

A New Step When Teaching the "Hold" Command

By Jim and Phyllis Dobbs

Teach the "Hold" Command Thoroughly

How the dog holds the bird not only affects the delivery to hand but also the development of a "working attitude". Often, the root of a mouth problem is related to the dog having a loose grip on the bird. In order to prevent future problems, we spend extra time training the dog to hold with a firm grip. We want the meaning of "hold" to be thoroughly understood by the dog.

In our article "The Trained Retrieve: Part I" (*The Retriever Journal* Oct/Nov 1995), we wrote about teaching the "hold" command. Since then, we have added a new training technique that we think is worth passing along to you. If you don't have a copy of the Oct./Nov. '95 article, feel free to copy this article from our Web site: <http://www.dobbsdogs.com>. Once you are at the site, go to the Library and click on the Retriever picture. For additional information, see the video "Tri-Tronics Trained Retrieve" or the book *Tri-Tronics Retriever Training*, which can be found in the video and book section of this magazine.)

Our new training technique is used right after we teach the meaning of "hold" and requires the dog to grip the object firmly in his mouth.

Teaching the Dog to Grip

We want the dog not only to accept holding a dowel in his mouth but also to grip it firmly. To do this, we begin with a 3" X 13" wood dowel or hard jute roll. The dog is taught that he must not let go of the dowel when you touch it. He must hold until you say, "Drop".

To teach the dog to grip, say, "Hold," and at the same time touch the dowel. Then immediately move your hand about an inch away from the dowel. Repeat doing this until the dog doesn't drop the dowel when you touch it.

Next, instead of just touching the dowel, hold the end of it between your finger and thumb. If the dog starts to release the dowel, say, "Hold" and let go of it. Repeat this procedure a few times until the dog understands that he isn't supposed to let of the dowel even when you take hold of it. He must wait until you give the command to drop it.



Teach the dog not to let go of the dowel even when you pull on it. He must wait until you say "Drop."

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If the dog releases the dowel when you touch it, grasp the top of his muzzle with your free hand. Press his top lip against his top teeth. This is uncomfortable to him and will allow you to open his mouth and place the dowel in it. Repeat this procedure as often as necessary until he will not let go of the dowel unless you give him the command, "Drop".



When you start training the dog to grip, you may need to achieve a balance between the hold and drop commands. If he doesn't let go of the dowel when you say, "Drop," place a finger on tip of his tongue behind the dowel. Repeat the drop command as you wiggle your finger on his tongue. This will make him let go of the dowel.

If the dog drops the dowel, grasp the top of his muzzle with your hand and press his lips against his teeth.

Now teach the dog not to let go of the dowel even if you pull on it lightly. The correction for letting go of the dowel before he has been given the command "Drop" is the same as before- quickly grasp the top of the dog's muzzle and reinsert the dowel.



At this stage of training, if he doesn't release the dowel on the first command, you can use a correction. Use either a nick with the e-collar or an ear pinch as you repeat the command "Drop".

As a final step, repeat the procedure of firming up the grip, but use a bumper and then a bird. Once the dog will grip all objects until you give the command to release

When you say "Drop," the dog must release the object and take his head away. Do not pull the object out of his mouth.

them, you will have gained a lot more control over his mouth. He will have a clear understanding that "hold" means to grip firmly, and "drop" means spit it out!