

Curing the Collar Wise Dog

By David Molyneaux

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One of the most frustrating things that can happen in the field is to have our dogs blow off our pleas and commands without an e-collar on the dog. And, like most bad habits, it gets worse as time goes on.

The use of the e-collars and hunting dogs has become widely accepted in the hands of a competent owner or trainer. Obedience in the field has got to be consistent for your dog to always react in the same manner. This pertains to holding point, range control, or even retrieving a bird unscathed. First let us understand one of the causes. The trainer relies too heavily on giving corrections with the e-collar and uses it as their main source of correction. Simply put, the pup has much more respect for the collar than it has for the trainer's verbiage or actions when it comes to corrections. No doubt this is a bad place to be in a training situation, but there is a cure.

Often times we find it so much easier to reach for the collar instead of tagging close behind the pup with a check cord in tow. In our basic training there is nothing that earns the trainers trust and respect more than hands on training. This pertains to both correction and praise. Also a trap that a lot of owners find themselves falling into is taking the short cut of going to the e-collar too soon. Like most everything else, your pup's training requires a good foundation. Go back to basics (without the e-collar) using a check cord and flank hitch, knowing your pup will be on his best behavior with it attached. Eventually, you will progress from a 20 foot cord down to an eight to ten foot cord. In the training field, tighten up your criteria and expect absolute perfection and use a lot of hands on corrections. If need be, correct the pup for mistakes he never made but, be firm, fair, and get your point across you want and expect nothing short of the very best effort. Some refer to this as 'tough love', as you are now gaining his respect for you and not the e-collar as training requires a good foundation.

We will get the same response (being a run away dog) if we place the e-collar system on some of the time and some of the time not. An intelligent pup will often figure out it isn't ALWAYS wearing the collar when afield. It is pretty much a golden rule, once you switch to the e-collar, don't place it on some of the time and sometimes not. There is nothing wrong with the pup having the e-collar on when even taking walks and the transmitter is left at home. What does matter is the fact he believes that you are calling all the shots, not him. Again, you want to be so consistent with the collar that if by some chance it is forgotten, the dog never suspects it's missing.