



# Golden Views

September, 2009

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OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE OTTAWA VALLEY GOLDEN RETRIEVER CLUB



*The Field Issue*

## “Primarily A Hunting Dog...”

So reads the opening line of the Golden Retriever Breed Standard. Developed by Lord Marjoribanks to be a versatile gentleman’s hunting companion, equally at home finding and flushing upland game with its sensitive nose and retrieving waterfowl, our breed standard is rooted in this purpose. But what does this really mean? I’d like to share a few words with you that were excerpted from an interview with Gayle Watkins, Gaylan’s Golden Retrievers, for the monthly online publication, “Everything Golden”:

*The golden community regularly talks about goldens as hunting dogs when we discuss the Breed Standard ("primarily a hunting dog...") or debate correct conformation and temperament. However, I don't think we talk enough about what it really means for a golden to be a member of the collection of sporting dogs known as retrievers. In my opinion, the work of a retriever is one of the most difficult tasks in the dog world. This work requires numerous contradictory traits in the same dog—we want calm dogs with very strong prey and hunting drive that are immediately obedient to our commands. We want a dog that will walk quietly at heel until we send it for a bird. Then on a single command, it charges straight into water, ice, cover, wind and/or current to go directly to a shot bird letting nothing deter it from its task of finding and recovering that bird. Once found, the dog is brave enough to immediately retrieve the game, even if it is only crippled and willing to put up a fight. It should do this work, over and over, for hours on end regardless of the terrain, weather, cover and game. This can mean finding and retrieving game in heavy, even impenetrable, cover or in cold, icy and very challenging swamps. The animals that can find and retrieve birds for hunters are remarkable in every way. As golden retriever owners and breeders, we must be the first to honour this work, treasuring the dogs that have been created to do these very complex and conflicting tasks.*

*We, of all people, should recognize that the job of a retriever is one of the most difficult that a dog can do, demanding both innate drives and absolute obedience. If we trivialize, simplify or ignore the complex set of traits that make up these hunting dogs, then we can't expect the rest of the dog world or our society to understand our dogs' value. Dogs of many breeds make good family pets but few breeds can do the work of our retrievers. If we don't cherish and preserve the traits that make up these dogs, both physical and mental, I fear we will lose them.*

Gayle’s words are a fitting introduction, to this, our inaugural field issue of Golden Views. Inside this issue, we have brought you training articles to help get your golden started in the field. We’ve provided articles that introduce some of the areas of field work you can try. We also profile two members who have taken that extra step beyond training and testing, to actually take their goldens hunting. I hope you enjoy what we have put together in this issue and urge you to give your golden a chance to explore his breed purpose.

Primarily a hunting dog.....

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## South of the Border — The Field Education Subcommittee

The Golden Retriever Club of America recently established a Field Education Subcommittee. The purpose of the committee is:

- to enhance all members' appreciation of the breed's purpose as primarily a hunting dog
- to inspire them to participate in field events with their dogs, and;
- to educate those interested in beginning or advancing their field training knowledge and experience.

The committee has been extremely active in a variety of projects including writing helpful articles on a number of field training topics. Currently, the FEC is involved in the creation of a DVD on how to hold WC/WCX tests. The FEC has kindly granted permission to reprint many of the articles found within this newsletter and many more can be found on their website: <http://www.grca.org/events/field/index.html>

Have a look at the many wonderful resources the FEC is putting together for golden owners. Drop them an e-mail to thank them for their efforts, or better yet, give field a try with your golden!



*It takes a village to train a dog...or at least two cute guys for support...*



*Just waitin' for the signal to throw....*



*WHERE exactly do you want this mark???*

Donna LaHaise is thrilled to announce that Bizzy, aka Ambertrail's I Am A Wild Party MH WCX, can now add the Master Hunter title to her name. Bizzy completed the last leg of the MH title at the OVGRC Hunt Test on July 4th. Way to go Biz!!



Deb Brunner Walker has been having an amazing summer with her boy, Flyer aka Can OTCh AGMCh Goldencol's Come Fly With Me Can VCX WCX SH AGMX AGMXJ RA Am UD WC AX AXJ OF. Deb and Flyer started the summer by earning the last points to put Flyer into the GRCC Obedience Hall of Fame. The team then turned to field and in July, finished their Senior Hunter at the Chesapeake Bay Retriever Club of Canada tests. Last, but not least, Deb and Flyer put aside field training for a weekend in August to finish their AGMCh (Agility Master Champion) and also entered the GRCC Agility Hall of Fame. Wow!!



Ginny Chafe reports: In 2009, Goldencol's Full of Beans, better known as Chili, received her CGN in May, her WC in Maxville on July 31, and a week later on August 8, got her first pass in the Started class at the HRC test near Almonte.

The WC test was fun and I always enjoy being with friends at an OVGRC event.. The Maxville site is a beautiful spot and the late day test was perfect for me and obviously for Chili!

The HRC test involved elements that neither Chili nor I had experienced before - such as hidden gunners, handler sounding the duck call to signify "ready", goose silhouettes in the field and duck decoys in Ross' pond. Chili examined the decoys closely on land and in the water but didn't drop the ducks until she brought them to me. Both tests were a challenge for Chili and for me as she just began retrieving ducks in June. The judge was very helpful. She had extra camo clothing in her car for anyone without - and I was the only one. Everyone was very pleasant and encouraging. In chatting with Jocelyn Magdan, the owner of the only other Golden entered, we discovered that her dog Margie and Chili are related on the Gowrielea side. It was not surprising then, that Margie and Chili took almost identical creative paths to their birds through a narrow channel between a teeny island and decoys.



I hope to do a WCI in future and perhaps another HRC test. However, I will have to curb Chili's enthusiasm for getting to the line as quickly as possible, with or without me, and charging after the first bird before it lands!

Thanks to everyone who helped and encouraged me this summer and to the volunteers who made the evening WC test possible.

## Parks and Ponds: An Introduction to Field Training

Laurie Collins

So you want to see whether your dog has a natural aptitude for field training. You've come to the right place!

If you're interested in competing, you'll obviously have to make sure your dog likes to retrieve birds. (Unfortunately, some dogs can be retrieving fools but think birds are totally disgusting!) For now, since birds aren't always available, we'll start our training using bumpers. You'll start out using white bumpers, but if you continue, you'll want to get other colors (orange, black, and/or black and white) so the dog learns to rely on their nose when they get close to the bumper instead of just their eyes.

### How to Act As a Gunner (Person Who Throws Birds or Bumpers):

Make sure your bumpers have rope on them so you can throw them further! To throw a bumper, you'll want to hold the end of the rope and toss it underhanded. You may want to practice some bumper throwing before you start training with dogs. Don't be embarrassed if your throws aren't always perfect because I don't think anyone can say they've never had the bumper (or bird!) land behind them or almost hit them in the head! Practice throwing by using a target. (Surveyor's tape tied to a few blades of grass is usually used in tests.) You want to keep your throws consistent so the scent isn't spread all over the place if you're training with multiple dogs.



Make sure when you throw the bumper, you throw it so the dog can see it in the air and when it hits the ground. You want to get a good arc on the bumper, and you want to make sure you throw the bumper a good distance away from you. You want to get the dog used to going past the gunner, so you angle your throws back about 45 degrees. There are usually excellent throwers with good arms (or mechanical wingers) in tests, so you want to make sure your dog doesn't get used to thinking that a bumper is going to land within a couple feet of the gunner station or they'll be lost in a test!



When you throw a bumper (or a bird) for a dog, you need to wait for the handler to signal you that they're ready for you to throw. When you see their signal, most people say, "Hey, hey, hey," and then toss the bumper as the dog is looking at them. Other people use duck calls or shots from starter pistols to get the dog's attention in their direction. When you're starting out with a new dog, you want to make a lot of noise out at the gunner station so the dog gets really excited about what you're throwing. You can even add a few, "Woo woos," in with your, "Hey, hey, heys"! As the dog gets more seasoned, you can tone it down a bit.

Okay, you've thrown the bumper and the dog is now on its way out towards you. If all goes perfectly, the dog will go straight to the mark (where the bumper fell), pick it up and head back to its handler. But, as we know, life is not always perfect! So what do you do if a dog heads out to you but gives up before it gets to you? Make some more noise, "Hey, hey, hey," and see if the dog comes back in your direction. If the dog still isn't sure, say, "Hey, hey, hey," again and take a few steps towards the bumper. With some dogs, you may actually have to go all the way to the bumper, pick it up, make some excited noises, and give it a little toss (trying to keep it close to you this time so the scent stays in that area). Give the dog as much of a chance to figure it out on their own as possible, but try to



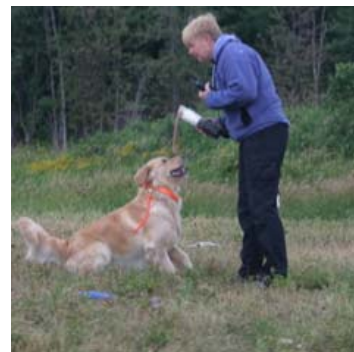
avoid the dog going all the way back to the line (where the dog was sent from) if you can. Ideally all help should come from the gunners in the field, not the handler. Only use the dog's name to get it to come out towards you if it's totally ignoring you.

What do you do if the dog comes to visit you or tries to pick up a bumper or bird that you may have at your feet? Ignore it! Look away from it (and towards the mark) to try to direct its attention that way. You should always have your extra bumpers or birds in a bag (preferably a dark one!) at the gunner station so make sure you step on the bag opening if you need to so the dog can't go shopping. If the dog is really persistent about visiting, the handler can tell the dog to, "Find it," or, "Fetch it up," again, and if you need to, you can take a few steps towards the mark as described above. You definitely do not want to reward a dog for visiting the gunner station! Usually they learn that visiting is no fun once they've been ignored a few times.

### How to Handle (Run) A Dog:

First of all, you want to make sure your dog will pick up bumpers. Even if your dog is a tennis ball fiend, it doesn't mean they'll pick up a hard plastic thing with knobs!

It's also best to have a dog who's reliable on a recall since you can do so much more if you don't have to worry about attaching a long line to them.



Once you know your dog likes bumpers, it's time to get a friend to act as your gunner. Most dogs are used to having whatever they're retrieving come from their owner's hand, and it's a big change for them to pick up something that someone else has thrown. You want to start out by keeping your marks short. A local park would work beautifully for your early field training. As your dog heads out to where the mark went down, they can see the bumper on the mown

grass and they get an instant reward for finding it. Eventually you'll want to find areas that have more cover so the bumper is not so easily visible, which is where the nose work kicks in!

