

Kennel Talk

Control

By Ken M. Blomberg

It's one of those glorious October mornings we all dream about and you just arrived at one of your favorite hot spots. Pulling off the road you unload the gear and turn the dogs loose. There's frost on the field that by all rights it should hold a bunch of pheasants. Everything feels good; sometimes you can just sense these things. Today's the day!

While you un-case your guns and fill your vest with shells one of the dogs wanders off. By the time you and your hunting partner are

and the hunt has started off on the wrong foot. Tempers flair and the day will never be the same. Blame the dog? No the fault is yours. It's your responsibility to keep the dog under control at all times. Ask any pro trainer what's the most important phase of dog training and their answer will include obedience.

Control is obedience manners and discipline all rolled into one. I like to refer to control as field obedience. When you call your dog he should come straight in with no exceptions. When you go afield

are natural instincts. You cannot teach a dog to use his nose. You cannot change the nose your dog was born with. The urge or drive a dog has to search out and locate their quarry comes from hidden desires that have been bred into the dog over generations. Exposing the dog to birds gives him the opportunity to show his stuff.

you're likely to be in trouble all day. On the other hand if your dog has regular field obedience workouts during the summer and has learned his lessons well you can rely on complete control early in the hunt during the fall.

When you let the dog out of his kennel keep a close eye on him as you prepare for the hunt. If he wanders too far from the ve-

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ready to start the stray dog is out of sight. You call the dog in but he fails to respond. His bell is ringing off to the north he's already in the best cover. Calling turns to yelling and screaming as you watch bird after bird sail across the horizon.

Sound familiar? Your dog is out of control at the most critical time

your dog must be within the range you have established during pre-season training sessions. When you change directions your dog should respond accordingly.

Control is your responsibility. It's the one phase of dog work that you should have complete jurisdiction over. Pointing or flushing

The first five minutes of the hunt are the most critical. You're talking to your partners loading the guns and fumbling with gear. All the while the dogs are blowing off steam after being kenneled up for the past hour or so. Before you know it you've lost control. If your dog lacks field obedience

hicle you should quickly call him in. Better yet leave the dog in the kennel until you are ready to hunt. Later when you return to the vehicle attend to the dog's needs before your own. Check the dog over for cuts burrs or particles in the eyes. Give him water and kennel him up. Hunting dogs learn to love their travel kennels. A dog in his kennel is a dog under control.

Control is the most important job that you as a dog handler have. It's accomplished through proper obedience training starting when the dog is a pup and continues throughout its life. Without control a good dog becomes useless. With it even an average dog makes hunting more enjoyable.

Speaking of kennels if you haven't figured it out by now portable kennel crates and kennel boxes should be standard equipment for transporting your gun dogs. Not only do they put your canine companions out of harm's way while in a moving vehicle they serve as a great training tool.

Crates come in many varieties with the plastic ones being most popular. Their portability makes them useful in the house car or truck. They're relatively inexpensive and available at most pet and discount stores.

Dog boxes the kind you often see in the back of pick-up trucks are utilized for transporting several dogs in one unit. Beyond that dog trailers can be purchased and used to carry a kennel full of dogs.

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