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Training Pointers

Chapter XI

By Dr Joseph C. Greenfield Jr

The trainer must have more sense than the dog should be the first maxim in any bird dog training manual. Given the relative IQ levels between humans and canines, there would seem at first blush to be no problem . . . not necessarily so. In the context of training, the word "sense" assumes a meaning specifically related to the human's ability to develop and control the skills of a bird dog. I've known main extremely smart people who were utter failures as bird dog mentors.

I'm reminded of a time years ago watching a mule "snake" logs. The driver struggled in vain to force the mule to move the logs in a designated manner.

"What's the problem?" I asked the sawmill owner who was shaking his head clearly disgusted.

"The mule has a lot more sense than the driver," he explained. "It'll take the mule a couple months to get him trained."

If your bird-dog pupil has similar characteristics, give up; this dog is too smart for you to instruct successfully.

The information that follows, gleaned over many years, will at the least, I hope, prevent the reader from ruining a good prospect. There are scores of books, articles, pamphlets, and, now, videotapes that describe methods guaranteed to produce an outstanding bird dog. Generally, they are based on the assumption that all pointing dogs behave the same. First premise: Echew advice from any "expert" who touts a method that can be used with equal success on Brittanys and English pointers.

When training other pointing breeds, I offer the same advice I gave a colleague years ago when he asked for help developing an Irish setter: "Make the dog a pet or give it away, then get yourself a pointer."

Assuming that training English pointers is the job at hand, first define the ultimate goal of the training process. In my case, I use a vehicle to cover a large acreage containing widely scattered coveys of quail. To be effective in these circumstances, a trained pointer must hunt a wide pattern in the direction the vehicle is moving, intelligently seeking and hunting the birdy places. At other times, when walking after singles, the dog

dog moves when I fire. After the flush, the dog must remain in the vicinity to retrieve (assuming I've killed something, which frequently isn't the case). Where retrieving is concerned, my only requirement is that the dog find the downed birds without an undue amount of cajoling and bring them to me in a relatively unmacerated state. Acceptable retrieving assumes a willingness to chase cripples.

The single most important aspect of training is the selection of the trainee. If the genetic makeup is excellent, it's difficult, though not impossible, to ruin the dog. If given the proper opportunity, most pointers accomplish 90 percent of the training themselves.

How do you select a good prospect? When possible, choose a dog between eight and twelve months old. By this age it is easier to determine the important qualities: intelligence, desire and ability to hunt, and acuity of the nose. The latter is by far the most important. In fact, at least in my experience, lacking superior scenting ability will relegate the prospect to mediocrity.



A Quail Hunter's Odyssey

Dr. Joseph C. Greenfield Jr.

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Medical

Flying with Your Pet

From Texas A&M University Newswire

With hunting season upon us, many pet owners will be faced with the dilemma of what to do with their pet while they travel. Many may decide to travel with their animals, but before they begin their airborne journey, they should take some advice from Dr. Bonnie Beaver, a veterinarian at Texas A&M College of Veterinary Medicine & Biomedical Sciences.

If a pet owner decides to travel via airplane, the pet owner needs to make arrangements for the pet ahead of time. A couple of weeks before the travel date the pet owner should call the airline and make arrangements. According to Beaver, most airlines require that pet owners provide health certificates and proof of rabies vaccinations before the pet boards the aircraft.

Once all arrangements have been made, upon boarding the airplane there are two locations the pet can be stored; either in the cargo hold or underneath the pet owner's seat on the plane. In both scenarios, the pet must be in a secure crate from which the pet cannot easily escape. If a pet owner would like the pet to fly in the cargo hold of the airplane, the owner needs to check with the airline to ensure pressurized cargo holds are available on the plane.

"I recommend having the pet accompany the owner in the cabin of the airplane," states Beaver, "Unfortunately, there have been cases of dogs dying in the cargo holds of some airplanes."

The other potential hazard that comes with placing the pet in the cargo hold is transfer flights. If the owner misses their connecting flight, the pet may not, leaving the pet stranded for many hours with no one taking care of it. For this reason, Bea-

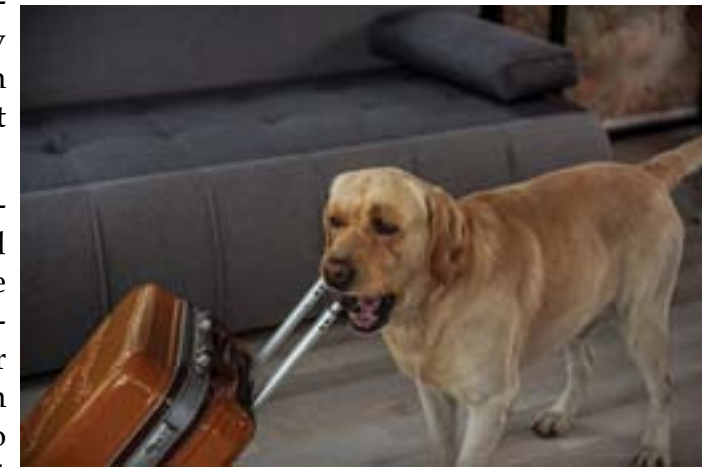
ver recommends, only flying with pets on direct flights.

"Pet owners need to note the temperature of their destination compared to their current

temperature. It is not good to have pets in the cargo hold of a plane if a great

temperature shift is expected, the temperature change can affect the animal in negative ways," informs Beaver.

Pet owners need to also keep in mind the length of the flight; during the flight, the pet cannot be released to eliminate or eat. This can prove to be a problem



on longer flights, thus pet owners should try to only fly with pets on shorter trips.

Beaver recommends exposing the pet to motion while in a crate before the actual flight, to ensure the pet does not get motion sickness on the plane. The best way to do this is to place the pet in the crate and drive it around in the car. This gives the pet the opportunity to experience motion while in a crate, without the accompanied stress that comes with airplane travel. If the pet does experience motion sickness, the pet owner should contact their veterinarian before giving the animal any kind of sedative.

"Pet owners should place identification tags on the pet with a cell phone number or a number for their destination, this will ensure if the pet is lost for some reason, it can be safely returned to the owner," recommends Beaver.

Pet Talk is a service of the Texas A&M College of Veterinary Medicine & Biomedical Sciences. 🐾

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