

WORKING TRIALS

THE SENDAWAY



by Terry Hadley

The Sendaway

The exercise which causes most concern to handlers is definitely the sendaway. It seems the cause of endless anguish to competitors in all stakes and remains a total mystery to most dogs throughout their trials careers. To the totally uninitiated spectator, it would appear that a handler takes his dog into the control area, bends over the dog and from then on shouts, screams and waves his arms about wildly, whilst the dog either runs madly about in total confusion or freezes to the spot in utter terror. After a period of time, the dog is recalled being none the wiser to the now furious handler. This is probably the only conception that the dog has had of the sendaway!

Generally speaking, the reason for this can be summed up in one word.....**CONFUSION**. Most handlers do not know the correct way to teach the exercise and dogs become utterly confused not knowing what on earth they are supposed to be doing!

There are very few dogs who perform a proper sendaway and redirect. Judges are confronted with dogs who cannot do the test and feel obliged or are panicked into allowing endless commands (I have witnessed up to 50!) simply to obtain some qualifiers.

The principles and theory behind the sendaway are relatively simple and I have not experienced any problems in teaching my own and other dogs the exercise using the methods described in these pages. It matters little which breed of dog you are working, I have had equal success with Dobermans, Rottweilers, Labradors, Border Collies and G.S.D.'s. If this method of teaching is adopted and thoroughly learned, you should have no difficulty in teaching your dog an accurate sendaway with no confusion.

Basic Theory of the Sendaway

There are a few important rules to bear in mind, the most essential being that you do **not** contemplate starting to train the sendaway until you have an obedient dog. You are heading for disaster if you have not successfully trained your dog to stay when told, to go down at 200 metres and to pay attention to the handler.

This method of teaching the sendaway relies on no negative commands or bad experiences in the dog's mind. The dog must stay as you walk out - if he breaks and the handler then starts shouting, a bad association is formed before you begin. We are teaching the sendaway, not the stay!

The dog must go down immediately on command, if your dog is disobedient at 10 metres, what earthly chance do you stand at 200 metres?

The dog must be aware of its handler. This may seem a very strange statement, but it is my experience that the majority of dogs totally ignore their handlers when given their freedom (ie. off lead) and other smells, dogs, game, droppings, completely overtake their supposed respect for the handler. Handlers must also be prepared to give their full attention to the dog whilst teaching any exercise and the sendaway is no exception. Attention to detail and understanding the theory behind dog training is fundamental to success. Success also relies heavily on the ability of the handler to praise the dog immediately it has performed correctly. If the dog makes a mistake, it is fatal to shout abuse when the dog is totally reliant up on its handler for assistance when being taught a new exercise. Handlers should be clear in their own minds precisely what they are asking the dog to do and be equally clear in their commands. The dog needs encouragement and praise. If your dog is confused, you are at fault for not teaching it correctly. Failure can be attributed to three main areas, lack of respect for the handler, confusion and disobedience.

The dog must be **keen** on a toy or ball. I stress the word keen as so many handlers work under the misconception that their dogs like a toy or ball far more than is the case. The handler must give the dog incentive to do the sendaway.

It is imperative that you keep firmly fixed in your mind that the sendaway is a sight exercise and therefore the dog's head and eye level must be elevated. Nothing must ever be placed on the ground, or at ground level. This is the main reason why I dislike the use of food, especially in small pieces. As you reward the dog, it is almost inevitable that some morsels will be dropped by either dog or handler, thus encouraging the dog to search the ground for food. The dog should be discouraged from using its nose and it only needs the dog to find its reward in this way once or twice and the association is formed.

Naturally, I have read with avid interest the many books and articles written on the sendaway and it appears to me that each of these methods leave something to be desired, leading to a lack of consistency, confused dogs and disappointed and frustrated handlers. There is a great difference between teaching the dog a 'send to' and a 'send away'. Using the method I advocate, the dog is only taught the 'send to' for a very short period of time. The use of the pole is only for about one week and the hedge or fence for a matter of months. These are only training AIDS to encourage the dog initially to go from the side of the handler in a straight line in the direction of which he is pointed. We are teaching the dog a true sendaway. Obviously, you will encounter judges who will place or use a very prominent marker for the sendaway point (ie. pole, plastic bag in hedge, cone etc.). Marks will be gained by sending the dog to the marker, but believe me, you would be better employed teaching the dog the exercise correctly rather than live in hopes of the judge setting up a 'send to'.

Equipment

The training aids required for the initial teaching of the sendaway are very simple and inexpensive.

- [1] White broom handle with cup hook screwed into top.
- [2] Small bag to hang on hook and hold toy (onion bag is ideal).
- [3] Toy.

I advocate the use of a white broom handle because it is easily 'seen' by the dog and there is sufficient height off the ground to encourage the dog to look up. It also prevents him being physically able to obtain the toy on his own. Remember, if you have an obedient dog he should go 'down' on command at the pole, even though he knows his toy is in the bag.

