

Teaching Pointing Dogs to Honor

By David Molyneaux

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Hunting birds with your buddy is a great way to lose a relationship if your pooch refuses to acknowledge or respect other dogs when working in a brace of two or three dogs. Nobody appreciates it when another dog disregards observing your dog holding a point and blows in flushing the bird, which often results in a delayed chase.

There is a code of etiquette when hunting with a brace of pointing dogs. When a bird is scented and one of the dogs becomes motionless with a point, the other dog is to instantly stop, do not move and show respect for the pointing dog. Not only is this showing regard, but it is a safety issue as well. If the brace mate does not stay well back out of the way there is apt to be a jealousy problem. This will result in competition, two dogs competing for who will get the bird first. This becomes a dangerous safety problem with one or both dogs jumping in the line of fire, and chasing birds.

Teaching dogs to honor its brace mate is a relatively simple task. It helps greatly to have the prerequisite being the pup must be trained to the stop to the flush, but it is possible to train for both honoring and stop to the flush at the same time. As with all dog training, the timing of the use with the e-collar is critical in stopping the dog. This is easily done with the use of a bird launcher and silhouette. Most people use pigeons in their launcher so as to allow you to concentrate on the pup's actions. The silhouette is a cut out of a dog on point. If you make your own design, make it at least life size or larger. The bigger picture of the dog is easier to notice while working in a field. The color of the make believe dog should be painted a light color. Most folks use a lot of white with brown or black. The material can be as simple cardboard but, plywood is much more sturdy and last for years to come. Silhouettes can be purchased ready to use from various dog training suppliers which will be your most expensive route.

Planning and placement of the dog silhouettes is of paramount importance. Choose an opening in a hedge row or clump of brush to place your fake dog behind. The idea in your setup is for your dog not to notice the silhouette till it is in close proximity. By watching your pup's reaction when it sees the cut out, instantly launch the pigeon. A gun report is not always necessary, but it may be in the beginning to re-enforce your whoa command till the pup understands the concept of honoring. A crisp and sudden stop is the objective.

As your dog starts to become accustomed to what is expected of him, now is the time to begin expecting more advanced patience and compliance out of him. The

placement of the silhouette again should be obscured from sight behind something. As your pup comes around the obstacle, as previously done, the silhouette should become suddenly visible, and he stops in his tracks. We no longer need the use of a bird launcher. Instead, as the pup is motionlessly standing there we are now going to walk up to the silhouette and stroke it as if saying good dog. Again, we are doing everything possible to make your dog steady and resist breaking. Walk a few by the silhouette and begin kicking the grass as if you are trying to flush a bird. This will raise your dog's excitement level, which may require your intervention. If you are able to maintain his steadiness to this point, reach into your game bag and toss into the air a wing clipped pigeon, with a report from your starter gun. The timing of the retrieve is up to the handler whether he breaks on the flush or waits to be commanded to do so. By you exhibiting a flushed bird, your pup is beginning to establish intensity on the honor. For he has no idea when but can expect to earn a retrieve when he notices another dog standing.