

Upland Hunting with a Flushing Dog: Part II Quartering

By Jim and Phyllis Dobbs

The most efficient hunting pattern for a flushing dog is a sideways figure eight. In this pattern the dog goes from side-to-side and turns toward the front as he comes back across the field in front of you. If the dog doesn't turn to the front he will be hunting back over ground that he has already covered which is considered inefficient.

The flushing dog should range within 20 yards ahead of and to either side of you. This distance gives the bird time to flush high enough for a safe shot and still be in range.

Prerequisite training

We first train the dog to go away from us on command by sending the dog to a place board (*Retriever Journal* Feb/March 1996). We will then use this knowledge to teach the dog a quartering pattern.



1. Send the dog to the place board that is positioned behind a bucket.

Figure eight pattern

Begin training the dog to go from side to side by sending him to three place boards. (See Diagram) Then we will teach the dog that he must go around a white bucket (always turning toward the front) to get to the board. You will move forward on a centerline with the place boards and buckets to either side of you.



3. Move forward and call the dog, causing him to come to you by going around the front side of the bucket.

Begin by sending him from the start to place board #1. Stop him on the board with a sit whistle. Move forward, stop and call the dog causing him to come to you by going around the front side of the bucket.

When he is almost to you send him to place board #2. Repeat the procedure to place board #3 and then to the "finish" place board. As you practice this set up, gradually extend the distance from you to the buckets until you are 20 yards away from them.

After the dog has become proficient at running around the buckets, remove the place boards that are behind the buckets. Then repeat the drill by sending the dog around the buckets as you walk down the centerline. Use your turn whistle (we use two short toots) to turn him toward you and using arm signal and body language have him continue on to the next bucket. Next extend the pattern by using six buckets so that there are three buckets down each side.

Casting

When sending the dog to go around the bucket, use your arm and body language to indicate which direction to go. If, at any time, the dog tries to cut short your cast and doesn't go around the bucket, stop him, move closer and make him go around.

"Punching" Straight Ahead

Teach the dog that he must not run straight down field. Start by allowing him to see you toss a dummy onto the "finish" board. This will entice him to skip the buckets and run straight ahead to get the dummy. When he "punches" straight ahead, stop him by commanding "No, Here!" and reinforce your command with the e-collar. Have him begin running the pattern again from where he began to go straight ahead.

Once he has accomplished this step, remove the "finish" place board. Have the dog run the pattern around the six buckets. Then continue to have him quarter down the field beyond the buckets.

The "Draw" Whistle

When the dog makes his turn at the end of each cast he will sometimes go too far straight ahead rather than running flat as he crosses in front of you to the other side. To counter this tendency of going too far to the front, sometimes toss a wing clipped bird out in front of you *without* him seeing it.

Right after the dog completes a turn, give him a draw whistle (a long drawn out low pitched whistle). When the dog comes in to the whistle he will find a bird right in front of you. Now, he will start to believe that you just might know where birds are and will be much more apt to obey your draw whistle in the future. This technique works great to counter the dog's desire to hunt too far ahead when quartering.

The next article in this series will be "**Part III -Trailing**"