For the first throw, you'll have your dog sitting next to your left side, in the heel position, while you hold onto their collar. At first we want them to be really excited about the retrieving game, so if they don't stay sitting, don't worry so much about it now. Control can be worked on later. The gunner should be about 50 feet out from you. You'll want to get your dog lined up so their whole body and head is facing at the point where the bumper will land. Again, if you're having a hard time with this, don't worry so much about it at first. That's something that can be worked on later.

Tell your dog to, "Mark," and then, when your dog is looking out towards the gunner, you can signal the gunner to throw the bumper. If the dog is looking everywhere but at the gunner, ask the gunner to make some noise. A couple, "Heys," should be enough. Once your dog is focused on the gunner, signal that it's okay for the gunner to throw the bumper. Most people make a waving motion with their right hand. You want the gunner to see it, but you don't want it to be so much movement that you distract your dog. The first few times you have a bumper thrown for your dog, you'll release them as soon as the bumper hits the ground, or even a little before. Again, we want to keep the motivation and excitement up from the beginning for this cool new game they're playing!



Some people send their dogs on their name. Other people use, "Fetch," or, "Get it," or, "Take it." Whatever you choose, be consistent.

Hopefully your dog will go out and get the bumper immediately and bring it back to you. If they don't, try your best to let the gunner help them figure the game out rather than you going out and helping them. Ideally the dog will bring the bumper all the way in to you and go back into heel position without dropping it, but they may need some encouragement. You can always work on delivery to hand in backyard fetch games so don't worry about it too much in the field at first. Most people use three short toots on a whistle to call the dog in to them. Feel free to use as much encouragement as you need to get the dog to come in to you with the bumper.

If your dog has done a beautiful job retrieving the first bumper, with no hesitation, you can back your line up a little bit. You always want to leave the gunner in the same spot so there are not too many scent pools in the field. It's much easier to back up your line. So maybe go back another 20 feet or so and try it again. If your dog does a good job on that one, too, change where the line was totally. Maybe go 50 feet off to the right side of the gunner and try running your dog from that direction. Again, the bumper should fall in the same area for scent purposes.

Eventually your dog will be able to retrieve from longer and longer distances. In a hunt test, the marks are usually about 100 yards (a football field) from the line. In field trials, they can be two or three hundred yards! WC test marks range from 40 to 50 yards from the line to 75 yards from the line for a WCX test.

Since you want to keep your dog's motivation up, don't do too many throws in one session. You definitely shouldn't try to go from 50 feet to 100 yards in one day!!! You want to quit while your dog is still excited about retrieving, so I would probably keep your first session to maybe half a dozen throws. The next time you go out, try running your dog at the distance you stopped at the time before. If they're successful, you can increase the distance again. If they have a problem, move your line closer to the mark. It's all about motivation!

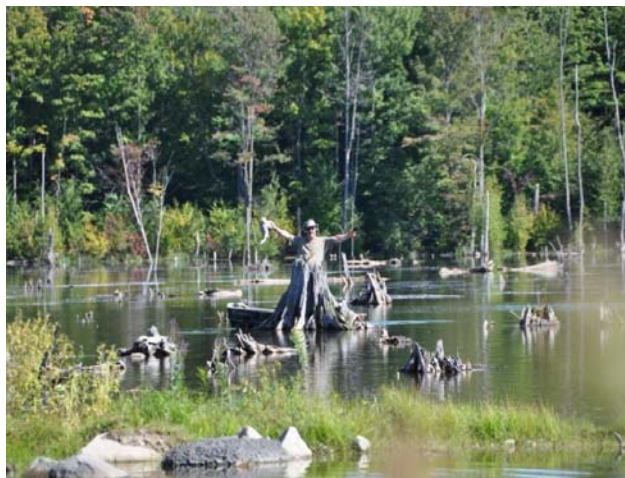
## **Pond Work!**



When you first start running your dog on water, you want to set them up as close to the water's edge as you can. Have the gunner throw the bumper so it makes a big splash maybe just 30 feet in front of the dog. Again, at first let the dog go as soon as the bumper hits the water. If they do a good job at that, let the gunner change position to lengthen the mark this time. Make sure to back up to shorter distances if your dog needs encouragement to make it out to a longer mark. You obviously can't help them much in the water, so make sure

your gunner has a pile of rocks to throw towards the bumper if your dog can't find it.

Swimming distances in tests can be anywhere from 25 to 100 yards (or more for field trials). Again, you don't want to increase the distance too rapidly. Eventually you can set the line up further away from the water's edge, but you want to make sure your dog goes straight into the water rather than running the bank. Bank running is definitely not a good thing to do in tests!



## What's Next?

So you've been out a few times and your dog is retrieving reliably at 30, 40, 50 yards or better. The best thing to do at this point, if you haven't already, is to join a training group with some experienced people so they can help you proceed. Your local golden retriever club should know someone you could contact or you can do a search on CKC/AKC's website for local hunt tests or field trials and contact the club who's putting them on. They should be able to help you find someone to hook up with. You'll be expected to throw bumpers or birds for other dogs on training days, but you'll be able to run your dog as well.



If you really have to do most of your training on your own, here are just a few things to work on after you've completed the basics:

Throw your marks in heavier cover (longer grass) so the dog has to use his nose to find the bumper

Have the terrain change in between the line and the mark (cross a dirt road, go from short cover to heavy cover to short cover, have the mark land up hill from the line, down hill from the line, cross a small gully, etc.).

Add one or two more gunners in the field. Make sure there's a good distance between them (at least 90 degrees) and have them throw the bumpers in the same direction so the bumpers aren't falling towards each other. Line your dog up towards the first gunner, have them throw, and once the dog brings that bumper back, line him up towards the second gunner and have them throw. Make sure your dog goes for the bumper it's sent for and doesn't switch to the other gunner station (gunners can help out with this).

Make sure to vary the distance of your marks. They don't all have to be 100 yards!

If you have access to birds and your dog doesn't want to pick up a duck on land, try throwing it in water. A lot of times they'll pick the duck up in water before they do on land.

Make sure you give your dog a chance to hunt before the gunner helps them find the mark. Some dogs establish a wider hunt pattern than others. Usually if they're running purposefully in big circles, they're trying to find the bumper. They need to learn to rely on their noses rather than a human to help them, so, if possible, let the dog work it out on their own. If they're really in trouble and they're obviously giving up or maybe heading towards a gunner whose bumper they've already picked up, the gunner can give a couple, "Heys," to keep them in the area of the fall.

Most of all, you want to have fun watching your dog do what it was bred for. There's a lot more to field training than just this, but hopefully this will give you a good foundation and you'll be able to figure out whether it's something you want to pursue.



## The CKC Working Certificate Program

*As mentioned in the article on activities for goldens published in the April 2009 newsletter edition, goldens can compete with other retriever breeds in all three areas of the Canadian Kennel Club field competitions: Working Certificates, Hunt Tests and Field Trials. This article will focus on the Working Certificate program and two subsequent articles will talk in more detail about Junior, Senior and Master hunt tests.*

*The order, in Canada, that most people obtain their titles is WC, JH, WCI, WCX, SH, MH. Why not give these tests a try?*

The tests in the Working Certificate program are designed to assess a dog's natural abilities such as marking, memory of fall, intelligence, desire, perseverance, nose and courage. There are 3 levels of tests and the dog only has to pass each set of tests once to receive the title. In the Working Certificate program all gunners are seen in the field and a shot is fired before the bird is thrown. All shots, except for one in the WCX, are fired by the gunner in the field. This is a big help in aiding the dog to focus on the gunner.

### ***Working Certificate***

This is the basic set of tests. To pass this level, a dog must retrieve two birds on land and 2 birds on the water. These are singles, only one bird is thrown before the dog is sent. The marks are short, less than 75 yards on land in light cover and 25 to 40 yards on the water. The dog may be brought to the line on a lead and may be held at the line; they are not expected to honour off lead. Note that dogs can not be run with a collar. Delivery to hand is not an absolute requirement at this level but the birds must be brought back close to the handler. The WC is meant to be an instinct test and is well within the capabilities of most retrievers.

### ***Working Certificate Intermediate***

The Working Certificate Intermediate (WCI) is comprised of a land double (2 birds are thrown before the dog is sent, the dog must remember where both birds land and deliver the first one back to the handler before retrieving the second) in cover of about 75 yards in length. The dogs are off leash at all times and must wait to be sent without being physically restrained by the handler. All birds at the WCI and WCX level must be delivered to hand. The dog must also complete an honour on land (dog must sit quietly and watch another dog retrieve). Dogs who complete the land part successfully then do a double water retrieve of 40 to 50 yards in length.

### ***Working Certificate Excellent***

The Working Certificate Excellent (WCX) is the highest title in this program. In this level the dog will be tested on a walk up land double (or land and water double) of 50 to 100 yards in length, an honour on a walk up and a water double of similar length to the WCI. In addition, there are two blinds run, one on land and one in the water, of 50 yards in length. A blind is to simulate a hunting situation where a bird comes down that the dog did not see. The dog must go in the direction the handler sends him, stop on a whistle and change direction at the handlers command. The dog is not supposed to just run out and hunt all over the field but must show control and obedience to the handlers instructions.

*The OVGRC will be holding two WC/WCI/WCX tests on September 26-27, 2009, at Ambertrail Kennels, Maxville, ON. Come take a look!*



## Hunt Tests: Junior

Glenda Brown

*The Junior Hunter title is the first level of the CKC Hunt Test program. While more experienced field trainers may skip this title, going straight to Senior or Master, for people new to the sport, this level enables both dog and handler to get a feel for the game and to fall in love with the sport. This article, published with the permission of the GRCA FEC, will give you an idea of what to expect at your first JH test.*

Hunting tests should be fun for both the dog and the handler. They represent a really pure form of competition, similar to tracking in that you are competing against a standard rather than against other handlers and dogs. Everyone there should be on your side, encouraging you and your dog to succeed, and you in turn, should be cheering for everyone else. Tests can be set up that are creative and enjoyable without resorting to contrived tests or trickery. In discussing hunting tests, one complaint heard is “this isn’t what I would do in a real hunting situation”. Many times the person saying this has never hunted and is basing it on what he thinks would be done in a hunting situation. Sometimes the basis for the complaint is predicated on whether the complainer’s dog can or cannot do the test! Again, the participants must realize that hunt tests are simulated situations set up to judge a dog’s performance against a set of standards.

