

About the Author



Terry and Jake.

Terry Hadley is the most successful handler in working trials, at present holding a record number of 44 tickets. He has owned and trained five working trials champions and won the coveted Kennel Club Championships a record of three times. He knows what it's like to work in the big ring at Crufts in Obedience, working a Doberman.

Probably his greatest achievement has been the variety of breeds that he has worked. Dobermans, German Shepherds, Rottweilers, Border Collies and a German Wire-Haired Pointer,

not all of them by any means being temperamentally suitable.

At present he is working his Border Collie, Zulu of Jacinto (Spider) already winning 14 tickets and his young G.W.P. Benreeda Wolfgang of Jacinto (Hogan) successfully working through the stakes. He owned and trained W.T.Ch. Flint of Jacinto (B/c) who held the record number of tickets won by any dog. He has qualified seven dogs TD.Ex and seven dogs PD.Ex to date.

This proven record of success is due to his training methods and this book represents years of accumulated knowledge on tracking. This same formula was adopted for all the dogs he has trained and the results speak for themselves.

A TRACKING MANUAL

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Photographs Courtesy of Mick Seaman.

Tracking

1. Introduction

This book is primarily concerned with training a dog to be successful on competition tracks as laid down in the Kennel Club S.I. However, having had the experience of also working several service dogs on practical tracks, the method of training I advocate is equally suitable.

I believe that very few books have placed the emphasis on making the dog want to track. They have rather tried to explain what happens to the scent on a windy day; what happens when the cold air from the ground meets the warmer air; how much human scent remains after a given time; the type of footwear used to lay the track: the difference between a track 15 minutes old to one of 1½ hours old: the effect of wind, rain, snow, sun, upwind, downwind. The list is endless and to some is has become a science. I am not really interested in the workings of the olfactory membrane or all the other technicalities that it seems should be explained. No-one knows all the answers yet, it's merely theory. We could do little about these factors anyway and for anyone interested in nosework, these theories only serve to confuse a student and introduce the wrong train of thought.

I would like to make one point very strongly; practically all dogs can track, so it is important for handlers to understand that we certainly do not need to teach them to track. Many exercises can be taught with compulsion, but with nosework no compulsion is necessary.

From the outset I would recommend that you forget completely about your dog tracking (i.e. following a scent path) and place all your emphasis on the importance of your dog finding articles. The handler who can successfully make the dog absolutely fanatical, besotted on wanting articles, so that they become his whole life, is the handler

who will end up with an excellent tracking dog. Forget all the clever theories and concentrate on this one thing — ARTICLES. It is very difficult for people to eliminate from their minds all preconceived, incorrect theories, just as it is far more difficult to irradicate bad habits, so before you put on the tracking harness, it is important to think along the right lines.

As I stated earlier, practically all dogs can track and to a very high standard. I am often asked which breed would I choose for tracking? To choose a breed solely for tracking, I must admit that it would have to be one of the gundog breeds of working strain, Weimaraner, Labrador, Springer etc., not necessarily because they possess a better 'nose' but because they do have the built-in instinct to go out to 'find' something, i.e. shot game. So many handlers seem to lack the ability or knowledge to instill this desire into a breed without this instinct, i.e. Rottweiler, Border Collie, G.S.D., Doberman. The gundog with the carefully bred instinct to go out and 'find' something can be more easily motivated onto an 'article' instead of 'game'. This most important factor of making a dog to go out on a track to 'find' something is the very thing most handlers fail to achieve over the years. Until you achieve this desire in your dog you are wasting your time. My whole teaching relies on the dog that wants to find an article.

