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### "Dog Days of Summer"

by

Ken M. Blomberg

The month of August has always been a month of ritual for me. With hunting seasons knocking at the door, there is much to be done in preparation – not the least of which involves the dogs. First of all, my truck needs to be straightened out and reorganized – after all, last spring's turkey hunting "stuff" must be put away and my upland hunting gear stored. The dog trailer requires to be pulled out of the weeds, cleaned and organized. This year, the 10-foot jon boat will be strapped on top of the trailer – as several duck and goose hunting trips are on this fall's agenda. And last, but not least, the dogs need special attention – as summer inactivity needs an adjustment.

The month of August also has the dubious distinction of being attached to the expression, "dog days". During summer months, the "dog star," Sirius rises and sets with the sun. Our ancestors believed the star's heat, together with the sun, resulted in much warmer and muggy weather. These hot, humid days of late summer are not the best of times for dog training, but preparing for the upcoming hunting season may be in order nonetheless.

With the season beginning next month, are you ready? Is your dog ready? All too often, you are both out of shape, due to the lazy days of summer that recently passed by. With little time to physically prepare for somewhat strenuous autumn hunts, we need to take stock in our dog's fitness to return afield. Watch your dogs closely during training and those warm, early season hunts. Dogs require proportionally more air than humans for breathing, especially when working out in summer's heat. In addition, opening day weather can be summer-like, with hot temperatures and high humidity. This can be a deadly combination for any dog, but especially one that's not conditioned and in top shape.

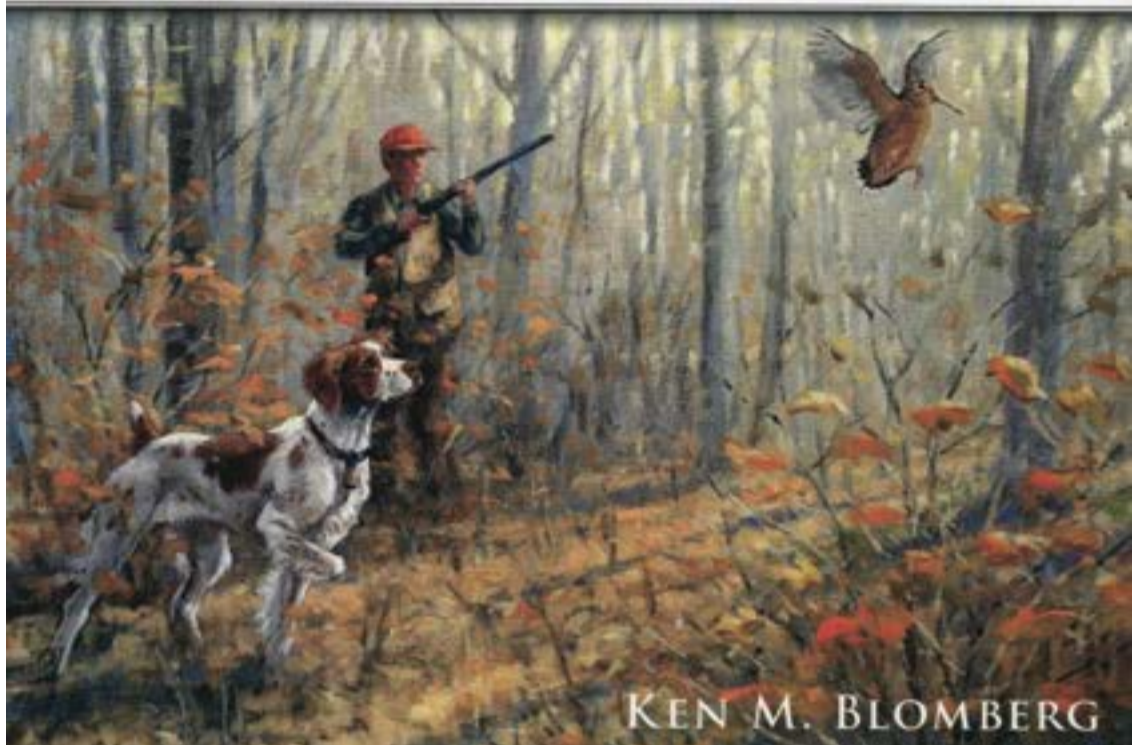
Dog training in warm weather should revolve around water. Preventing heat stroke can be accomplished by timing training activities during the cool hours of early morning and late evening. If you must work your dog during the mid-day's heat, do it near a body of water, or better yet, in the water. Water work and retrieving are great conditioning exercises and help to maintain normal body temperatures. Early season hunting near water - like rivers and streams - just makes good sense.

Whether training or hunting, carry water afield for you and your dog during warm months. Water bottles carry well in game bags and may be needed in areas far from a water source. In addition, a small first aid kit and dog treats can easily fit in front vest pockets and may come in handy.

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## — Wisconsin — BIRD HUNTING — TALES —



Maintenance diets may be fine for the "dog days" of summer, but during times of strenuous workouts, or when the hunt begins, a change in dog food with higher protein and fat content may be in order – specifically formulas designed for working dogs.

As the season progresses, you should notice a change in your dog's stamina and endurance - then make sure their diet changes to meet the nutritional needs of an active dog.

Late summer and pre-season is a great time to schedule a trip to your vet for an annual check-up. Weight gain or loss, skin or coat problems and overall health issues can be ad-

dressed now – rather than the week before a planned hunting trip. If you have scheduled an out-of-state trip, vaccinations need to be up-to-date. Crossing state lines may require proof, so pack your veterinary records with your guns.

So, don't let the "dog days of summer" get you down. Treat yourself to August, a month of ritual – where hunters and their dogs prepare for the season they wait for all year long. After all, planning, preparing and dreaming of cool, crisp autumn days afield is half the fun.

Ken Blomberg hails from Junction City, WI

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