Ideally, the judges are looking for dogs that they would like to hunt with on a regular long-term basis. Obviously, in Junior you will have a green dog, and the judges are looking for potential. They are trying to determine if that dog will eventually become a good hunting dog. They are looking for a dog that shows drive, instinct, good marking ability, and trainability to an extent. With each step up, they are looking for a more polished performance. When you and your dog reach Master level, that dog should be one that anyone would be delighted to hunt with at anytime, anywhere.

One problem encountered at the Junior level is that the participant has never read the rules and has not spent any time working with the dog. He/She believes the dog will be judged on natural attributes. This is fine to a point, but it is not realistic. Too many of the problems seen at the Junior level fall under the trainability category and show up in a variety of ways. A dog may have done a beautiful job of marking the bird, and then it plays with the bird, drops the bird, or even plays keep away! These are all obedience (training) problems. You would not want to see your dog perform in this manner if being sent for a dumbbell in the obedience ring. Working the dog in the yard on basic obedience, then transferring that obedience work to the field should help clean up many of these problems. Do not go to the field until the dog is solid in the yard.

In Junior, many persons do not realize that the dog must deliver to hand. The handler lets the dog drop the bird and then reaches down and picks it up himself. This is an automatic zero. If this should happen with your dog, tell the dog to “fetch”, then when the dog picks it up, take it directly from the dog. In a training situation, one should always make the dog sit, hold the bird, and when you reach for the bird and say “drop”, the dog should release it. In a test, if you are worried that the dog will not sit holding the bird, feel free to take the bird as quickly as possible. It doesn’t look as good, it is not a good habit to establish, but it might mean the difference between a passing score and a failing score. Then, return to the yard and work on obedience! Fetch, hold, and drop are not requests, they are commands, and your dog should respond accordingly.



If your dog is reluctant to return or it looks like he might stop and play with the bird, move backwards behind the line (obviously not to the point of being ridiculous) and encourage the dog to come in. Make sure your dog crosses the original line and gets to your side. You cannot go out to the dog

and take the bird. Do not start telling the dog what a good dog it is while encouraging it to come to you. It is not a good dog until it crosses the line and willingly delivers the bird to you. Again, if this is a problem, return to the yard and work on your recalls. After picking up the bird, your dog automatically should return directly to you.

Before indicating you are ready for the bird to be thrown, make sure your dog is looking at the guns or in that direction. This sounds like a very basic instruction, but often the dog is looking anywhere but at the guns, and the handler is not paying attention to the dog. The handler is looking out and sees the gun and indicates he is ready, but the dog is looking at something off to one side. Although a duck call, “bird coming in”, or shot is used to get their attention, an occasional young dog will be turned around and looking at the gallery as the handler is signaling the judges! When the dog hears the shot, he may well turn back, but could easily miss seeing the bird go down.



Gentle restraint is allowed to steady the dog, however, the steadier the dog is the more likely it is to mark the fall. Even if you are convinced your dog is rock solid steady, since the rules allow this restraint, don't let your ego get in the way of common sense, and hold on to the collar. Do not send your dog for the bird until the judge either says “dog” or calls your number. You do not have to send your dog the exact instant your number is given, and before sending, make sure your dog is looking towards the area where the bird fell. Sometimes the judge will forget your number and will just say any number which qualifies as a release for you. I know some of this seems very obvious, but I have seen persons freeze when the judge says “9” and their number is “19”. Be sure to send a dog on a command rather than allowing it to go on its own. These are basic things, but in the excitement of being on the line, it is easy to forget them. Try to practice with friends and

set up these situations so that you will become more at ease on the line and be able to convey this ease to your dog.

Generally, a test dog is run first to show handlers what is involved with a test and to show what problems might arise. The main purpose of a test dog, though, is to make sure the mechanics of the test are working well before a running dog comes to line. It is important to watch the test dog, or at least to watch other dogs run before your turn. This will help prepare you for what you need to do to prevent problems with your dog. This is more important at more advanced levels since in Junior, the marks will consist of singles. If you have any questions on the procedure, ask them after the test dog runs.

Don't forget to expose your dog to working around and through decoys. Never allow your dog to retrieve a decoy. You will receive a zero if your dog comes back with one. Many types of decoys are used so it is a good idea to buy, borrow, or train around many different ones. Get your dog used to shots going off behind it, duck calls from the line and in the field, and to your using a duck call. You should practice entering the water from a boat and returning back into a boat just in case a test such as this is set up. Practice working your dog with a gun in your hand and be aware of what good gun safety is. Never point your gun at a judge, no matter how strong the temptation may be! Any type of proofing you may do will be time well spent to prepare your dog for what it might encounter in a test.



Courtesy at hunting tests begins with checking in with the marshal when you arrive.

Once there, you should stay available as it is your responsibility to be ready to go to the line when called. It is not the responsibility of the marshal to find you. If you are not there within fifteen minutes of being called to the line, you may be dropped if you cannot provide a reasonable explanation for your absence. If you need to go to another stake, be sure to tell the marshal where you are going. At one hunting test, the last dog present had run and the judges wished to move on to the next series. One participant had not shown up and no one knew where he

was. They “put the clock” on him, and he was dropped. Later, he turned up and said he had been busy watching another test. He was upset, but it was his responsibility to be at the test he was scheduled to run. It is discourteous to make the other participants and the judges wait for you unless there are strong mitigating circumstances preventing your being there on time for you to run.

Another courtesy, often forgotten, is when there is a dog on line, you should be as quiet as possible, especially if the gallery is near the line. If you are more interested in talking than watching the dog, move to another area where you cannot interfere with the running dog. Do onto others as you would have them do onto you when you and your dog are the ones on the line.

Do not wear white when in the gallery. Some of the dogs may have run either in field trials or in events where they have to turn to look for someone in white to give them directions. If you are in white, the dog may focus on you rather than on the handler who is in camouflage. If someone is handling a dog, and you may be in the dog’s line of vision, do not move---especially, do not move to the right if, for example, the handler is trying to cast the dog to the left! The judges should position the gallery so no one can stand behind the handler, but sometimes they are a little remiss in regard to this.



One thing beginning handlers do not always understand is the judging and what the judges are looking for in the dogs. A good mark is one in which the dog knows the direction, the area, and the depth of the fall. It does not necessarily mean pinning the bird (going directly to the bird), as a dog that puts up an intelligent hunt in the area of the bird, sticks in there and works it out has indicated it is a good marker. On the other hand, some persons tend to feel their dogs have done a good job of marking if after spending an inordinate amount of time hunting around, the dog accidentally comes upon the bird. If this happens on every single mark, it is going to be a judgment call as to whether or not the dog has a great deal of marking ability. It may get a good score in perseverance if it stays out there for fifteen minutes looking for one bird, but its marking score will be low. Judges tend to mark “SOB” on the judging sheets for this---stumbled on bird! From a hunting point of view, if the dog is out there for a long time it is disturbing area and game. The longer the dog is out there, the more tired it becomes. Other birds may be coming in and leaving while the dog is still hunting for the first bird shot. Some newcomers (as well as some old timers) may be unrealistic in what they feel is a good job done by their dogs.

Remember, good sportsmanship is a large component of this game. Always thank the judges, no matter what you might feel about the tests they set up. They have given up their time (and sometimes it has cost them money) to be there so you could run the tests. Thank the members of the Club who have worked so hard to put on the test. If on that particular day you did not do well, an old obedience adage is “Train, don’t complain”. Make note of your problems and determine what you need to train on to improve your dog’s performance the next time out. If you do feel things could have been improved re the judging or the conducting of the hunt test, get involved with the Club and contribute to the betterment of the next test.

## Hunt Tests: Senior and Master

Glenda Brown

*For those of you who have already gained the title of JH and are interested in pursuing higher titles, this second article will help to shed some light on what you'll see at the advanced levels and the skills you and your dog will need to be successful.*

One of the biggest problems in advancing from Junior to Senior is that most persons are not aware of just how big that jump is. Besides having multiple marks, diversions and blinds are now required and control is essential. The first change in Senior is that you cannot go to the line with a leash or collar on your dog. You can wait in the holding blind with your leash on, but when called to the line, it must either be left behind at the blind or put in your pocket out of sight.

At some point, your dog will be asked to honor another dog's work. Here, again, control is stressed because if your dog breaks and interferes with another dog, your dog is out. In Senior, you are allowed a controlled break—an example, if your dog tries to leave the line and you can get him back to your side under control without interfering with the running dog, your score will be lower but you should not be dropped. In Master, you may be asked to honor throughout another dog's work, or possibly two or more dogs may have to work at the same time, with only one dog being sent to retrieve at a time. In both Senior and Master you will have walk-ups with the dog walking under control at your side while birds are being shot. Usually, as the first bird is shot, you may quietly give your dog a sit command and/or whistle command. The judges will tell all the handlers in advance at what point they may give a sit command or whistle command.



Some handlers may have misconceptions as to how a blind is judged. They assume that if their dog gets out there and eventually stumbles on a bird, it has run a good blind. Of first importance in a blind is the initial line the dog takes. This does not mean that the dog has to line the blind, it means that if you give your dog a line, it should take that line for a reasonable distance and not peel off to return to an old mark, go to another area, or join the gallery for lunch. If the dog does start towards a previous mark or towards something which offers suction, such as decoys, blow your whistle and handle. Often, persons do not handle quickly enough. They let their dog get completely off the initial line before they blow their whistle. Sometimes they dig themselves a deep hole in which it will take innumerable whistles and casts to correct the dog, whereas a quick whistle might have gotten the dog back on track immediately. Judges generally do not judge by the number of whistles blown. They judge as to how the dog is maintaining the initial line, how far the dog varies from this line, whether it challenges the blind by taking cover, ditches, and other obstacles on the way to the blind, and just how many whistle and cast refusals there are. Does the dog sit? Is it attentive? Does it take the cast and make progress in the direction of the blind? Judges



want to see if the dog is trying to work with the handler or is it just romping around having a good time, totally out of control. Hunting dogs can be told to “hunt it up” at the end of a blind, and if you do this, make sure your dog is in a downwind position so it can wind the bird. The cleanest blind is one where you put your dog right on the bird. The number of whistle and cast refusals allowed becomes very stringent when you reach the Master level.