This book is specifically aimed at instructing a handler to train his dog to be successful in Working Trials solely in accordance with the Kennel Club rules in Great Britain. There are other nosework books currently available, although excellent in their own right, but more suited to their own specific nosework requirements, the Canadian T.D. ex. and the German Schutzhund for example, and it is often mistakenly assumed that they are all the same thing. The emphasis for our T.D. ex. is placed on articles, the marks allotted for articles alone is 30, and therefore it seems obvious that this is what should be uppermost in our training from the outset. For a dog to find the extremely small articles on T.D. tracks it is essential that

he is completely dedicated to finding them by scent alone, and the only way he can do this is by following the track accurately and thoroughly. This is a complete reversal of other training methods where the emphasis is placed on tracking and the articles of secondary importance, or of such a large size as to make it insignificant. The dog that consistently finds three articles on the track and four articles in the search is the one that has been trained correctly, a dog fanatical on articles. Tickets are lost and won on articles as it is almost impossible to make up those extra marks in the Control and Agility sections. If I can persuade you that the track is merely the vehicle for finding the articles, then we can make some progress.

2. Why Dogs Fail Competition Tracks

There are various and combined reasons why competition tracks are so often failed, and I think it may be helpful to examine them carefully.

a) Bad tracklaying: it is all too easy to blame failure on bad tracklaying, but unfortunately this does sometimes happen. We are at the mercy of the tracklayer and the dog can be made to fail on a badly laid track. If the legs are laid too close together, tracks laid in the dark, angles too sharp, crossing onto another leg, misreading the pattern or simply not knowing where the corners are exactly. Inexperienced tracklayers make mistakes which they genuinely do not realise can cause failure.

b) This leads to another reason, unreasonable track patterns which inexperienced tracklayers cannot manage. If the track pattern does not fit into the field, it becomes impossible. It takes much practice and experience to accurately lay some patterns made by ticket judges. Due to the lie of the land, if the tracking pole disappears from sight; it is easy to become disorientated.

c) If the track has been laid and left for 3 hours it could possibly have been crossed or fouled by people walking across it, unbeknown to judge or tracklayer. Tracks are seldom 'guarded' from laying to running.

d) The track may well have been fouled by game, sheep or other animals and the dog simply is unable to cope.

e) The dog is not keen enough to want to find an article. Handlers are often guilty of convincing themselves that they have a good tracking dog when in actuality this only applies when conditions and terrain are favourable.

f) The dog 'looking' for the track and article by 'sight'.

g) Dogs simply not competent in the conditions, terrain or both.

h) Dogs overkeen to track, overshooting corners in their excitement, casting on a leg thinking it's a corner and getting 'lost'.

i) The opposite case to the above is the dog who lacks confidence, who through bad training methods is worried about failing and in panic goes anywhere to avoid verbal punishment from the handler.

j) Handlers nerves: Under pressure of a trials situation, some handlers are very nervous and consequently handle their dogs entirely differently to when they are training. Some handlers are guilty of thinking that they know better than the dog, pull them off the track or refuse to believe the dog.

k) There simply may be too many legs and too many sharp angles for the dog to cope with at his level of experience.

l) The conditions and terrain are too much for the dog.

m) The dog on certain types of medication or unwell.

However, all this having been said, there are times when none of the above reasons are applicable. The weather was good, the terrain ideal, reasonable track pattern, good tracklayer, a consistent, proven tracking dog — but failure! We may never know, even after careful

analysis and post-mortem (of the track — not the dog!!) the reason for failure, and it is a mistake to think that we know all the answers. The only wise course of action is to thank judge and tracklayer, roll up your line and look forward to the next trial!

3. Who Lays the Track?

The way in which the dog actually tracks and the accuracy with which it performs the exercise is determined mainly by how the track is laid and the positioning of the articles. This is why it is of the utmost importance for handlers to always lay their own tracks. This statement is often hotly disputed and I can appreciate the dilemma of novice handlers, becoming confused, misled and consequently not knowing what to believe. Some trainers say that you will only 'help' your dog round the track because you know where it goes and on no account should you lay your own tracks, but allow the dog to 'work it out for himself'. But what happens if the dog is unable to work it out for himself? I will admit that the tracklayer can tell you exactly (hopefully) where the track goes should the dog go wrong, but by that time considerable damage has been done and another nail driven into the coffin. The dog knows in his own mind that he was wrong, the handler knows that the track has been a failure, and more importantly the dog knows the handler is disappointed. To add insult to injury, the tracklayer dutifully explains how and where the dog went wrong, and worse still, during all this time the dog is told to 'get down' and then ignored for fifteen minutes or so! So the one thing we have achieved is disappointment all round, which was not really the object of the exercise, was it?

