

# Great Plains Hunting Retriever Club

*HRC – “Conceived By Hunters for Hunters”*

## Volume 6 Issue 11 December 2018

### Editor’s Message – Paul Bishop

First, thanks for your willingness to forego a newsletter during the month of November. I appreciated the opportunity to devote time to hunting. The month away from newsletter production contributed to that. The period since the last newsletter has seen some “pretty good” days for “on-the-job training” and a few nice “spur of the moment” training sessions.

Since the last newsletter there have been a few newsworthy items. First, Dane handled two dogs that earned Grand passes at the recent Fall International Grand hunt near Lafayette LA. “Jaws” owned by Pat Keslar of Hyannis, NE earned his sixth Grand pass. “Shorty” owned by Dane and Kara got her first Grand pass. The Fall Grand was a “tough one” – 582 dogs entered but fewer than 125 earned passes.

Second, Randy Smith has agreed to serve in the capacity of “Hunt Test Chair” for the upcoming 2019 hunt test. Please extend a huge THANK YOU to Randy for his willingness to volunteer for that role.

Third, Russ Harris will be taking over as “Field Rep” for Region 13A effective December 1, 2018. Russ Harris is a member of Elk Horn Valley HRC and replaces Paul Bishop of Great Plains HRC in that role.

Fourth, “Jet” owned by Jim McCurry passed away recently. Jet was an accomplished performer having earned HRCH and MH titles. Jet had at least two Master National Passes to his credit. The “Jet and Jim” team accomplished much in their time together.

Last, Nate, Jill and Boots have completed the preliminary work the 2019 Hunt Test. It appears that we are “good-to-go” as far as the good folks at UKC and HRC are concerned. Now would be a good time to entry the hunt test dates in your new 2019 day planner:

Friday May 17 – Set-up Day  
Saturday May 18 – Test Day 1  
Sunday May 19 – Test Day 2

### Judges/Handlers Seminar & Judges’ Test

The 2019 Judges/Handles Seminar will be held on February 23 in Norfolk, NE 9:00 AM-5:00 PM. To maintain licensure, all HRC judges must attend a Judges/Handlers seminar at least once every three years. Judges whose last seminar was in 2016 will need to have completed a seminar in 2019. The HRC web site includes a list of judges by region and the date of their last seminar.

All apprentice and licensed judges must take and pass the “Judges’ Test” in odd numbered years. The Judges’ Test will become available at the HRC website very early in the month of January 2019. You are encouraged to take the test early in 2019 and before accepting a 2019 judging assignment.

If you are not a licensed judge and not interested in becoming a judge but have an interest in “how the performance of dogs participating in a hunt test is to be judged” please consider attending the upcoming Judges/Handlers Seminar. Handlers often find the seminar to be very helpful in adjusting training routines to maximize the probability that their dog will perform at the standard required to pass the hunt test.

## Dress for Success

A somewhat recent issue of *Ducks Unlimited* (November/December 2015) had a very well written article on keeping warm when waterfowl hunting. Based on the *Ducks Unlimited* article, three things are essential:

1. Stay Dry;
2. Block the wind; and
3. Control the loss of body heat.

Dressing in layers was recommended for staying warm, dry and comfortable. The process for layering up includes a base layer of moisture wicking long underwear, followed by a middle layer such as a lightweight pullover or heavy shirt. The outer layer ought to be of "heavier material" such as an insulated coat. Coats, parkas, and pullovers made of modern fabrics are waterproof, breathable, and are great for blocking the wind. To control the loss of body heat, wear a hat or cap. Heat is also lost from around the neck and wrists. Keeping the neck covered is important as well as "sealing" around your wrist.

Lastly your body needs fuel to stay warm. A calorie dense breakfast is recommended. Snacks and access to hot liquids will also help to keep you warm and comfortable.

## Training – "Popping" – Prevention is the Key

Popping is an undesirable behavior that has been defined as "when your dog, without command, stops and looks at you from the field" (Lardy, 2012). The behavior frequently occurs when running a blind but may occur when working to locate a marked bird. At the very least, this is an annoying behavior and is sometimes viewed by judges as a behavior that is inconsistent with the standard of control possessed by the best performing dogs. Most authorities contend that most dogs will occasionally pop simply because they are confused. However, dogs that often "pop" may do so because they have a low retrieving desire or have received too much or inappropriate pressure.

Like other things in retriever training, it's best to prevent popping. Lardy recommended "lots of pile work" as the dog transitions from beginning to intermediate retriever work. Piles that are easily discernable by the retriever often instill confidence. The retriever has no confusion about the expectation and the repeated trials condition the retriever to "go" and continue to "go" because the bumper (reward) is there. The logical progression is to gradually increase the distance from the send point to the pile.

Another technique to prevent popping is "force to the pile". This technique uses this sequence: (1.) verbal "back", (2) low intensity nick as the dog starts to go and (3) repetition of the verbal back. This technique is sometimes referred to as the "first and best technique" to condition the dog to "go" on the back command and continue going without popping. However, this is not always a suitable practice. Too much intensity with the "nick" may cause confusion. Dogs that are hypersensitive to e-pressure may actually "refuse to go" on the back command. Retrievers who have received too much intensity for errors in the field can be confused by the e-pressure. Perhaps, forcing is not the best practice for some dogs.

If popping does occur, it's best to "nip it" early. One technique used requires the handler to "read the dog quickly" and provide a verbal back paired precisely with a low intensity nick. The sequence for this technique is: (1) verbal back, (2) watch the dog carefully and at the micro-millisecond the dog shows hesitation in forward progress, provide a verbal back and a low nick, (3) continue to watch the dog and repeat verbal back and nick in association with any display of hesitation, (4) praise the dog on return for a pop free trial.

The young dog that is just beginning transition level work is likely to be confused with the introduction of pattern blind work. If the young dog goes out a distance and then stops and

pops, the retriever is probably saying “what am I supposed to do out here?”. Too much e-pressure in this situation will likely increase anxiety and slow the rate with which the retriever becomes a good blind runner. Perhaps it would be better to simplify by shortening the distance and clarifying the location of the bumper.

Popping on marks is trickier to work on than popping on blinds. The use of e-pressure may actually drive the dog away from the mark. Marks are the retrievers “ballgame”. Success on marks is based on natural ability and desire. If a dog is engaged in a marking set-up and pops, it may more appropriate let the retriever engage in an extended hunt without e-pressure. Lardy suggests simplifying the set-up to ensure success in marking so that popping is not likely to occur.

An occasional pop will not harm the working retriever and is not likely to result in failure of a hunt test. But the behavior is annoying and is not the display of control expected of exceptional retrievers. Perhaps it is smarter to prevent the popping rather than get involved in elaborate techniques to “cure the problem”. Pile work and marking set-ups that are consistent with the dog’s ability are likely to minimize confusion, strengthen hunting desire, and contribute to an attitude expected of a good hunting retriever.

#### Reference

Lardy, M. (2012) Problem solving: Popping. *Retriever Journal* 17, (3), 14-17.

#### Next Meeting

President Nate Krizek will set the date, time and location for the next meeting within the next three weeks or so. Typically the first meeting of the new year is held during the third week in January, often on a Tuesday evening. For the past several years we have been meeting at the Pizza Hut on south 2<sup>nd</sup> Ave. in Kearney. Expect an email message to announce the details of the first meeting for 2019.

#### Bands

The outcome of a recent text message to Logan Trampe was this photograph of the young dog “Taz” with a banded mallard drake.



This banded goose was taken by a friend of Paul Bishop in a field north and west of Yanny Park, Kearney.