In Senior, it is not uncommon to see handlers sending their dog on a blind without lining the dog up correctly. Many times the dogs are not even looking in the direction of the blind. The dog should be brought to the line and given its cue for a blind (something such as “dead bird”), and the dog's spine should be lined up in the direction of the blind. After the spine, the eyes should be lined up. Do not send your dog until it is focused on the correct line. With training and the use of drills, dogs learn to ignore old marks and

diversions. Handling is challenging and interesting as you learn to read your dog. You develop a much closer bond to one another as your handling skills improve and advance.

A lot of line work can be done using what could be referred to as “bits and pieces”. If you do not have good grounds or water at home, use whatever you can find. You can work on obstacles such as bushes, logs, ditches, etc. in small increments, teaching your dog the concept of taking a straight line. You can utilize agility jumps in your yard while running a dog to a pile of bumpers. After a good heavy rain, look for lovely puddles! With time and practice, your dog will realize when it is pointed at something such as cover, a small piece of water, or a log, the idea is to go through it or over it, and not around it. You can start up close to these obstacles and gradually move back as the light bulb goes on!

Casting can be improved by watching yourself in a mirror. Observe yourself, are you doing something that might be confusing to your dog. Is your right hand and arm moving at the same time you are trying to cast your dog to the left? When training with a friend or friends, have others watch you from the field and see if you are giving clear, informative casts. When training, use the least exaggerated cast possible. If your dog is only used to big casts, you will have nothing to fall back on in a test situation. When using verbal casts, it tends to drive the dog back in the direction it was going or wants to go. Verbal is good if your dog is losing momentum, silent casts are good for changing direction. Save the big, walking casts for when you are in a test and are desperate! A comment---often you can not even be watching a dog and you can tell the handler is in trouble by the tone of his/her voice. Try to keep any panic from your voice when casting.



It is completely acceptable to handle on a mark in a hunting test. A quick handle is often preferable to a long hunt. Once you begin to handle, you should continue to handle until the dog gets the bird. Some persons let their dog hunt and hunt until it is completely out of the area, give it a cast, and let it hunt again. Once you start to handle, get the dog to the bird as quickly as possible. In a test, if you notice that most of the dogs that have run before you have blown through a mark, going out of the area of the fall, be prepared to give a quick whistle if it looks as though your dog might do the same thing. You will have a much cleaner job, and sometimes if you let a dog get too far out of an area, you cannot get them back. Although it is acceptable to handle on a mark, obviously, if you handle on every mark or a high percentage of the marks, it becomes apparent that your dog is not marking well and can be dropped. There are different types of handling on a mark. If the dog goes to the area of the fall, indicates it knows a bird is there but can't come up with it, then at least your dog knew a mark was there before you handled. Whereas, if your dog hasn't a clue as to where the mark is and indicates this by going in a totally different direction, even though you handle your dog to the mark, the judges will take this into consideration. That doesn't mean you shouldn't try, it just means depending on your other work, that it could lower your score enough to not pass on that day.



Water marks deserve special attention at all levels of hunt tests. A hunting dog can cheat the water, but there are marks that if a dog does not take a line through the water, he will not be able to come up with the bird. Avoiding the water can indicate lack of perseverance on the part of the dog, though many times this is due to insufficient training. There are some cases while hunting where it is unsafe for a dog to go by land rather than

water such as broken glass or harmful surfaces, barbed wire fences, etc. This is why your dog should be trained to go by water even if running around the pond looks more inviting. You should be able to handle your dog into water on both marks and blinds. If a dog repeatedly will not handle into the water, it indicates your dog is not only refusing your cast, but also is not working with you as a partner. His respect level for you is not high enough to do what you are asking of him. When you are hunting, the dog must be your partner!

Persons tend to criticize long marks, but there are some cases where a bird was winged and flew a great distance before going down. Another situation that could create a longer mark is hunting with friends and they shoot a bird that is a distance from you. Hunting test distances should stay within the limits set by the rules. If a mark is 125 yards rather than 100 yards, it does not necessarily make the test invalid or illegal. There are some tests where the marks are extremely long for a hunting dog and are not justifiable as a hunting test under the most generous assessment. When training, you do need to work your dog on both marks and blinds that are longer than the distances given in the rule book. With marks, you want to vary the distances so your dog will not always assume they are a certain length. With blinds, if you can have good control on a 200 yard blind, think how much better your control will be on a 100 yard blind.

In walk-ups, the important thing is to have your dog under control while walking so that the minute those birds go up you can say “sit” and have your dog in a good position to mark the falls and not break. You do not want your dog looking behind you when the marks are going off in front of you. The less new things you and your dog have to confront while running a test, the more confident you both will feel. Another thing to practice for Senior and Master is to have your dog sit in front of a blind or sit in front of you while you are behind the dog sitting on a bucket. It is amazing how many dogs who are very well trained become disconcerted when they have to be somewhere other than beside their handler. Getting in and out of a boat or running from a boat is something else you should practice.



One of the best things about hunt tests is their non-competitive atmosphere. Everyone should be in there supporting one another and hoping each dog does the best it is capable of doing. If you don't do well in a test, after the tests are completed, talk to the judges and see what they feel your problems were (if you haven't already figured it out!) and discuss what you can do to overcome these problems. If you do not like the way some of the tests are being handled, the best answer is to get involved and try to see that changes are made to make the tests more valid in your estimation. A lot of clubs are looking for persons who will help, work, and chair these tests. Don't just complain. Constructive criticism is one thing, whining is another.



When a dog has earned the title of Junior Hunter, Senior Hunter, and especially Master Hunter, the owner should be filled with pride. Whenever a dog has not passed a test, the handler is frustrated and upset, not eager to blame himself or lack of training. But if you, the handler, stop and think realistically about your dog's performance, would you want the performance of your dog on that particular day to be the standard, or would you rather do more work and have your dog improve his performance. The titles should have meaning, and this only will occur when everyone involved is educated as to what constitutes a good test and when performances are judged according to the standard. Our goal should be work that surpasses the standard, rather than a performance that just earns a passing score.

## A Judge's Perspective

Lauren Kinney

*OVGRC member, and president of the GRCC, Lauren Kinney, is very active in the field events with her goldens. A licensed CKC Master judge, Lauren was gracious enough to share her thoughts and experiences as a judge.*

### **Background:**

First a little background for those who don't know me. I started in show/obedience with Goldens when I bought my first male in 1977 after doing a couple of year's worth of research. Later on, my sister joined me and we eventually started breeding in the 80s, under the kennel name Zaniri (pronounced Zana-rye). We then got into field trial training in the early 80's living in Toronto, working on the GRCC FT Committee for several years. This was a fantastic bunch who also worked at some of the Lab trials and allowed us to gain entry to field trial training opportunities. We did run a few field trials (not very well) as well as train our dogs for WC/WCX, and it gave us both an excellent beginning in field work.

In those days we would have 55 or so dogs in the Open stake and always be finished on the same day (although sometimes it was very dark by then). But it pushed you to really think about mechanics and time needed for each test. The marshal would have been out with their judges on the Friday, and gotten the full test setup, so during one stake we could go and set up the next series as the previous one was finishing and save a lot of time. It was important to time each series as well, and actually know how long it was going to take for "xx" dogs, so you would really consider whether 2 or 3 big swims were really needed to test the dogs (i.e. 20 minutes per dog) on that triple or whether a similar test with one last big swim would get the same results (at 7 minutes per dog). I still find this experience useful and tend to focus very much on smooth mechanics, avoid multiple long swims unless for a real purpose, etc. This leaves time to carry lots of dogs in each series and ensures that if delays happen there is time to catch up.

We then got into AKC hunt tests back in BC and later the CKC hunt tests when they started. Over the past 10 years or so, this has been our major activity along with breeding although we still do a little conformation, obedience and lately have been training and sometimes running in field trials again. The field trial game is a very demanding one, so few people have the time or commitment to get involved, but I would encourage anyone who is serious about hunt tests to at least check out the field trials.

### **General Comments on Judging Challenges:**

One of the big challenges of competing in hunt tests is relates to the perspective you bring. The rules of the game are quite well written and pretty explicit for a sport carried on outdoors on a wide variety of land and water. On the other hand, the rules are written to explain to the knowledgeable what is expected and despite some very good explanations in Section 15 Standards of Performance, the words are still meant to be understood from a knowledgeable perspective. This requires understanding of what is a good performance at a Senior level vs. a good performance at a Master (or Junior) level. In a hunt test you are looking at the results of highly variable behaviors, during 2-4 series of tests with many marks and blinds at the higher levels and trying to integrate the different demonstrations of 4 different traits; Marking, Style, Trainability/Control and Perseverance/Courage.

On the other hand, there is also a fair bit of difference between judges sometimes in interpretation of the details which can make it challenging for exhibitors to understand and develop a solid sense of expectations. That is where training and helping at higher levels can be the best way to see and really understand what a



good job looks like. Given the complexity of the terrain and the tests, I think the rules do a good job of meeting that balance. Note *“The hunt test regulations have been formulated in such a manner that the officials of a test giving club and the judges have considerable latitude in the conduct of a test. This is desirable to allow*



*for variations in conditions that are peculiar to various parts of the country and also to grant judges unlimited opportunities for ingenuity in planning the tests. The regulations are not intended to be restrictive, either to officials or judges.”*

Although there have been various efforts to do more training of judges, it is very difficult and in fact, nearly impossible to establish significant consistency as there is a lot of information provided through 2 or 3 series of tests, and it all has to be taken into consideration. I have attended a number of judging seminars for field trials, AKC, UKC, NAHRA and CKC hunt tests,

and although they have all been useful for some kind of new information, I have not found any that especially helped in the real judgment areas. In the end, this is why there are always two judges, and they must agree on which dogs qualify.

If there is a serious concern about whether the test meets the rules (not the handler’s preferences or concerns for something they have not trained) it is best for the Test Chair to bring this to the attention of the judges. An example might be a senior test where the judges propose to run the blind between the marks. A less clear situation might be where the blind is being run outside the marks, but close to one of them. This does not meet the intent of the rules but is not prohibited and in very limited terrain or water, the other choices might be even more difficult for the dogs. My approach, if some wind or terrain factor forces me to set up something unusually difficult or not recommended in the rules, is to take this into account in the dog’s score. For example, this situation would be a little beyond expectations of most senior dogs, so if the dog suctions towards that old fall, and they need a few whistles and casts to get them back on track, I would not judge it as severely as otherwise might be the case. In other words, I would not generally want to drop a dog for a couple of cast refusals and perhaps some scallops here. Of course, I would have discussed this with my co-judge before we agreed on the test. And if the dog was not even trying to respond to whistles, that could be a different issue. In my scoring, I see a difference between a dog who makes an effort but is a little beyond its training/experience level and a dog who is not trying at all. In this case, the dog might get a 2 or a 4 for trainability rather than a 0, which gives it the chance to make it up with other good work on the line and during its blinds.