Let's look at it another way. We obtain the services of a good tracklayer and the dog performs an excellent track and finds his articles. Very good, one would say! BUT now comes the critical part; how many times did the dog cast, overshoot a corner, investigate something he should not (i.e. rabbit droppings, etc.), cut a corner

WITHOUT BEING CORRECTED? By allowing someone else to lay that track all you did was 'hope' that the dog would do it, but you did not do any training. Some may argue that it was very good, the dog did the track, success was achieved and everyone was pleased, BUT all the little mistakes that the dog made on the way round that you genuinely knew nothing about and that the dog was allowed to get away with, is bad training. It is the attention to detail that pays dividends. You allowed someone else to lay your track and placed yourself in the position of knowing nothing about the track, consequently how could you possibly teach, chastise or assist the dog in any way? Does it make any difference to the dog as to who lays the track, you or someone else.? The answer is a big, big, NO!!

4. Time Factors and Queries.

Yet another area of confusion to many handlers is the 'age' of a track, i.e. 15 minutes old to 3 hours old, and this has become a stumbling block. It is not the age of a track that should concern us, but the conditions and terrain. If you find this difficult to accept, I suggest that you set out to prove it to yourself.

Lay a track for your dog on 2 inch long meadow grass on a nice still summer morning. Lay just one straight leg, half a mile long with an article hidden at the end. Let it 'age' for three hours before running it with the dog. Now, find an unused tarmac road, a disused airfield or footpath and lay a track half a mile long as before, with an article at the end which blends with the terrain, (i.e. roofing felt). Age the track only 15 minutes before running it with the dog and see for yourself which track the dog does best.

One track was 3 hours old and the other merely 15 minutes old, but which track did the dog find easier? Don't tell me, tell yourself!

This is only one illustration of the way in which some handlers think, and similar questions crop up regularly. I've listed some examples:

When should I start ageing my tracks?

Should I lay tracks downwind or upwind?

How many articles should I put down?

My dog loves his ball but ignores other articles?

Should I insist on the 'down' when he finds an article?

My dog always does my tracks but not other people's?

Should I use a harness for his first track?

How often should I track?

My dog will do one track but is not interested in a second.

If you have asked yourself any of these questions, this book should explain to you that they are all irrelevant, and the thinking behind the questions is incorrect. I hope to eliminate confusion in the handlers mind.

One question always asked of me is "when do you start a dog tracking, or at what age?" My answer is always "when he is ready". By this I mean when the dog is fanatical to find and play with an article, any article. Please note that I said PLAY with an article. For a dog to find an article is nosework, but to retrieve an article is an obedience exercise. At this stage, the two must remain completely divorced, and unfortunately this is the first of many fatal mistakes made by handlers.

5. Natural Instinct

There are 'natural' tracking dogs, and by that I mean that after only two or three short sessions of properly showing the dogs what to do and what is required, simple go from strength to strength with little or no help from the handler. I am talking about the actual 'training' or 'teaching' the dog to do the exercise. For example, I once owned a Rottweiler dog who took only two days to teach how to chase

and detain a 'criminal'. I really did not have to teach or instruct him, he just did it naturally. Unfortunately, it is not always so simple and this book is aimed at teaching and training dogs who are not 'naturals'. It may be better explained by saying that Mick the Millar was one of the greatest greyhounds, George Best the greatest footballer, Steve Davies the best in snooker, Arkle the best 'chaser, all these were 'naturals' and possessed a natural flair or gift. Obviously, if you are fortunate enough to own a dog with a strong, natural retrieve instinct then you have a distinct advantage. Having said that, most of us wish to work the dog we have and this book is aimed specifically for the novice handler to train his dog, of whatever breed, to track solely in order to find the articles to qualify in a working trial. Do not despair if your dog is not a natural retriever; you may have to work harder initially, but the training procedure and the result should be the same.

