

Dog Training Fundamentals

(The Interworkings of a Working Relationship)

In the world of dog training there are as many ways to train a dog as there are trainers who train them. Some methods are time tested and well proven while others are not as well known and maybe even a bit outlandish as well. Throughout the years numerous people have confronted me on the topic how to train a pointing dog. In the remainder of this article I would like to discuss what sets the good dog trainers from the rest, and in doing so I would like to draw emphasis to three of the biggest points of dog training, what makes a dog do what he does, understanding a dog's body language, and use of repetition.

While training a dog, all good dog trainers know and understand what makes a dog do what he does. The United States military has spent a vast amount of time and effort trying to better understand dogs and their interworkings to allow for more efficient and time effective training. In doing so it was found that dogs are very inapt with their surroundings and relate the consequences of their actions with all five of their senses with regards to time. The military was able to go as far to prove that a dog responds best when correction is given within the first 1 to 1.5 seconds after making a mistake. This means that the timing of correction is directly related to the dog's ability to understand why, or what he is being corrected for. If a dog is mistakenly corrected or corrected at the wrong time a trainer runs the risk of the dog relating the correction to an action that was not in need for correction at all. For example; a lesser trainer would make a mistake as follows. While teaching a pup to come, the command is given, and to no avail the pup runs off to chew on his favorite toy. The trainer again would give the command with no reaction from the pup. Finally the trainer retrieves the pup from his toy and scolds him. Pup now is confused because he knows he is allowed to have the toy and he was in an area that he was allowed to be in, but he was just scolded. If the correction had been given at the right time (when pup refused the come command the first time) the pup would have known the correction was for not coming when told, instead pup is now no closer to understanding the command and is also unclear whether or not he is allowed to have his chew toy. All good trainers will allow dogs to make mistakes while training, but the lesser trainers would fail to correct the dog within the proper time frame, if correction is given at all. The military also proved that a dog is no different than you and I; he is most content doing what he wants, when he wants to do it. At a glance this statement leads a person to believe that a dog is a creature that is naturally hard to train. When looking closer at the statement we find that it means that a dog will be more motivated to do what makes him most happy. By knowing a dog will do what pleases him, a good trainer will set up training scenarios to allow the dog to do what motivates him most, and by doing so the desired task also gets done. For example, a good trainer when teaching a pup to come will give the command followed by a slight tug on a leash. Since pup does not like the pressure on the leash he then moves toward the trainer to get the pressure to stop, and by doing so the pup correctly responds to the command that was given. When using tactics to allow the

pup to do what pleases him the training lessons will be greatly simplified while shortening the time needed for pup to understand the lesson.

A good dog trainer knows that he must be able to clearly communicate with his student. The communication barrier that exists between dog and handler can easily be overcome just by reading a dog's body language. Just like human a dog can speak volumes with just a look or sulk. It may seem foreign, but a dog will tell you when he is happy, sad, content, or confused. While training, a good trainer will keep a keen eye on pup while he does the desired task for any subtle change in body language. Changes to look for would be drooped ears, a tail that is low and tucked, or a lowered head. All afore mentioned signs illustrate that pup is confused, or clearly unhappy about something that just took place. Once body language of a negative manner is noticed while training, a good trainer will back off with the intensity or switch to a different drill so pup does not feel threatened and can easily digest the lesson at his own pace. In terms of dog training open lines of communication are a must, and without being able to comprehend what pup is saying a trainer can be greatly limited in getting the maximum out of his pupil.

One sure fire way a trainer can come to expect a specific action or reaction from a dog is exposing him to many repetitions. I'm sure we have all seen it on TV a dog running through a field at full speed and stopping abruptly to go on point. The dog's entire body is as solid a statue. Do you have any idea how many times the dog has found himself in that pose prior to his TV debut? Teaching a pointing dog to perform is a progression of tiny lessons, and all of those lessons are taught through repetition, over and over again. It is often said that the difference between a "hunting dog" and a "field trial dog" is only several thousand repetitions. Dogs are just like humans, when learning a desired task the more times the dog does the task correctly the more it becomes second nature to the dog. A dog trainer knows that if ever in doubt, do it again. Repetitions are key to training a bragging right bird dog.

In conclusion there are three key points to training a pointing dog, understanding what makes a dog do what he does, having the ability to read a dog's body language, and the use of repetitions. When all three points are used in unison dog training is a breeze. If there are any questions concerning this article or my training methods please feel free to drop by www.buckeyeshorthairs.com for more information. Until next time; be true to yourself and kind to your neighbors, and maybe I'll see you in the fields of Ohio.