The other area that is very tough to judge is the “just passing” performance. To assess whether overall performance meets a 70% level and warrants a step towards a title can be difficult. If you compare with obedience, a 170 out of 200 score is required to pass and is the equivalent of 85%. And yet it is not usually a very pretty picture. And then you have to compare what a 70% average would look like in Junior, vs. Senior, vs. Master. You definitely want a more polished performance for every passing dog in Master, but there are still the near perfect Masters as well as the not so perfect passes. Note: *“In most instances there should be little doubt in a judge’s mind as to the abilities of dogs in a given hunting situation. However, there is unlimited*

*opportunity for an honest difference of opinion on abilities that range from just above average to just below average”.*

Another factor that comes into play, is the goal for Master of a “*truly experienced and finished hunting companion*”, rather than a polished field trial type of performance. Because of the very stiff competition in field trials, the dogs are naturally trained to a far more precise standard than is necessary in hunt tests. So although it may be beautiful to watch such a highly trained dog “nail” the hunt test situation, it should not drive up the expectations for the others dogs to perform to that same degree of precision. And also, it is important as a judge not to be over swayed by the presence (or absence) of multiple highly trained and accomplished dogs in the test. We must maintain the standard set by the rules, not one influenced by the level of quality in the competitors. Although this should be a given, it can be quite difficult to do. Watching multiple dogs do a great job on a series tends to make a test look easier than it is.

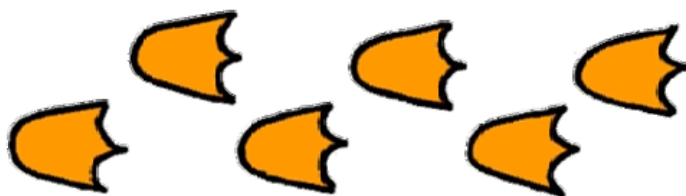
### **Practical Examples:**

I was invited to judge at the Eastern Ontario Labrador Breeders Association at the end of August and it was an outstanding weekend. The club is extremely well organized, very professional Marshals, great co-judges, lots of good dogs and friendly competitors and lots of help. The weather was mixed clouds and sun which made for perfect working conditions, and we made sure to set up alternating land and water tests, so as to help keep dogs from overheating.

A good example of working with the conditions was our first series in Master on Sunday. We had the sun in the dog’s eyes for one piece of land and the wind in our faces for a big hillside. So we set up a delayed quadruple set of marks on the hill to start the land first thing (and avoid heat later). The first two birds on the left went off, with number one being our key marking challenge. On the dogs return from the go bird, after sitting and delivering the bird, a second set of two birds went off, the second one landing about 35 yards in front of the dog. There was also a short honor required during the shooting of the first two birds until the working dog was sent to retrieve. The marks were fairly straightforward and well separated, so test was designed mainly to test memory and trainability/control. So the water marks will need a good marking challenge. Although the delayed quad made the competitors a little nervous, none of the dogs had any problems with it, and as I recall, we carried 17 out of 18 dogs to the next series. This was a good example of a basic test for the dogs at the level (Master in this case), which lets lots of dogs get the fun and the experience of getting to the next series.

The next series was run from close to the same spot, with a fairly challenging water blind (a little more so than we had intended), then a quarter to the flush along the shore, and finishing with a land blind run back across the land and a little ways up the hill.

**More details of the tests and this judge’s perspective next issue.**



## Grooming Your Golden for Field

Pat Enright

Grooming your Golden for field work should be more important than for any other performance event, although not as intensive as for conformation shows. Burdock and other flora tend to attach itself to your dog's coat, especially in the fall, so I will give you some tips to help lessen the work you will have AFTER your field trip.

Tools needed – Comb, pin brush, nail clippers, scissors (preferably blunt-nosed or short-bladed scissors for working around the face), and spray bottle with water.

### **GROOMING BEFORE FIELD WORK**

#### With Dog in Sitting Position

*Ears:* The hair surrounding the ears tends to have a soft and “cottony” quality which traps burrs and other debris. When this area gets wet, it tightens as it dries and makes removing debris even more difficult. To avoid this, spray on top, behind and under the ear lightly with water. Brush the hair on top of the ear back and upwards. With scissors pointing **DOWN AND AWAY** from the dog's head, trim the hair to about 1/2 inch from the ear flap. Next, comb the hair behind the ear up, and with the scissors pointing down and away from the head trim off enough hair so that a comb will easily pass through. Use the same technique under the ear; brush the hair up and trim downward, leaving about 1/2 inch of feathering.



*Neck and Chest:* Lightly spray with water, and using the pin brush, start at bottom of chest and brush your way up to the neck, just under the chin. Using the comb, comb hair straight out from chest. Starting under the chin, scissor downward and away from the head, trimming off about 2 inches – leaving about 1 inch of feathering.

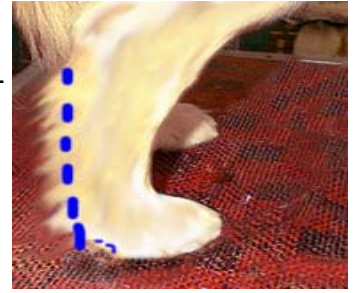
In the picture to the left, note how clean the head looks. The length of feathering on the ear is about 1/2”. Trim any excess feathering around the **END** and **SIDE** of the ear by lifting the ear flap up and away from head. Remember to always trim **AWAY** from the dog's head.

*Feet:* If the dog's nails are long, it is important to trim them down, as they could easily get caught in heavy ground debris, such as a downed tree or submerged log in the water. It is especially important to trim the dew-claws.

The top of the paw can be trimmed by brushing the hair up and trimming evenly with the paw. Don't forget to lift the hair in between toes. Trim the hair evenly with the **TOP** of the pads; **NEVER** in between the pads.



*Front Legs:* Lightly spray the feathering on the front leg with water, and brush hair out straight from the leg. While holding the paw with one hand, lift the front leg forward toward the front of the dog, and with the other hand, trim feathering down to about 2 inches, depending on how thick the feathering is. (Thin feathering does not need to be trimmed as short).



Brush hair on hocks and trim down to about ½”.

### With Dog Standing

*Back Legs:* Lightly spray feathering on back of legs and under tail with water. Using the pin brush, start brushing at the bottom of feathering near the hock, and work your way up to under the tail. Using the comb, comb hair straight out from leg and trim downward toward hock, trimming off enough hair to leave about 2 inches. After trimming legs, facing the dog from the back, comb hair straight down and scissor the hair evenly between the legs.

*Tummy and Tail:* Lightly spray feathering under chest and rib cage. Comb downward, and trim hair on chest, underneath from front of dog to of back legs, leaving about 1 inch, depending on length and thickness of hair.



(Re: the photo at the left— I know this is a conformation show picture, but a field coat was all he had at the time)

For the tail - lightly spray and brush/comb down on both sides and underneath. Hold the tail and the end, and give a light shake; letting the hair fall naturally. Before trimming, hold your thumb over the end of the tail bone (which is also his spine, by the way) and start trimming 1 inch from the tail bone. Trim down and around bottom of tail feathering leaving a SABER-SHAPED tail. Try to avoid a straight cut, setter- like tail, which leaves a harsh and uncharacteristic outline.



### **GROOMING AFTER FIELD WORK**

Be sure to comb/brush all feathering; especially ears, neck and tail. Don't forget to check UNDERNEATH front legs, tummy and inside back legs. Also, check in between pads to make sure nothing is stuck in the hair between the toes. (After 35 years of grooming, you wouldn't believe the stuff I have pulled out of that area!).

**HUNTER'S TIP:** If your Golden has especially thick and soft feathering, try this: Just before you enter the field, spread a liberal amount of Vaseline in your hands, and work through ears, neck and chest, front and back leg featherings, and tail. I have used this technique on my Cocker Spaniels, and Irish Setter since I read an issue of OutDoor Life magazine in 1963. Works like a charm!

## WCs and Hunt Tests

### . . . and then there is the Real Thing

Frances Holmes

I have been playing the CKC “field game” since 1992 with my very first Golden Retriever, Rush. We got our WC, and since Rush didn’t really like the game and, I must admit, I didn’t either, we focused on Obedience and never looked back.

Then came Radar. From the time he was a puppy, Radar watched the birds in the sky. How could I not play in the field with Radar? After all, that’s what he was bred to do, wasn’t it? Off we went to WC tests, and then I was talked into trying a Hunt Test or two. He got his Junior Hunter title with relative ease. He seemed to enjoy himself, but I really didn’t. At every Hunt Test the judges presented a scenario, and the major theme was “we’re huntin’.” That always meant to me that I was precariously sliding down a slippery slope to a water’s edge, balancing on a moving log – and balance is not one of my strong points – or up to my boot tops in mud, as evidenced by the picture of Radar. Huntin’ was not anything I ever wanted to do, and after Radar got his JH, we focused on Obedience and Agility and never looked back.

Some time later, I had the wonderful opportunity to acquire another dog. This dog was a “field Golden.”

When I met the dog, I knew immediately that I wanted him to be a part of my life. His name was Pull, he was one year old, and he was crazy. He had drive to die for and boundless energy. A field Golden? Field was not in his future. He was going to do Agility and Obedience. Remember, I really didn’t like field events and swore off of them after Radar got his JH.

It wasn’t long before I gave in to the realization that retrieving birds was in Pull’s blood. When it came to playing in the field, this dog was like no other, at least like none of my previous Golden Retrievers. In no time, he won me over to the field game, and I was hooked! I was out training regularly, and eventually he got his Senior Hunter title; for some reason, the mud, unstable logs, weird bridges, and murky water became pleasurable, merely a challenge that had to be overcome in order to play. The influence of the dog!