It may encourage you to know that my Border Collie 'Flint' could not be considered a 'natural' in any exercise, especially in nosework and manwork, but at 6 years old won fifteen tickets. This was only achieved by using the correct training methods, and equal success was had with all my other dogs, all different breeds and temperaments. The training methods you use should be proven to be successful with all types of dogs, not just the 'natural'.

It may be prudent at this point to mention a few 'natural instincts' which are distinctly undesirable, for example game, animal droppings, etc. The very word 'hare' is enough to instill fear in some handlers minds and has become the prime excuse for a dog failing a track. Obsession with smells and game should be dealt with firmly at an early age, and it is relatively easy to cure. Find a field which you know is regularly frequented by rabbits and game and take your dog for a walk, observing him carefully. The very instant that he shows an interest in sniffing droppings or ground scent, throw a check chain at him and scold him severely, 'leave that!' Then play with him with an article. Repeat this action effectively for only a few times

and he will soon realise that he receives a very unpleasant experience connected with game and a very pleasant experience with playing with the article and the handler. Always put yourself in the position of being able to correct his 'mistakes' and do not fall into the trap of avoiding gamey fields, but use them to your advantage. As the dog becomes more obsessed with articles, this problem will diminish.

There are no such places as 'clean' fields. If we could stand watch over the field in which our track is laid from the evening before and see in detail all the game, wildlife, rabbits, foxes, hares, mice, voles, etc., that walk on it, urinate on it, kill and eat on it, we would be much more enlightened as to what our dogs 'see' through their noses. One only has to observe all the tracks visible after an overnight fall of snow to appreciate just how 'clean' is the field. At risk of repetition, how much more important in the dog's mind should the article be, and how much more fanatical to find it to overcome his other investigations.

6. Article Conscious

Although most handlers agree in theory, some complain that their dogs show no interest in articles and do not want to play. Perhaps they should say that they do not know how to get their dogs to play with an article! It is very exceptional to find a healthy, active dog that does not want to play. Two of the main reasons why dogs will not play are: firstly, the handler does not give the dog enough reward when playing with an article or letting the article become the dog's possession instead of the emphasis being that it is the handlers article that the dog is 'allowed' to play with. Secondly, and I believe the main reason, is that the dog has little or no respect for its handler. The dog finds other things more rewarding, other dogs, where other dogs have been, other smells, etc. In fact, if one observes closely many dogs and their handlers, obviously they are 'together' and the dog may even be on the end of a lead, but that is about as far as the relationship

goes. All my dogs over the years have been far more interested in me and anticipating what 'we' were going to do next. Very few handlers have their dog's attention because too many dogs could not care less about their handlers. Please read that last statement again and try to understand the importance and the implications behind it.

Article consciousness starts at a very early age, and the sooner one introduces the wonderful 'game' to the dog, the better. All puppies love to play and have the handler's full attention and this should be harnessed to your advantage. Bear in mind that the praise, fun and reward come from finding the article. Presume that you now have your 6-8 week old puppy who loves to chase, chew and tear things, anything! Always use a suitable article and remember that his teeth and gums are sensitive. Obviously, be aware of when the pup wants to play; it is not in your best interests for you to decide to play when the pup has just eaten or feels sleepy.

My preference is a tennis-ball as it feels nice and soft to a puppy's mouth and will roll away, creating extra stimulus. As the pup gets older I dispense with the ball as it can easily slip down the throat of larger breeds, and I substitute a piece of grey or green rubber garden hose, a piece of leather or a rubber ring. The living room is the ideal place to introduce this game. Sit on a chair and make a big issue of getting the article from your pocket: pretend to eat it, spit on it, sniff it, and when you have your dog's attention, roll the ball across the floor. When he chases after it (which, believe me, he will, providing you have done the first part correctly) allow him to pick it up. Generally, he will go over to a corner to chew and play with it. Approach the dog, take the ball from him, praising him all the time. Return to your chair, attract his attention as before and this time, as you roll the ball away say 'seek'. After the pup picks up the ball, he will generally return to 'his' corner as before, to play with it. Go over to him and take the ball, praising and telling him how clever he is. Return to your chair and repeat. Having once established that the dog is going over to 'his' particular corner, anticipate him

