

Upland Hunting with a Flushing Dog - Part IV: Advancing the Dog's Trailing Ability

By Jim and Phyllis Dobbs

Adding Difficulty: Corners

Once the dog is using his nose to follow the track, you can increase the difficulty by adding corners. First, check the wind direction and lay the track so that the first leg has a crosswind. (See diagram) Take normal length steps as you lay the track.

Then make a right angle turn so that the wind is at your back. As you do so "double lay" the track. This means make your footsteps so they are side by side and heel to toe. Lay the track in this fashion for about five feet then begin taking normal length steps again.

Another method of double laying a track is to walk up the track about five feet then walk back to the corner and then back down the track. Double laying the track on the second leg makes the scenting conditions easier to follow coming out of the turn than they were going into the turn. This will make it easier for the dog to make the right decision on which way to go and will give him confidence to follow his nose.

Aging the Track

As the dog's ability to concentrate on the track increases, gradually lengthen the time between laying the track and working the dog. When the dog can follow a track that has been aged for 30 minutes, begin adding cross tracks.

Cross Tracks

Cross tracks teach the dog to follow the bird scent and not follow the human footsteps. First, lay a track in the usual manner with bird scent. Let the track age for 15 minutes or more. Then, without any bird training scent on your boots lay a track that crosses over the track you laid with the bird scent. If the dog starts to follow the human footsteps of the cross track instead of the bird scent track, stop him with a leash correction and guide him back onto the bird scent track. With practice the dog will learn to disregard human footsteps that have walked across the bird scented track.

Trailing a Drag

You can make an easy trail to follow by using a scented drag. Attach the drag to a short rope tied to a long pole. Pull the training drag as you walk. We like to toss a bird onto the end of the track as the reward.

Be sure you are walking on the downwind side of a crosswind trail. Being on the downwind side will help to keep the dog on the bird scent. You do not want the inexperienced dog to become confused with the extra track you are making.



Attach the scented drag to a long pole and hold it to the side as you pull it to make a bird scented track.

After the dog has demonstrated his skill at following a drag to find a bird, we put a live pheasant in a harness and attach it to a short rope on a long pole and lay the trail with the bird.

Finally we use wing clipped pheasants. By now you can take the dog off leash and let him track free. Toss the bird in some light cover and let it run for about five minutes. Then put the dog on its trail and let him go.

If you have followed our training steps your dog will average out much better at being successful when trailing. He will have learned to concentrate on the bird scent and work out corners when conditions become difficult.