This is a good time to mention the suitability of toy to use. Personally, I use a length of rubber garden hose for the following reasons:- it is pleasant for the dog, however young, to hold in his mouth. It is pointless using something that the dog finds unpleasant or difficult to play with. Many people prefer a ball, but if you do, ensure that it is not smooth like some of the rubber or plastic balls available, that is large enough not to slip down the dog's throat, even the larger breeds. The only type of ball I would recommend is the type on a string handle or a tennis ball.

If your dog is motivated more in play by a tug of war, it would be sensible to use a rubber ring or the length of hose and these can be readily hung directly on the hook, dispensing with the use of a bag. The tennis ball can be punctured and impaled directly on the hook. Food should **never** be used for the reasons already explained.

At last, we are now ready to start the practical aspect of the sendaway, but in my opinion it is very important to know the theory.

Check through the following:-

- a) an obedient dog.
- b) dog very keen on a toy.
- c) flat field bounded by hedge or wall.
- d) white broom handle, bag and toy.

The Practise

Whenever you begin training in a new area, allow for the fact that your dog will be curious and want to investigate his new surroundings. It is unwise to bring him straight out of the car on his lead, take him into the field and expect him to give you his full attention immediately. Bear in mind that we 'see' with our eyes and

Day 16. Field 2.

Sett him up from 60 metres, walk out 10 metres, return and send the dog, follow, praise, down, reward.

Repeat twice more, both from 100 metres.

Day 17. Field 1.

Send him from 60 metres, then twice more at 100 metres.

Day 18. Field 2.

Send him from 80 metres, 100 metres and 130 metres.

Day 19. Field 3.

Now that the dog is happily working well in both fields, go to another location. From now on I shall indicate the distances to send the dog and how many metres to walk out to indicate the direction. The handler must always follow, praise, down and reward. The distances are now increased and the handler must be prepared to work harder and run out with as much speed as the early shorter distances.

As you are now using a field foreign to the dog, on the first sendaway of 40 metres, walk out the whole distance, again leaving the dog in the sit. Touch the hedge, return and send him.

Bring him back 60 metres, walk out 7 metres, return and send the dog.

Bring him back 80 metres and send immediately.

Repeat at 100 metres.

Day 20. Field 3.

Do a sendaway from about 80 metres, following the dog, praising when he gets to the 'spot' and give your down command as usual. Reward him with his toy, stay at the 'spot' and continue to play with the dog.

Day 21. Field 4.

We are now at another location. Set the dog up at 40 metres and walk out 10 metres in the direction which you intend sending him. Return to the dog and send him to the 'hedge'. Follow up, praise, down and reward.

Repeat at 80 metres and 100 metres.

is before and run out with
pole. Run back to the dog,
him up. As he reaches the

Day 19 have the toy, praising

Return
at 50 m
30 me

Repeat
praise
him at

tion we require. Allow your
through his nose, that tells
him opportunity to relieve
establish this habit as early
fouls the sendaway point

Sum

You a
now r
new l
intend

where, using the toy. Approach
instru side facing the hedge at a
'tested dog to sit. Leave your dog
our pole, bag and toy. All

After t with the toy, throw in into
the m whole time. Stick the pole
going is toy and ensure he sees
hesita as previously explained.
unhap g and release him on the
carefu ut most importantly he is

Even e pole PRAISE THE DOG
many n. If he does not go down,
execu be satisfied with this for
fail to the dog, give him his toy
enorr nt that the dog enjoys his
a little
usuall
game
betwe

To N

The ti
directi
Up un

then take him back to the

continually and have a good game.
fifth time take him 40 metres instead
work and should be a happy introdu

Day 2.

Repeat the procedure exactly as for the
field. You will do five sendaways, fou

Day 3.

The procedure is identical to the first
to increase the distance. Nothing els
and the same sendaway point (place
sendaways but using the following d
last twice at 50 metres.

Day 4.

Still using the same field and the same
30 metres and put out your pole and t
running behind him, praising all the t
toy and play as before. Leave the pol
pocket, having the dog back on the c
from approximately 30 metres follow
your pocket, place your hand on the
the pole in place (toy in pocket), walk
him. Follow him up and on reaching
from the pole and reward the dog.

This time, bring the pole (& bag) bac
on the ground. Point the dog to his '
he arrives. Tell him to go down, follo
dog has now done his first sendaway
his attitude should be that this becom

Place the dog on the lead and return t
and repeat again. If for some reason t
him, put him back on the lead and a
Do the sendaway as before then co

distances, but it has been gradually and systematically instilled in his mind that when he arrives at the hedge, he gets his praise and reward.