this time and get there yourself before he does. As the pup comes over with the ball (and this is crucial) be lavish with your praise, take hold of the ball and have a gentle tug-of-war game, praising constantly. Take it out of his mouth, somehow, without using a command. Run back to the chair, throw the ball once more for him, repeating the above and then finish by putting the ball back in your pocket. Using this method you will have achieved several objectives: first, you have put into the dogs mind what a great game he has when he brings an article to you: second, you have achieved your first recall without even issuing a command, (the only command was 'seek'). You have also given the dog his first tracking lesson in that he has received pleasure, joy and reward as he goes forward to get the article. While this game is in progress, there should be no commands, only 'seek' and the handler must dismiss from his mind completely any thought of retrieve. This is nosework and nothing whatever to do with obedience.

If for some reason the pup does not react in this way, in that he does not head for 'his' corner, but simply picks up the ball and stays put, playing and chewing it, you must go out to him. Remember to praise constantly as it should never be allowed to enter into his mind that he is doing anything wrong. Grab hold of the article in play, have a tug-of-war with it for about 10 seconds. Allow him to win the game by letting go of the article and allowing him to run off and play with it on his own for 5 seconds. Go over to him again, take the ball and return to the chair, playing with the ball yourself. Repeat this procedure twice more and then keep the article yourself until the next session. These short play sessions can be repeated several times a day and you will find that the dog will be increasingly looking to the handler for play and more importantly, for the attention that you are bestowing on him. You and the article (your article) will begin to become one of the most important things in the dogs life. There is no compulsion, only pleasure.

I would emphasise again at this point that the dog should never be allowed to play on his own with the ball without the handler's involvement. The article belongs to the handler and the dog is only allowed to play at the handler's instigation.

Progress to gradually introducing other suitable articles such as gloves, slippers, leather, carpet, etc., all of which are soft and agreeable to the dog, but avoiding at this stage metal, stones, spark plugs, etc. Constantly bear in mind that it is NOT a retrieve and I cannot stress too strongly that too many dogs are ruined for articles by the handlers insisting that they retrieve to hand and give the dog a disagreeable experience. It may seem an obvious statement to make but to a dog, a ball, a stick, a rubber hose or ring are merely 'articles'. We differentiate by putting names to them; a dog does not. All these 'articles' are to be played with and enjoyed.

When introducing different articles, do remember to increase the degree of hardness very gradually. It is obvious that the dog which is not keen to pick up a nice, soft tennis ball is hardly going to be bursting with enthusiasm about a hard, cold, metal object! It is essential that the dog is mad about picking up balls, gloves, slippers, etc., before progressing to more uncongenial articles.

To introduce the change of article, firstly play with the dog as usual using his tennis ball ensuring that he is in a highly motivated state of play. After throwing the tennis ball a couple of times substitute a piece of broom handle or similar size stick (with no sharp ends) and the dog will run after it. If he immediately picks it up, play with him as usual and throw it again. In the event of the dog hesitating to pick up the stick, immediately grab it and play with it yourself, i.e. throwing it into the air, hiding it behind your back, spitting on it and pretending to eat it. But, do not let the dog have it. Holding the dog on his collar, bring the stick out of your pocket, tease the dog with it, spit on it and then throw it, allowing the dog to chase after it. If you have thoroughly built up his interest and motivated him properly, the dog should show no hesitation in picking it up.

Have your usual tug-of-war game, then take it from him, hold his collar again and repeat several times. The next day use the broomstick again and from there increase the repertoire. To introduce metal articles I like to use a length of aluminium tubing about a foot long. This is very light, but nevertheless, the dog is still holding metal in his teeth.

Some articles the dog will find agreeable are: tennis ball, gloves, slippers, leather, pieces of carpet, material.

Hard articles are: spark plugs, nails, screws, keys, dense metals, coins, stones.