Before I knew it, I was looking for an opportunity actually to take him huntin’, first to see if Hunt Tests in any way represented the real thing, and secondly to give him the opportunity to do what runs through his veins every day. My first opportunity was to go with a friend to a river in a very fancy hunting boat with a hula skirt. Off we went, and we moored at the river’s edge in the middle of a bog. There we sat! Nary a bird came by. There we sat! Somehow, Pull knew why we were there; he kept looking skyward, but nothing was happening. My friend kept calling for the ducks or geese, and there we sat. Finally, Pull took things into his own paws: he jumped off the boat into the most ghastly black stuff and swam away looking for something. Of course he came back with nothing but a very black smelly coat. I somehow knew that this was not what a good huntin’ dog should do, but it certainly didn’t scare the birds away because there were none, much to Pull’s dismay. It got dark, and off we went home, empty-handed.

My friend was kind enough to invite us back, and I was happy to go, armed with a thermos of coffee (I learned from the time before), a comfy chair, and my dog. This time the hula skirt clearly worked: the geese flew overhead, a shot rang out, and there was a splash. I sent the dog. I actually had to handle him to the bird, so his Hunt Test training paid off. He swam back with a goose that was bigger than he is, and he was as proud as punch. The trip was more than worth it in his mind. Pull retrieved his first bird doing the real thing. Was it like the water series in a contrived Hunt Test? No! But was it fun for both me and the dog? You bet it was.

Sometime later, another friend called to say that if I met him at 4:15am the next day, he would take me and Pull hunting, this time on land. How could I resist? After a quick stop at the Tim's drive through, we carried on, and I soon found myself in the middle of a corn field in some farm south of Ottawa. It was pitch black, and there were other hunters already there with car head lights pointed inward and what seemed like several dozen decoys thrown on the ground. There were two other dogs besides Pull, and they ran around with what appeared to be great anticipation. They had done this before. We set up the decoys, drove the cars to another area of the farm far away from where the hunting would take place, and walked back. By then, the sun was coming up, and we hid in the tall corn awaiting the arrival of



the poor unsuspecting geese. The hunters, unbeknownst to me, had already decided that Pull would be the dog to retrieve the geese as they fell. What a lucky boy! The first one fell, and off he went. Sadly, it was still alive, and Pull got pecked. He was rather shocked because all the other birds that he had ever retrieved in his whole life had been dead. He persevered nonetheless, and back he came with the goose. That was the first of seventeen that he retrieved that day. What a tired but satisfied dog he was by the time it was over. Was it like the land series of a Hunt Test with the "we're huntin'" scenario? Not like any Hunt Test I have attended, but it sure was fun for the dog and therefore, really fun for me.

I must admit that I am not crazy about real hunting, and I really hate to see the birds drop, but I am thrilled that Pull had the opportunity to do what he was bred to do and that I had the opportunity to see him do it with such glee.

## The Hunting Experience

Susan Roberts

Most of our Golden Retrievers, like us, are city dwellers and so do not have the opportunity to do what comes naturally to them – retrieve! The hunt tests and field trials that are designed to simulate a hunting situation are good up to a certain point but are no match for the real thing.


The opportunity to experience a real hunting situation is not to be missed. I find it fascinating to watch the dog and see how the instinct to retrieve kicks in – especially when it is new to them and they are learning their role.

My first opportunity to experience a real hunting scenario occurred a couple of years ago when I met a friend at a Wisconsin game preserve. We both had young dogs and wanted them to experience a real hunting situation but under controlled circumstances. The game preserve with released pheasants seemed a good way to start. I did not have my gun license at the time so I was relegated to “dizzying” the birds so that they would not immediately fly away and then placing them where the dogs could not see them. We worked with one dog at a time and the person without the gun (me) walked the dog slowly on leash towards the area where we knew the bird to be. The leash was important to ensure that the dogs were under control at all times until after the gun was fired. We had also both done some work previously with the young dogs to ensure that a) they had picked up birds before and had been trained to “hold” until told to release and b) both dogs were used to hearing gun shots. It was fascinating how much and how quickly the young dog’s enthusiasm kicked in after they had experienced the excitement of finding, flushing and then retrieving the shot bird.



My next real hunting situation came when my friend rented a house about an hour south of Tucson for the month of January. The plan was to do some quail hunting and get away from the worst of the northern winter. It was a long trek for me and my dog as there are no direct flights between Ottawa and Tucson, but as it turned out it was well worth it. We had a great time.

At 4 AM my good husband very kindly drove me and my young girl Laurel to the Ottawa airport (certainly above and beyond a husband's duty I think) in order to catch a 6 AM flight to Detroit so that we could connect to Phoenix. Understandably, I was nervous about putting Laurel on a plane, let alone having to connect in Detroit, but Northwest Airlines proved to be quite outstanding. I did not have to worry as Laurel was well cared for and made her connections easily - even when the connecting planes were only 20 minutes apart. I learnt quickly that if you get to the gate early, you can catch the pilot and crew waiting to board. In this way I was able to nab them to ensure that they knew they had a Golden Retriever in cargo. We finally landed in Phoenix and rented a car to get south of Tucson - about three hours away. We did this relatively easily considering I had a large backpack, a camera bag, a large dog crate and a young, bouncy Golden Retriever in tow who had been in a crate for several hours. It’s gratifying how much help people offer you if you look harried enough (or perhaps it was the cute Golden Retriever)!!<sub>23</sub>



The weather was perfect the whole time - about 60 to 65 F during the day and just above freezing at night. It was still warm for the dogs to be running for 4 or 5 hours during the day, so we sometimes took up to 8 litres of water in our orange hunting vests (husband says I should get a job directing planes) for the dogs as well as for us. This was on top of lunches, snacks for the dogs, camera equipment and gun and ammo, so we were loaded down.

The terrain was quite remarkable. The area we were in was miles and miles of nothing but hills and canyons, trees and brush and cactus. Very beautiful but it had its hazards. We had to watch for sharp sand burs and cactae in the dogs feet and fur and we were constantly on the watch for creatures called javelinas which look like large pot-bellied pigs with razor sharp tusks, but are in fact large rodents. They can be quite dangerous to the dogs if they feel threatened. Luckily we only saw dead ones on the road - or stuffed in the local bar! Disgusting looking creatures. No snakes - they are all underground at that time of year and no scorpions or spiders in January either.

The area we were in was called Patagonia and it's largely ranching territory with ranches of thousands and thousands of acres and large Spanish-style houses. The house we were in was beautifully laid out with stone floors and a huge sunroom. Great for the dogs and us. The town, called Sonoita, consists of a crossroads with basically a couple of restaurants, a few stores, a gas station and that's about it. For you older folks, they were filming Easy Rider 2 in the town on the first day we were there, so that gives you a mental image of the type of terrain we were in. Sonoita is only 40 miles from the Mexican border and so is a big border patrol town with patrol cars and trucks coming and going constantly. Signs warned of the presence of illegals and smuggling - including drugs. On our hunting treks we constantly came across little campsites in the hills with abandoned tattered backpacks, the odd sock and empty Mexican food tins. One interesting sign read, "NO TRESPASSING. ENFORCED BY RUGUR". A rugur is a type of revolver. HmMMM.

The first few days were spent hiking through beautiful country with the dogs but we did not see too many birds other than the odd duck which was summarily turned into dinner for the dogs. Since it was supposed to be a great year for mearn quail, I decided that we had to be doing something wrong and that we needed to find a couple of seasoned Arizona hunters to give us some hints. Where else would you be more likely to find hunters but in a bar? So we hit Sonoita's Steak-Out Restaurant and Bar for dinner, ordered steaks and struck up a conversation with two older fellows who had been hunting quail in the area for 30 years when not being stock brokers. Turned out we weren't quite doing it right with respect to the time of day and the conditions under which the dogs could scent out the birds but a couple of margaritas later we figured we had it all sorted out. These two fellas also told us some interesting stories about finding stashes of cocaine and other drugs in the hills on a couple of their trips. Needless to say, they did not touch it and left the area quickly! Thankfully we did not come across anything like that, although on one day, in a particularly deserted area, we saw someone walking on the side of a canyon. When he saw us watching him he quickly started running and ducked out of sight. Could well have been a Mexican border crosser hoping to get to Tucson airport for the trip up north to farm jobs.

The next day after our chat with our hunting buddies, we suited up with vests and equipment as usual and headed out with our new tactics in mind. Sure enough we pretty soon flushed several covies of birds. The next challenge was their size - they are very small! Of course hitting them was out of the question for me and as seasoned a hunter as my friend is, she is used to shooting larger birds like duck and pheasant, so the pickings were a little slim I am afraid. Regardless, it was great fun and the most interesting aspect of it was again watching the dogs pick up quickly on their role and thoroughly enjoy it. Particularly the oldest Golden who had already experienced many hunting situations, understood completely why he was there and loped along in



position just ahead of us scenting for birds. When he caught the scent he stopped and the tail wagged furiously just before the covies flew up off the ground. He then waited for direction. The younger dogs were not quite as patient or as inclined to wait for instruction, but they certainly understood why they were there.

Another opportunity to hunt came more locally in the fall in southern Ontario where I visited some friends for a duck hunting trip. We loaded up the dogs and the guns before sunset and drove a distance to a very marshy area. It was starting to get cool out so we were dressed warmly in sweaters under hip waders. We walked and waded through thick bush for about 30 minutes before finding a spot to stop and wait. We split into two groups of two with one gun and one dog in each group and then waited for the ducks. The Golden Retriever, Winter, who was with us was a seasoned hunter and he knew exactly what he was there for. He did not have to be on leash and waited quietly beside my friend and me with water up to his chest and with ears perked and alert. After another 30 minutes or so of waiting, a flock rose up and flew slightly ahead of us and low. We aimed and fired and one was hit, falling into marsh about 50 feet away in some trees. Winter dashed off and we heard him splashing around for about 15 minutes before my friend followed him further into the marsh. Both Winter and she continued looking for the bird for another 20 minutes or so but to no avail. The light was by now quite dim and we finally gave up the hunt. No luck this time but the experience of watching the dog doing his job again gave me a lot of pleasure.

Our hunting trips to date have been fun and educational. They offer a great excuse to get out and experience the outdoors in so many exciting ways and to get away from the hubbub of everyday busyness. It is also an awesome experience to watch our wonderful companions come alive with the excitement of doing what they were bred to do.



## Resources

### BOOKS

#### Building a Retriever: Drills and More - Carol Cassity

- excellent resource focusing on drills that are useful and within reach of the amateur trainer.

#### Retriever Puppy Training: The Right Start for Hunting - Clarice Rutherford and Cherylon Loveland

- covers the first year of field training for puppies.

