

Great Plains Hunting Retriever Club

HRC – “Conceived By Hunters for Hunters”

Volume 7 Issue 4 April 2019

Editor’s Message – Paul Bishop

It seems that we’ve carried over the announcement regarding the Region 13A Judges/Handlers Seminar for several months. Because of the recent flooding, the seminar is postponed indefinitely. A new date will be selected when conditions in northeast Nebraska become more stable.

Another postponement related item is the “How to Pass a Hunt Test Seminar”. This seminar is intended to provide handlers with awareness of the idiosyncrasies of handling dogs that is most likely to result in a “pass”. The seminar had been scheduled for March 23 but has been re-scheduled for April 13 at Bishop’s beginning at 9:00 AM.

An item on the agenda of the March 21 meeting was “Helping the Community of Wood River”. Per the consensus of the members attending the meeting, we donated \$300.00 to the Wood River Community Foundation per the recommendation of Nate Mayhew. Nate indicated that the Foundation is a key organization in efforts to restore the community following the recent flooding. Nate agreed to serve as the club’s ambassador and deliver the check to the Foundation.

Attendance at the March 21 meeting was sparse but we went forward with the agenda item associated with hunt test work roster. In some cases, members who were not present were assigned a task based on having completed that task in the past. Anticipate email correspondence seeking confirmation to complete the task assigned. Likewise, members

present will receive communication to confirm willingness to perform the task or tasks assigned.

Hunt Test Chair, Randy Smith and the rest of the membership that attended the March meeting felt that meeting in April is necessary to assure that we are in the best position to deliver a good hunt test. Put “GPHRC Meeting” in your day planner for Thursday April 18 at 6:15 PM. Per usual we will be meeting at Valentino’s (5115 Second Ave. Kearney). If we are unable to work out all of the details, we’ll need to meet in May, perhaps May 2 or May 9. The wrap-up meeting date has not been determined but is usually two to four weeks following the hunt test.

Last, “Dues are Past Due”. Membership dues are \$25.00. Dues can be mailed:

Dick Schumacher
PO Box 93
Kearney, NE 68848

2019 Region 13/13A Calendar

April 6 & 7, 2019
Southern Colorado HRC
Back-to-Back Regular Hunt
Walsenburg, CO

April 8-12, 2019
HRC International Spring Grand
Cheraw, SC

April 13 & 14, 2019
Roadrunner HRC
Back-to-Back Regular Hunt
Navajo Lake, NM

May 4 & 5, 2019
 Platte Valley HRC
 Back-to-Back Regular Hunt
 Snyder, CO

May 18 & 19, 2019
Great Plains HRC
Back-to-Back Regular Hunt
Wood River, NE

June 1 & 2, 2019
 Mount Rushmore HRC
 Back-to-Back Regular Hunt
 Custer, SD

June 8, 2019
 National Meeting
 St. Louis, MO

June 15 & 16, 2019
 Hidden Pines HRC
 Back-to-Back Regular Hunt
 Cheyenne, WY

June 15 & 16, 2019
 Salt Valley HRC
 Back-to-back Regular Hunt
 Syracuse, NE

July 6 & 7, 2019
 Platte River HRC
 Back-to-Back Regular Hunt
 North Platte, NE

July 20 & 21, 2019
 Western Colorado HRC
 Back-to-Back Regular Hunt
 Grand Mesa National Forest; Cedaredge, CO

August 10 & 11, 2019
 Platte Valley HRC
 Back-to-Back Regular Hunt
 Tamarack Wildlife, Sterling, CO

August 24 & 25, 2019
 Elkhorn Valley HRC
 Back-to-Back Regular Hunt
 Norfolk, NE

Club Training Day Schedule

The “Club Training Day Schedule” was established during the February 21 meeting. The original dissemination was fought with errors so a corrected version was submitted as an attachment to an email. The table below is a display of the training day opportunities in April and May.