Articles that are hard (difficult) to hold are: balloons, chamois leather, elastic bands, flexible soft rubber (inner tube), cotton wool.

It would be prudent at this point to stop and evaluate exactly what we are trying to achieve and more importantly, what we are establishing in the dogs' mind to be retained for the rest of his training. It matters not if you are training a young puppy and introducing this 'game', remotivating a previously wrongly trained older dog or starting off with an older dog. The methods used are exactly the same.

The dogs' reactions should be very carefully monitored by the handler and one should be able to observe any subtle change in the dog's behaviour. It would be foolhardy to suppose that after a few sessions a lifetime habit can be established. This is why I advocate that these exercises should initially be started at home, in the dog's own environment in a controlled situation. Do not under any circumstances be lulled into a false sense of security that all has gone well if in fact it is only 75% right. The dog must positively enjoy this game, with handler involvement.

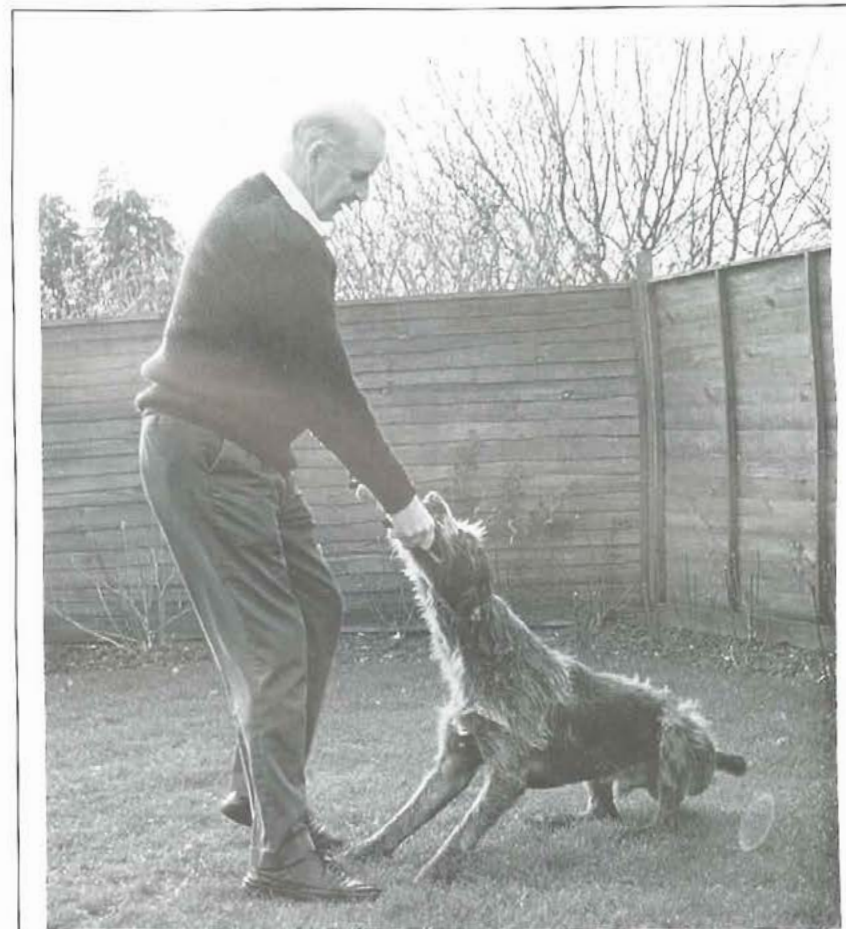
It cannot be overstated that the dog should understand that the enjoyment of the game can only be continued by bringing the article back to the handler. In fact to continue the best part of the game it is necessary for him to bring back the article for the tug-of-war game.

This is also important; this is the handler's game and is played on his terms. It is not acceptable that the dog makes his own rules and plays a variation on this theme, that he picks up the article, comes to the handler and drops the article a few feet from the handler for the article to be retrieved by the handler to be thrown for the dog. Too many mistakes can be made at this stage for which the handler will pay dearly later on. Remember that you will at a later stage be in open fields with your dog, strange surroundings, distractions, etc., so be careful that the game is stage managed correctly.

