

Creeping—Curing the Problem

By David Molyneaux

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Simply put, “Creeping” is a pointing dog moving toward a bird after it has acknowledged its presence. Though it cannot be tolerated, it is his natural prey instinct to sneak up close to a bird in the attempt to catch it. Whether it be in the event of chasing a running cock bird or advancing in on a camouflaged woodcock it doesn't see, training to prevent this is done in the same way.

Basically, all your dog needs is to see more birds and be accustomed to them moving in front of him. Most of us don't have the setup for a pen full of birds, nor the financing. In reality, all it takes is one pigeon and a length of PVC pipe and you now have hours of training your whoa, stop to flush, and creeping problems. Everything needed per training station will cost less than a ten-dollar bill, which will include the bird. The pigeon doesn't cost much and can be housed in a small cage if need be. The PVC pipe is the type used for electrical conduit. One full length (10 foot) will be all that is needed per setup. At the same time purchase a four-foot piece of metal rerod to be driven into the ground. The PVC pipe is slid over the metal rerod and stands up like a flagpole. Attached to the top of the pole is a twelve-foot piece of 3/16 inch parachute cord. The other end of the cord is tied to the pigeon by one leg.

Now we have a system that is reusable for multiple points, flushes, and gun fire reports. Carefully bringing the pup down wind of the bird will start your training scenario.

Often times a dog who is not reliably whoa trained will continue to take a few steps closer to a bird it scents when on point. More often than that, when a dog sees a birds moving and sneaking away, the dog makes an attempt to lunge after it. The pup has got to be taught to reject its desire to sneak in and pounce onto its prey.

The dog should know and understand the whoa command without hesitation. Most often, creeping is the result of not having a thorough foundation in basic training. This is very important and if there is any doubt, go back to your basic training. Confusion and not understanding what the training is requesting will create symptoms of softness and shutdown.

The process of training a pup to point at its first hint of scent or sight of a bird requires critical timing in stopping and establishing a firm stance. It is advisable to go back to basic training methods the pup is familiar with and that being the check cord wrapped around the flank. At this point the e-collar would be too

harsh of a correction for moving on point.

When the pup either sees or smells the bird it doesn't matter as long as it has acknowledged the bird's presence. With the flank hitch attached, give a small tug on the rope and quietly state the word "whoa". If you feel the pup may break when the pigeon moves or takes flight, then it helps to have an assistant lightly pull the cord to encourage the bird to move. How severe and when the trainer pops the rope is critical. It seems to work best when the sensation on the flank hitch is worked like a fish biting on a line....tap....tap..tap.....tap. A constant reminder you are watching him. Your pup will experience the pigeon walking, taking flight, and also landing right beside him, all the while you are steadying him. This method can also be used in training to relocate and shot to flush.

After you both feel confident that steadiness is not an issue with the rope and flank hitch, it is time to institute the e-collar training on the same sequence till there is no doubt the pup is where you want him in your training program.

There are other methods to put an end to your pup creeping in on birds such as using a platform and buddy stick, which we will cover in future articles.