Host	Day/Date/Time	Location
Bishop	Thur Apr 4 – 6:00 PM	1550 Amherst Rd. Elm Creek
Boots	Sat Apr. 13 9:00 AM	310 HWY 10 Kearney (Minden Interchange)
Mark Morton	Thur Apr 18 6:00 PM	29235 145Rd. Kearney
Boots	Sat Apr 27 9:00 AM	310 HWY 10 Kearney (Minden Interchange)
Bishop	Thur May 2 6:00 PM	1550 Amherst Rd. Elm Creek
Shaffer	Sat May 11 9:00 AM	1550 Amherst Rd. Elm Creek
Morton	Thur May 23	29235 145Rd. Kearney

Important Notes:

1. The training at Bishop’s may be cancelled because of “road wash-outs” have not yet been repaired
2. The May 2 training may be cancelled if there is a need to meet as a club to confirm hunt test details.

If you want the training day schedule for 2019 in its entirety, contact Paul and he’ll send as an attachment to an email.

Training Tip -- Delivery and Mouthing Issues – Part 2

Handlers of working retrievers want retrievers with the ideal mouth – aggressive enough to firmly recover shot game birds but gentle enough to assure that the meat is not damaged. Most discussions about mouthing problems centered around “hard mouth” and “freezing”. Indeed, both of these behaviors are undesirable for working retrievers. But Dahl and Dahl (2003) described other mouthing problems – roughing birds, soft mouth, slow pick-up, fidgety hold, stickiness. Hard mouth, freezing, and some measures to prevent these behaviors are discussed here. Soft mouth, slow pick-up, fidgety hold, and stickiness will be discussed in Part 3.

Prevention

According to Lamb (2001), working a young retriever on birds that have been “over used” and beginning to decompose may contribute to mouthing problems. Also, working a young retriever on wounded but not dead birds should be avoided. However, early introduction (sixth or seventh week) to cold or fresh killed birds is helpful in developing a good pick-up and sets the foundation for delivery (Dahl & Dahl, 2003). The transition from bumpers to other retrieving objects to birds ought to be gradual. Lamb recommended a sequence of bumpers, other retrieving objects, cold dead birds and finally fresh killed dead birds. Lamb also cautioned handlers to “avoid too much feather” before force-fetch is complete. Care should be taken to avoid retrieving heavy objects among young dogs as that can encourage a forceful grip. A professional trainer cited by Lamb contended that too much pressure, either during force-fetch training or as correction for mouthing errors following force-fetch training, contributes to mouthing problems. A good force-fetch program is considered by nearly all authorities as the best measure for the

prevention of mouthing problem. Likewise, a return to the force-fetch program is often cited as the treatment for many mouthing problems.

Hard Mouth

Hard mouth is a mouthing problem that is characterized by a retriever that finds the bird but either “eats it or runs off with it” (HRC, 2017). The bird becomes “unfit for the table” because “chomping and “rough handling” severely damages to the meat. Two often cited signs of hard mouth include severely lacerated meat and sounds associated with the breaking of breast bones.

The return to force-fetch training should focus on the “drop” command. Mild verbal or physical pressure/correction ought to occur simultaneously with the verbal command “drop”. The idea is to condition the dog to release the bird promptly in an effort to avoid correction. Since the dog is confined by the force-fetch environment, the tendency to “chomp down” or “be rough” with the bird can be minimized at the same time that an expedient release is being learned. If chomping or roughing occurs when the dog is holding the bird, a verbal “NO” would be given to stop that behavior followed by the verbal “drop” command.

After the return to force-fetch training has “cleaned-up” the problem, consider generalizing the “fetch-carry the bird nice-drop” sequence to the yard environment. Leads, check cords, and fencing can assure a controlled environment that eliminates the possibility of “running off with the bird” so as to eat the bird. Doing basic obedience work with “bird in mouth” can help establish proper bird handling. Re-visiting the “here” command with bird-in-mouth is useful. Heeling on lead and then off lead with a bird

in mouth is also cited by authorities as helpful. After the “fetch-carry the bird nice-drop” sequence is well established in the yard, the behavior needs to be generalized to the field. Dahl and Dahl (2006) contend that “on the spot” correction is essential. The best treatment is reprimand with a verbal “NO” for chomping or rough handling of the bird in the location where the infraction occurred followed by the “hold” command. If the dog’s “fetch-carry the bird nice, drop” behavior is consistently “below standard” in the field, return to the yard to strengthen the desired behavior and provide correction to eliminate chomping and roughing. One trainer cited by Lamb (2003) emphasized the use of “common sense” in the transition from yard to field and be careful not to administer too much correction pressure.