#### Retriever Working Certificate Training - Rutherford, Branstad and Whicker

- an overview of the WC program and how to train for it.

#### Training Retriever for the Marshes and Meadows - James Spencer

- a non-collar approach to dog training for the amateur; nice description of force fetch.

#### Smartwork for Retrievers Series: Volume I and II – Basic & Transition - Evan Graham

- two volumes of retriever training from puppies through basics and into early-to-mid transition.

#### Training with Mike Lardy, Vols: I, II, III - Mike Lardy

- three volumes containing a series of articles written by Mike Lardy for the Retriever Journal. Volume I contains articles that cover Lardy's Basics training program.

#### Retriever Training for Spaniels - Pamela Owen Kadlec

- approaches training as a balance between force and positive reinforcement (clicker training) and food treats. The book covers puppy kindergarten through to basic handling.

#### Retriever Training Drills for Marking - James B. Spencer

- a collection of marking drills with diagrams and explanation of purpose, prerequisites, necessary equipment, and pitfalls to avoid.

#### Retriever Training Drills for Blind Retrieves - James B. Spencer

- a collection of blind retrieving drills.

#### Retriever Training Tests - James B. Spencer

- diagrams of training tests and some explanations of factors – wind, terrain and cover.

#### Smart Fetch - Evan Graham

- a very complete discussion of force fetch.

#### 10 Minute Retriever - John and Amy Dahl

- reflects the authors' belief that daily ten-minute training sessions best suit a retriever's attention span and lead to rapid learning.

#### The Big Jump - Julie Cairns

- a collection of articles originally published in the GRNews covering what is needed to make the "Big Jump" from Junior to Senior.

### DVDS/VIDEOS

#### Sound Beginnings Retriever Training - Jackie Mertens

- excellent video focusing on getting your puppy off to the right start.

### Total Retrieving Marking - Mike Lardy

- covers marking from puppies through advanced training. Field demonstrations and discussions are used to describe a complete sequential marking program and to explore a wide variety of marking topics.

### Total Retriever Training - Mike Lardy

- a complete guide to Mike Lardy's retriever training program covering Basics, Transition and Advanced.

### Total E-Collar Conditioning - Mike Lardy

- an excellent video guide through e-collar conditioning. General theory as well as real-time collar conditioning footage is provided.

### Problems and Solutions - Danny Farmer and Judy Aycock

- an excellent video focusing on problem solving for both marks and blinds by two of the most famous names in retriever training.

### The Art and Science of Handling Retrievers - Dave Rorem

- not a training video but a video that focuses on making you a better handler. For the more advanced competitor.

### SmartWork Series - Evan Graham

- Graham has produced a series of videos covering everything from obedience, to waterforce, swim-by and basic handling. Production quality can be lacking.

## **PERIODICALS**

### Retrievers ONLINE

- an information-packed magazine for those interested in improving their training and handling. Some useful puppy and young dog articles, but generally aimed at advanced work.

### Retriever Journal

- bi-monthly publication with articles written by such retriever trainers as Mike Lardy, and John and Amy Dahl.

## **INTERNET RESOURCES**

### *Knowledge Resources*

<http://www.bdarn.com/article/retriever/>

<http://www.totalretriever.com/>

<http://www.dobbsdogs.com/library/retrievers/>

<http://www.gundogsonline.com/TableofContents.asp>

<http://www.gundogsonline.com/retriever-training-channel/>

<http://www.retrieveronline.com/>

### *Discussion Forums*

<http://www.retrievertraining.net/forums/>

<http://www.canadianhuntingdogs.com/forums/>

<http://www.working-retriever.com/>

### *Shopping Sources*

<http://www.dogsafield.com/>

<http://www.gundogsupply.com/>

<http://www.lcsupply.com/>

<http://www.zingerwinger.com/>

<http://www.canvasbackpets.com/home>

[www.tritronics.com](http://www.tritronics.com)

## Lost in Translation

Even listened to field fanatics talk amongst themselves? Even wonder what the heck language they are speaking? Well, here's a few terms that you might have heard tossed around. It really is English that they're speaking.....kinda.

### **JARGON:**

Area of fall:	The general area where the bird/bumper landed on a mark that one expects a retriever to enter, establish a hunt within, and find the bird within.
Bird Boy:	The person who places the bird for a blind retrieve or throws the bird or bumper for the dog to retrieve.
Blind	A retrieve on either land or water where the dog does not know where the location of the bird or bumper is, but the handler does---the handler must direct the dog to the location through whistles and casts.
Break:	A very bad thing, the dog leaves for a retrieve before being sent by the handler.
Bumper:	Sometimes known as a dummy. It is a plastic or canvas object, usually with a rope attached so it can be thrown, used to simulate a bird.
Cast:	The direction given to the dog, with the arm and hand, and/or voice, after he has been stopped on the whistle.
Cast Refusal:	The dog refusing to respond to the direction or cast given by the handler.
Cheat:	To avoid an obstacle
Controlled Break:	This is when the dog makes an attempt to break and is immediately brought under control by the handler.
Creep:	The dog moving forward on the line while marks are being thrown, without making an intent to retrieve. If the dog has crept too far forwards, many judges will ask you to have the dog return to heel position before being sent for the mark. This verges on breaking.
Diversion:	A mark or blind which is included in a test in order to divert the dog. This makes the test more difficult as the dog can be sent for another mark or a blind after picking up the diversion. A dry shot also can be used as a diversion.
Double:	A marking test in which two birds are thrown, each in a different location prior to the dog being sent to retrieve. In the upper levels, triples and quadruples will also be seen.
Flat Throw:	Also known as a square throw—a bird or bumper thrown directly across from the thrower, i.e., neither back nor in—from the dog's point of view it is a 90° throw. Other types of throws are angle in and angle back throws.
Go Bird:	The first mark to be retrieved, generally the last bird that has been thrown.

Handle:	Directions given by the handler to the dog, e.g., handling on a blind. The handler does this by blowing a whistle which is giving the dog a sit command. When the dog sits and watches the handler, the handler then will give a cast or command of one kind or the other to the dog.
Hardmouth:	A dog that is very rough on, abuses, or eats the birds when sent to retrieve. This is a disqualifying fault.
Holding Blind:	It is an enclosure for the dog and handler to stand behind while waiting to go to the line during a trial or hunting test. It is to prevent the waiting dog from seeing the tests before running them.
Honouring:	A dog remaining seated on the line while another dog is sent for the bird or birds. The honouring dog must not interfere with the working dog.
Line:	This is the spot designated by the judges from which the dog is sent for retrieves or blinds.
Lining:	Setting up the position of a dog before running a mark or blind. Running a perfect line to a blind retrieve without whistles or casts being given by the handler.
Line Manners:	The dog's behaviour while coming to the line, while on the line, waiting for the marks, and upon returning to the line with the birds.
Mark:	A fall of a bird, watched by the dog, which he should remember and retrieve when so ordered. Multiple marks can consist of two, three, or four birds (double, triple, or quad).
Obstacle:	Any physical factor that a dog must contend with while on the way to a bird; logs, ditches, water, cover and roads are all examples of obstacles.
Pin:	The dog going directly to the bird without a hunt.
Steady:	A dog that does not leave to retrieve until commanded to do so is said to be "steady".
Switch:	Leaving the area of one fall after hunting there to go to the area of another fall. It is also a switch to put down one bird to pick up another. This could occur, for example, during a bulldog when the dog on his way in to the line drops the bird he has just retrieved to pick up the bird thrown as the bulldog. This is a disqualifying fault.
Walk-up :	Used to simulate hunting---the handler, with the dog at heel, continues to move forward before the birds are thrown or shot. The dog is not brought to the line and sat before the birds are shot. Usually as the birds are in the air, the handler may tell the dog to sit, but cannot send the dog until the judge so orders.
Whistle Refusal:	The dog failing to respond to the whistle when blown by the handler.

## THE DOG'S WORLD OF COLOR

By Dana K. Vaughan, Ph.D., Dept. of Biology, University of Wisconsin, Oshkosh

Vision is just one of several senses that dogs use to scan their world for important information. Any visual scene has multiple aspects to which dogs' brains are sensitive: brightness, shape, contrast, and motion are a few of these. But what about color?

Many authorities have stated that "dogs are colorblind", with the implication that dogs perceive only black, white, and shades of grey. In fact, this was not known for certain, but became "folklore". Then, in the late 1980s, a definitive set of experiments was done at the University of California, Santa Barbara, by what may well be the world's foremost research program on comparative color vision. I played a very small part in this study, in that I volunteered my two Italian Greyhounds, "Flip" and "Gypsy", for the study. A third dog, a toy Poodle named "Retina", was volunteered by her owner, who was also one of the researchers. All three dogs were beloved family pets, both before and after the studies.

To define canine color vision, each dog was placed into a box facing a display of three round light panels in a horizontal row. Beneath each light panel was a cup. A computer provided combinations of different colored lights in the three panels. Two were always the same color, while the third was different. Over a series of some 4,000 trials, each dog was taught to "find the one that's different". Every correct choice was rewarded with a treat in the cup beneath the correct choice. Every wrong choice meant that no treat was forthcoming, from any cup. All three dogs were so food-driven that they weren't even starved for the tests. Mine loved their "lab days" and would practically drag me onto the elevator to get to the box!

When it was clear that each dog understood the test, some 200-400 tests were run per session, over a period of weeks. This provided a large data set on which statistics could be run. If the dog couldn't tell two colors apart and was just guessing, s/he would be right, on average, only 33% of the time (one out of three possible choices). If the dog could tell two colors apart, s/he would be right much more often.

To ensure that the dogs were identifying the different panel based on color alone, the position of the different colored panel was randomly moved around (left, middle, or right) and the relative brightness of each light was also equalized, so that brightness couldn't be a hint as to which panel was which. The key publication describing this classic work is: J. Neitz, T. Geist, and G.S. Jacobs (1989), "Color vision in the dog", *Visual Neuroscience* Vol. 3, pages 119-125.

These experiments showed that dogs do see color, but in a more limited range than that seen by normal humans, who see the rainbow of colors described by "VIBGYOR": Violet, Indigo, Blue, Green, Yellow, Orange, and Red (plus hundreds of variations on these shades). Instead, dogs see "VIBYYR" (Violet, Indigo, Blue, Yellow, Yellow, Yellow, and Red). The colors Green, Yellow, and Orange all look alike to dogs; but look different from Red and different from the various Blues and Purples. Dogs are very good at telling different shades of VIB apart. Finally, Blue-Green looks White to dogs.

