

Steady to Flush and Shot

Question

Why steady your dog?

Answer

Safety and control!

You should be able to stop your dog any time in the light of imminent danger. Suppose you're hunting a well-known trail or old logging road and you hear an ATV approaching. If your dog was to cross at the same instant as the ATV passed, they may collide at the same instant and your dog may get injured. Some of these ATV's travel at a good clip and by being able to stop him instantly, you may save his life. By having a good handle on your dog you could stop him from approaching other dogs you may encounter on the trail and even foxes or porcupines you may encounter and believe me you will come across them in the wild. And, how frustrating it is when your dog is flushing and chasing birds out of range leaving you way behind giving you absolutely no chance for a shot.

As stated earlier your dog should be steady to both flush and shot. Both go hand in hand. Many dogs will sit to the flush but once the shot goes off it's every man for him self. As if to say: "Don't worry boss that bird is coming down eventually! I'll get it!"

By now your pup should have developed a good head wind pattern, be flushing and retrieving live birds and should have been introduced to the gun. A good season of hunting in natural cover is, I feel, essential. Others may differ but my success stands to rebut any argument. What I do is hunt the dickens out of him in the fall and let him just be a pet all winter until spring when I start to tighten down the screws. I have never rushed a puppy to prepare him for spring field trials, it's not fair to the pup and besides this is supposed to be fun not work. Your pup should also have the basics of sit and come in his repertoire. Keep in mind that **75%** of all the steadying process is done in your back yard and like everything else you can't put the cart before the horse. I know I'm starting to sound like a broken record or as you say now days a scratched CD but it is so true. Dogs are creatures of habit and by repeating steps they become habitual.

Once you begin the process you must not let him chase another bird, however you should concentrate your fieldwork on running cross and downwind patterns using taped-wings. But don't over due it, two birds per run and no more than two series at about ½ hour apart.

Start with your canvas buck covered with feathers, sit your dog down in front of you and back away about three to four paces. Remember, you're facing the dog. Repeat the sit command "HUP, HUP, HUP" with one hand extended outward and throw the dummy behind you while repeating the command. Generally your pup will be intimidated by your presents with both of your hands extended outward. However should pup decide to go for the dummy you must be prepared to intercept him, and he probably will try. If so, catch him and pick him up by the scruff of the neck (hands on both sides just below the ears) and at the same time voice your displeasure with a low growly raspy voice in his face. He will quickly realize that you are not happy and that this rebellious action will be dealt with quickly. Don't get angry with him, be firm and be consistent, as you want him to comply out of respect not due to fear. Don't carry him by the ears as by doing so could