Keep a sharp eye for the reoccurrence of the problem especially in the case of dogs who tend to emit Alpha dominance tendencies. At least in dog’s mind, the handler is near the bottom of the “social order” -- at least at that moment. A quick reprimand/correction to eliminate chomping and roughing at the spot where it occurred will re-establish the dog’s awareness of the desired behavior.

Don’t miss opportunities to reinforce the desired “fetch-carry the bird nice-drop” sequence when it occurs. Generally mild verbal praise will strengthen the dog’s tendency to retrieve birds in a way that meets the handler’s expectations.

Finally, birds should be used whenever possible after the “cure” for hard mouth has been completed. Use birds that are in good condition. Do not use pigeons for water work – switch to ducks for water work (Lamb, 2003).

Freezing

Freezing is described as failing to release the bird to the handler (Dahl & Dahl, 2006) and is considered a somewhat difficult problem to resolve. The dog simply will not release the bird when commanded to do so with the “drop” command. It is not uncommon to observe that when the handler attempts to extract the bird by pulling, the dog emits an even more firm hold. In the “worst case scenario”, sheer force is used by the handler to extract the bird.

Dahl and Dahl (2006) caution that too much correction pressure can make the problem worse. Pressure from the e-collar, rather than prompting release, may have the effect of an even more firm hold. They recommend a “surprise tactic” as a form of corrective pressure. Hold a short dowel stick or broom stick at your side and bring it up sharply under the dog’s chin with one hand while you place the other hand on the bird to receive it. Just a single tap is used. The idea is to surprise the dog rather than punish.

If the “surprise tactic” works – great, but be aware that reoccurrence of freezing may happen once the “surprise is gone”. For that reason, a return to force-fetch training is often needed. Emphasis is on the “drop” command. Lamb (2001) recommended teaching the “remote drop” command as an extension to the expedient drop re-learned in the return to force-fetch-training. She cautions that this will take a great deal of training time but could be “well-worth-it” as the “cure” for freezing. With the remote drop, the dog will spit the bird out of its mouth while sitting at a distance. An even more difficult skill is to spit the bird out while walking at heel or coming into the handler. The notion here is that the extension drills

make it absolutely clear to the dog what is expected when the “drop” command is given

Summary

Mouthing problems are thought to be the consequence of force-fetch training that was incomplete and hard mouth and freezing are among the most troublesome and difficult to resolve problems. To prevent mouthing problems, ensure that force-fetch-training is complete and use common sense in the transition from bumpers to other retrieving objects to birds. Early introduction to birds is recommended to strengthen retrieving desire and set a foundation for delivery but avoid “too much feather” before force-fetch is complete. Curing hard mouth and freezing often require a return to force-fetch training with emphasis on the “drop” command. Care should be given to the transition from the force-fetch environment to the yard and then to the field.

References

Dahl, J., & Dahl, A. (2003) Training with the pros: Mouth Problems. *Retriever Journal*, 5(3) 26-29.

Dahl, J. & Dahl, A. (2006) *Retriever trouble shooting: Strategies and solutions to retriever training problems*. Minocqua, WI, Willow Creek Press.

Lamb, V. (2001). Mouth problems. *Retriever Journal*, 6(7), 71-72.

Did you know this?

The first dog owned by a Great Plains HRC member to earn the HRCH title was “Ajax”. This black Labrador retriever was owned and handled by Chris Rector. Chris is currently employed as City Administrator in Gibbon, NE.