

Duffey's Domain

Words of Wit & Wisdom From Dave Duffey

The Old-fashioned Cure

Scrub out hard mouth

By Dave Duffey

Gun dogs that retrieve are a blessing and rank a genuine conservationist, making sportsmen out of shooters by keeping them honest. Recovered game birds must be counted in the bag limit. Lost birds not only are wasted but few hunters include unrecovered game as part of their legal limit.

However there are dogs clever and proficient at salvaging shot game who inflict dam-

age on the birds they retrieve. In combination with the shot charge, canine dentures can render game unfit for the table. When a gun dog brings back a bird that's been mangled so badly it's not worth cleaning and cooking that dog is charged with being "hard mouthed".

This vice is shrugged off or ignored by some. But to others it ranks right along with gun shyness as the worst fault a

hunting dog can have. In both cases, because of the difficulty effecting a "cure" (and that uncertain chances of success using any number of "medicines") the best advice that can be given a hunter is to start over with another pup; or ship old Mighty Mo-

lars off to a pro and hope his corrective method clicked.

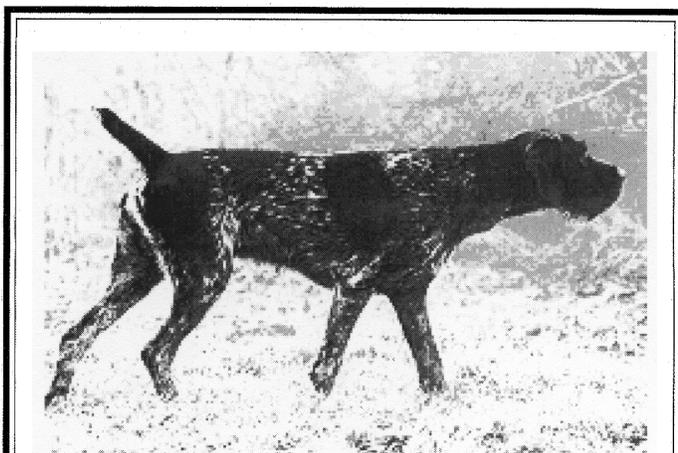
There are good hunting dogs worth a try at working out this problem and there are hunters who have to, or would rather, do it themselves. The "technique" I've used for years is elemental and cheap. I guarantee it will not work with every dog. But, in my experience, even forced-training to retrieve (the "guarantee" against hard mouth) isn't 100%. So what I'm suggesting probably will work as well as anything for the hunter/trainer who wants to eat what is dog has fetched.

For the impatient in a "quick fix" would-be-trainers I'll tip you off to the tool that will help you get the job done right now. Then you can get started without being kept in suspense. For those curious about the background some insights into a seat-of-you-pants, old fashion way of preventing or curing a bad fault, some explanations will follow.

Get a scrub brush

Well over half-a-century ago when I started doing this, you could find a scrub-brush (and a washboard) in almost any household. Today you may have to shop around to find a hardware store that carries them. And a generation or two of hunters may not even know what one is.

A scrub brush is a hand tool once employed by stooping laundresses and on their knees cleaning ladies. The brush bristles stick out from a flat wooden



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