Now he has to be encouraged to go to 'nothing' and this is what most handlers seem anxious to achieve. We have now to convince the dog that the handler can be trusted and providing the procedure is taught properly, the dog's confidence and trust will be increased and all your basic training, if successful, will now reach the ultimate goal. This is a dog who will go out in a straight line in the direction in which he was pointed until he is told to go down. Although the dog sees no hedge, no pole, no marker, his experience has been such that he knows in his own mind and has the confidence in himself and his handler to eventually cover long distances.

In the initial stages of training, you must find a field with a slight hill as shown in Fig. 1.

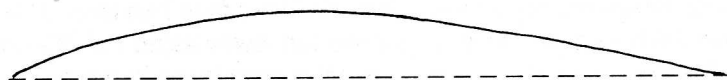


Fig.1 SIDE VIEW OF FIELD

The idea is that you are about to set up your dog facing up the hill and the only view your dog has is of the horizon or skyline. Fig.2 shows a bird's eye view of the field.

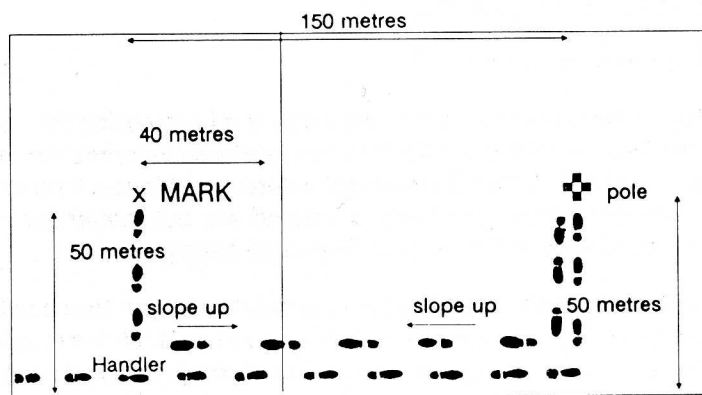


Fig.2 BIRDS EYE VIEW OF FIELD

Leaving the dog in the car, the handler enters the field carrying the original pole, bag and toy, walks round the perimeter of the field as shown in Fig.2. The pole with its toy is placed on the opposite side of the hill from which you intend to send

the dog. Retrace your steps and line yourself up roughly opposite the pole on the other side of the rise. At this stage you will be unable to see the pole, but if you use the same distance from the hedge as indicated in the diagram you will be in approximately the correct position. Continue to walk up the slope until the pole comes into view, then back up about 40 metres or until you can no longer see the pole. Mark this spot with a short pole or your coat, this is the spot from which you will send the dog. (marked A on Fig.3)

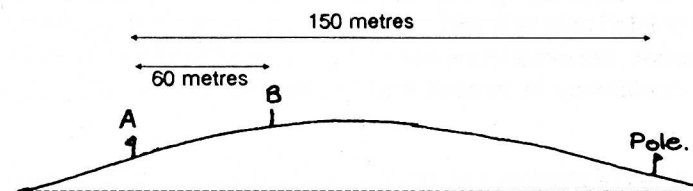


Fig.3 SIDE VIEW OF FIELD SHOWING A = SEND DOG MARKER
B = DOG SEES POLE

Collect the dog from the car and on collar and lead take him to point A. Sit the dog, remove the lead and set him up for the sendaway as normal, commanding him to go. The only thing the dog can see at this point is the horizon. Remember, you walked on 40 metres until you could see the pole, but the dog will have to go at least 60 metres to 'nothing' before he sees the pole, as his eye level is lower. He is covering this relatively short distance on trust and in the knowledge of his previous training, so encourage him to go on, following him up, stopping only when you can see the pole. As soon as the dog 'spots' the pole he should cover the remaining distance with confidence. When the dog reaches the pole, praise, down, walk to him and reward with his toy.

Repeat the exercise once more.

The next day, in the same field, set up the same sendaway using the pole and the second time dispense with the pole. You can gradually increase the distance on the send off side of the hill, thus increasing the dog's confidence. Find similar areas in which to practice, large open fields, moorland etc. but remember to return to simple sendaways to keep the dog confident and happy.

Through systematic training we have now taught the dog a true sendaway. We have dispensed with all training aids except reward for which the dog is working, the praise he receives for doing an exercise which he enjoys, so do not be tempted to become complacent. Always praise and reward your dog to maintain his enthusiasm and remember that every successful training session intensifies your dogs confidence and enjoyment.

One last word of advice, after all your hard work and patience, having achieved your goal, don't be tempted to go out and 'test' your dog on sendaways. This always happens and then handlers complain that they have 'lost their sendaway'. The only time to test your dog is at a trial, all the rest of the time you are training.

I have purposely not included any information on teaching the redirect at this time as I firmly believe that handlers, in their haste to rush on with training do not consolidate the sendaway sufficiently. Until your dog is 100% accurate and successful at the sendaway exercise, leave the redirect alone, as more damage is done by teaching it too soon than is often appreciated. There are many re-directional exercises which need to be covered and these will be thoroughly explained in another booklet.