounds. Then estimate the amount of meat meal that could be derived from dead zoo animals, road kill, and euthanized pets in the U.S. If all the claims by Ms. Martin were true, and they are not, this percentage of animal protein meal derived from these sources would be so small as to be undetectable.

In summary, I am very familiar with the suppliers of animal protein meal used by the major pet food manufacturers, having spent considerable time over a ten-year period visiting their production plants. They do not accept the raw materials named in Ms. Martin's book for rendering. However, there are renderers in the U.S. that do accept dead animals described in Ms. Martin's book for the production of animal protein meal. In my experience, the quality of this meal is unsuitable for use in pet foods (due to low protein content), and it is used primarily as a protein source in livestock feed or is incorporated into specialty plant fertilizers.

I hope this answers your questions about commercial pet foods. The nutritional balance of the diet consumed by pets in the U.S., in my opinion, is far superior to the diet consumed by the human population. I am a private airplane pilot and sometimes travel to remote areas. I routinely carry a bag of Prescription Diet k/d, a dietary animal food designed for the management of kidney disease in dogs, in case my plane goes down. Along with water, this food is better than any single human food sold in grocery stores. It will keep me alive until rescued. This is the best example of my feeling about the safety and nutritional adequacy of commercially produced U.S. pet foods.

Sincerely,

Mark L. Morris, Jr.

DVM, Ph.D. Diplomat American College of Veterinary Nutrition



“...now remember, when measuring the dog's height, to always measure from the ground up to this notch between the shoulder blade s.” Future judges looking over **DORY OF AUGER FALLS**. Nicholas Stuart with hat and Jordan Dysart in camo at the Northeast Chapter's Spring test 2000. (Photo by: Jane McKenna)