A major mistake shown later is the dog that runs off with the article to the handler's distinct annoyance and it develops into a handler chases dog situation. The article must be delivered to hand, and this is where most of the pleasure is derived, from the tug-of-war with the handler. There must be no retrieve commands or compulsion for the dog to bring the article back, he must want to bring it back.

From the home environment, you can now change area to the garden, but with each change of area, do allow for the fact that a young puppy will want to familiarize himself with the new surroundings for a short while. However, if the 'game' has been 100% successful in the house and you are convinced that he really wants the article, it will make not a scrap of difference where you play. He should not become distracted. I would introduce a word of caution at this point: with the older dog, do not be persuaded that he is fanatical on articles when he happily does five or six 'seeks' with his favourite article then becomes disinterested and drops it to sniff or lift his leg. Do not tell yourself lies, be prepared to work harder on the 'seek' game to improve his attitude. The standard for which we should be aiming is the dog that desperately wants to play this game all day long and never tire of it. This is the dog that is article conscious.

If you have an adult dog that you are training (and not a puppy) or perhaps have already competed in obedience or trials, the above state can still be achieved, perhaps not as readily, but it is far from



Hogan enjoying his tug-of-war game

impossible. To encourage you, I owned a Doberman dog, Yuba's Adonis, that I worked in obedience. In his case it was never a question of 'finding' the article but always a controlled, strict, obedience retrieve, with no dropping or mouthing. Therefore, he never derived the pleasure of playing with an article. When I decided to enter him in trials, he was four years old and this established attitude was changed in a very short space of time and the finding of articles became his greatest pleasure. Note that I said 'finding' of articles.

Another dog of mine that I took on at twelve months old was a Rottweiler, Graff, a problem dog in that he was a fighter and difficult to handle. He had received some basic obedience training, and to him, articles were those things which when picked up, invited screams of "hold it!", "don't drop it!", "sit straight!", etc., from the handler. Playing the 'seek' game changed his attitude completely and soon articles became the best thing since sliced bread enabling him to qualify T.D. ex. in a very short time. This was because both dogs discovered great joy in 'finding articles', not 'retrieving' them. What has all this to do with tracking . . . everything. If I can persuade you that articles are the whole basis of tracking and you can get your dog fanatical on articles then we have the correct basis and incentive for your dog to start tracking.



—Who's this for Spider.—

7. How to Lay Tracks

As I have already stated in chapter three, I advocate that you lay all your own tracks, but to enable you to train your dog it is imperative that you first learn to lay tracks accurately. The only successful way to learn is to go out on your own and practice. Again, it comes easily to some handlers, but to others it is more difficult and needs more practice. Sadly, for some, it remains a complete mystery or at best, a very 'hit and miss' affair!

Go out on your own; you need all your concentration with no distractions or 'helpful' suggestions. Survey the area in which you intend to track, observing carefully any permanent markers. Do not be tempted to lay a pattern at this stage. Place your start pole in the ground and hold your track article in your hand. As you are standing at the pole, pick out a marker at the end of the field, or, if you are not laying in a field, use a marker in the distance, i.e. fence post, gate, particular tree, telegraph pole, house, etc. Leave the pole and head straight for your marker. As you are laying the track, try to observe and remember different things en route, i.e. large stones, big nettles, thistles, mole hills, etc. You can even bend over the tops of thistles or nettles. Do not walk too fast and give yourself adequate time for observation. Walk out about 40 yards in the direction of your chosen marker and place your track article, which you have chosen to blend with the terrain. Walk on another 12 yards and then turn right and walk in a straight line for 20 yards. Turn right again and return parallel to your track past your pole (see Fig. 1). Leave the field for a few minutes and then return to the pole. Retrace your steps, do not count them, keeping an eye on your marker and noting the other observations you made as you laid the track, at the same time, looking for your article. Hopefully you will find it exactly where you thought it should be.