The simple explanation for these differences in color vision is this. The retinas of normal humans have three (3) types of color receptors, called "cones". Each cone type is particularly sensitive to light of a narrow limit within the entire VIBGYOR range. That means that three different "cone lines" of communication run back to the visual part of the brain, which then compares the weight of the signals coming in from each of cone "line". Different weights produce a perception of different colors. In dogs (and in "green-blind" humans), there are only two (2) types of cones, so there is less basis for comparison by the brain, and thus the perceived color

range is more limited. In sum, dog color vision is "color-limited", not "color-blind".

To better understand the difference between VIBGYOR and VIBYYYYR, consider what a dog would see in each of the following color combinations. HUMANS SEE: VIBGYOR  
DOGS SEE: VIBYYYYR

How can we put this information to use as dog trainers? First, we have to recognize that color is just one aspect of a visual scene as perceived by a dog. There are two other aspects that are just as important, if not more so.

The first of these is motion. Think of a green lizard motionless on a leafy branch in the tropics. Both you and your dog would have a hard time seeing it until it moved! Think back to your dog chasing a green tennis ball against green grass. He can follow it fine, even though there is no color difference on which to cue. Objects moving at a moderate rate of speed are, in general, easier to spot than motionless objects.

The second of these is contrast (that is, outline against background). A stationary object that has a very distinct and very different shape from its background is easier to spot, while one that is patterned like its background will blend in. That's the principle of the camouflage clothing worn by hunters. Yes, it's the color of the woods, but more importantly, camo breaks up the human body's outline against the patchy background scene of branches, leaves, and underbrush. Even small movements are harder to see when an object's outline blurs with its background.

The third is color. Back to hunters for a moment; ever wonder how we get away with wearing screaming hunter's orange hats with our camouflage jackets and pants? Deer are probably like dogs (VIBYYYYR): to them, orange is not different from the green or brown undergrowth, and a hat doesn't give a terribly distinctive shape. As a color, safety orange sticks out like a sore thumb to humans, but not to dogs or deer.

So, to maximize an object's visibility to a dog, we should strive to combine: (1) moderate motion (when feasible); (2) maximal contrast (a dark and white pattern unlike that of the background scene); and (3) stand-out color (one that is identifiable by dogs and does not occur very often in the background scene). The best of all possible worlds for most background scenes would be boldly-patterned Bright Purple and White objects.

Having said all that, let's never forget the other keen senses the dog has at his disposal (and we do not): smell and hearing. These are minimally helpful when a dog is working bumpers, but play powerful roles when a dog is working live or shot game.



## OUT, OUT DARN HOT SPOT

*Even though summer is winding down, our goldens are still hitting those ponds and lake with gusto. Goldens and swimming go hand in hand ... unfortunately, sometimes they're joined by hot spots. Even if your golden is not prone to hot spots and "hot spot season" is almost at an end, you might want to stock up on a few of the remedies suggested in the Hot Spot Action Sheet prepared by Suzi Beber for a past issue the Golden Rescue newsletter (Canadian Golden Retriever Adoption Service). Each remedy, has been "tested" by at least one Golden owner.*

You make an appointment with your veterinarian, because your dog is chewing incessantly at some wet, raw looking skin lesion, and it seems to be noticeably bigger than it was, just hours ago. This is getting to look nasty. You show it to your neighbour, and they say, your dog has a Hot Spot. "What the heck is that?", you ask.



Hot Spots, also known as Summer Sores or Moist Eczema, can seemingly appear spontaneously, anywhere on your dog's body, and the area involved, can grow rapidly. This moist, raw skin disorder, has a variety of causes, but the most consistent factor is bacteria. Anything that irritates or breaks the skin, can create the environment for bacterial contamination, if the skin has just a bit of moisture on it. That moisture can be present from a recently given bath, from swimming, to simply being out in the rain, or even rolling in wet grass. Whatever the cause, Hot Spots can be a real nuisance, and the summer months really seem to increase their frequency.


To help you help your dogs, we hope that you will make use of this Hot Spot Action Sheet, which is packed full of a variety of remedies, old and new, many tried and true, but remember, just as we are individuals, so are our wonderful animal companions. This is just a partial list of remedies!

**Calendula Tincture:** You can purchase Calendula from a health food store. Put 10 drops of Calendula in 1/2 cup of distilled water. Put this in a spray bottle, and spray it on the hot spot several times per day. It is not necessary to shave the area first. You can also consider Calendula based products, e.g., Thompson's Calendula Cream, Boiron Calendula Gel, or Herb Hill Calendula Plus.

Some people swear by Chlorhexiderm Medicated Shampoo, for skinfold dermatitis, and as a preventative for hot spots. It is an antifungal shampoo. A medicated soap that is very popular, and is a personal favourite, is called Hibitane, which is available from many veterinarians, or from your local pharmacy. Don't be put off by its red colour. Pour a bit of soap directly onto the hot spot, rubbing it in well, but gently. Using a washcloth, soaked in warm water, make sure you remove all residual soap, and then dry the area very well. Do this a couple of times per day. You should see a noticeable improvement within 24 hours. Lowell Ackermann, a veterinarian, and well known specialist in skin problems, recommends the use of a mild water based astringent or antiseptic. Hibitane also comes in a cream formula.

Many people recommend that you trim the hair around the hot spot, to prevent the spread of possible infection. This also allows you to see how big the hot spot actually is, because they can be very deceiving. It is impor-





tant to determine, whether a bacterial infection has set in, and this is especially important now, since we have been experiencing such a hot summer. Gold Bond Powder is an old standby, especially when the hair has been trimmed away from the hot spot.

Some hot spots occur as a result of allergies, and sometimes antihistamines, such as Benadryl, can help to reduce itching, and have a beneficial sedative effect, that prevents a dog from scratching itself raw. Antihistamines should only be used at home, for short-term therapy. Benadryl: For dogs weighing 25 pounds, give 25 mg 3 times daily; for dogs heavier than 50 pounds, give 50 mg, 3 times daily. Often, 25 mg is sufficient to stop the itch cycle, and provide the dog (and you) with some relief.

Golden Seal Root: You can use the extract, or get capsules from a health food store, and apply the powder directly to the hot spot. It is a natural antibiotic, and is used to stop infections, and to kill poisons in the body.

Tea Tree Oil is very popular in the treatment of hot spots. There are many ointments and sprays available on the market, both in pet product stores and health food stores, that contain Tea Tree Oil as the primary ingredient. An effective blend is Tea Tree Oil, Calendula, and Lavender. You can apply Tea Tree Oil directly to a hot spot, but keep in mind, that some dogs are sensitive to 100% Tea Tree, particularly small dogs, so dilution is recommended.

Domeboro (also known as Burow's) has been known to be amazing in the treatment of hot spots. It is available at some pharmacies, and comes in a pack of 12 powder packets. Domeboro is an aluminum acetate astringent solution. You simply mix one packet in a cup of water, and stir. Soak the hot spot every few hours, using cotton balls. The hot spot will dry out and eventually scab over. Results are usually fast.

Tea works well. Apply a wet and warm black tea bag or green tea bag, to the hot spot. The tannic acids in the tea, work like cortisone, having a soothing effect. Hold the bag on the hot spot for 4 to 5 minutes. Do this 2 times each day, for 3 days. Following this, put a little aloe vera gel on the spot. Some people have had great success, treating hot spots with a really strong infusion of mint tea. Let it cool, and then bathe the hot spot frequently. The mint infusion is very soothing, and some swear, that the spot seems to disappear overnight.

The homeopathic remedy Sulphur (30C), is superb for all manner of skin ailments, but you really need to do your homework, looking at all of your dog's symptoms, before you use the remedies. If the hot spot smells, then this remedy may be just what you need for your dog. Rhus Tox (30C) is another homeopathic remedy, and is for extremely irritated and red skin. It is best to consult with a veterinarian who specializes in homeopathy.

If you are fortunate enough to live in an area where there is no pesticide spraying, then you may have something perfect to use for hot spots, right in your own backyard . . . plantain, which is a broad-leaf weed, that is found in many of our yards. Plantain reduces redness, inflammation, and itching. You simply take a leaf, chop it up, mash it into a paste, and then apply the paste to the hot spot. It generally works very quickly for rashes, lesions, pimples, and raw areas.

Dream Cream is a wonderful product, that is made by a woman on Salt Spring Island, in British Columbia. The cream is readily available in many health food stores in Ontario, or can be ordered from the Aroma Crystal Therapy web site, at [www.aromacrystal.com](http://www.aromacrystal.com). It contains essential oils of Peppermint, Eucalyptus, Lavender, Rosemary, Cinnamon, Tea Tree, and Arnica extract, in a base of shea butter, purified beeswax, poppyseed oil, and de-ionized water.

Another great product is Dy's Liquid Bandage. It is amazing stuff, and does just what it says. It was originally developed for horses. It is made by Advanced Biological Concepts at 1-800-373-5971. Dy's Liquid Bandage is an all-natural healing salve. Olive oil and beeswax have been combined to create the base. This allows the olive oil to carry the healing herbs deep into the wound, to promote healing from the inside out.

Lucas' Papaw Ointment, comes from Brisbane, Queensland, and is only available, by ordering it on-line at [www.nationalpharmacies.com](http://www.nationalpharmacies.com). It is made from carica papaya, which is simply fresh fermented fruit. Remarkable healing can be seen within 24 hours, and it is fantastic for sensitive skin.

Sometimes, no matter what you do, you are faced with hot spot after hot spot, and then it is time to consider other triggers, like food. I know that a number of us have been in this position, from time to time. There is a book on the market right now, published right here in Canada, that sheds light on many things that you may be thinking, but not discussing. The book is called K9 Kitchen (Your Dogs Diet: The Truth Behind the Hype), and it is written by Monica Segal, who is an expert in animal nutrition, physiology, parasitology, and disease. If you think that your dog could possibly have a diet related hot spot problem, this book is for you. Actually, it's for anyone, who wants to cut through all the hype out there, surrounding dogs and nutrition. You can visit Monica's web site at [www.doggiediets.com](http://www.doggiediets.com).

Remember that these are only suggestions and are in no way a substitute for professional veterinary care. Resources listed here, are not intended to diagnose, treat, cure, or prevent any disease.



***Watch for the next issue of Golden Views coming your way in December... the Obedience Issue!!!***