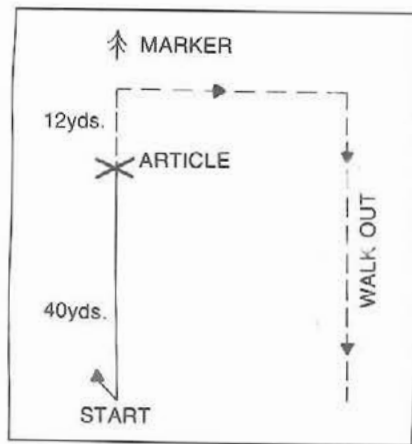


FIG. 1 — First Track

Practice again, increasing the distance from the pole to the article to 60 yards and then to 100 yards. When you can lay approx. 150 yards with a time lapse of 15 minutes and then confidently walk your track and pick up your article, then progress to laying two tracks, using two poles and two articles as shown in Fig. 2.

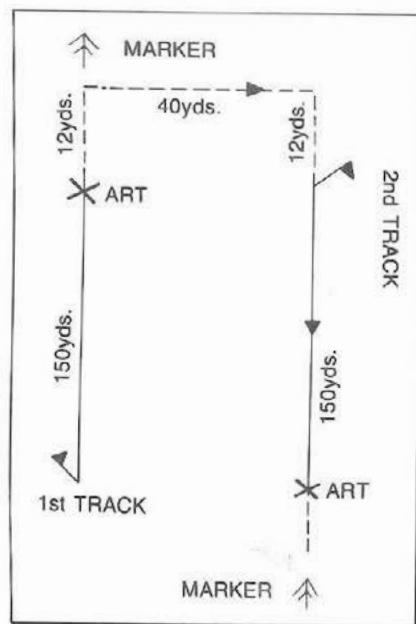


FIG. 2 — Laying Two Tracks

If you have been successful and feel confident, progress to laying an 'M' as shown in Fig. No. 3.

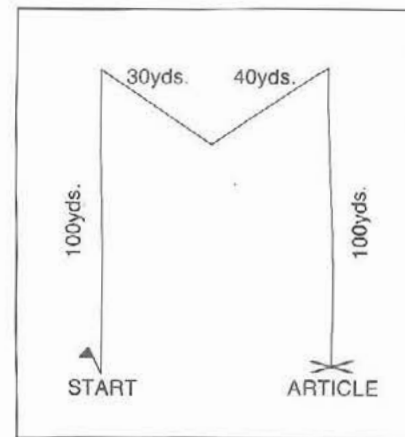


FIG. 3 — Increasing the number of legs

If at this stage you find that you can confidently walk round your track, knowing exactly where the corners are and recovering your article, progress to laying more legs. Do not be tempted to write it down on paper, for when you are tracking with the dog you will not be able to refer to notes. You will gradually increase your powers of observation and memory. Remember to take your time on the corners and always use markers, i.e. step on a molehill, bend over the top of a thistle, turn at a stone or an odd piece of binder twine embedded in the ground. The list is endless, just use your eyes and look for these markers, they are all out there if you learn how to observe them.

It is surprising how, with a little practice and a lot of enthusiasm just how proficient you can become at laying tracks. Those who say they cannot remember where they have been just do not try very hard. This is all part of teaching a dog nosework, but it is pointless laying tracks if you do not know where you have been. Increase the number of legs, acute angles and the number of articles (about 4). Also increase the time lapse, and in that time go and do something entirely divorced from tracking; go and train your dog in another field for the obedience exercises. Practice makes perfect, so persevere and be honest with yourself concerning failure or achievement.

8. Articles on the Track

Initially, when laying your first track, use the tennis ball as an article. If you have purchased new balls, first roll them in mud to make them dirty so that they blend in with the terrain. The ball should be placed on the ground and covered with grass to render it invisible to the dog. The extra scent from the pulled grass plus the well scented article will ensure that the dog successfully finds it by using his nose. It is important that this method of training is followed consistently throughout all the nosework exercises. He must use his nose alone. If you do not thoroughly digest the importance of this precept, you are heading for disaster. As you progress with your nosework training and use different articles, select them to blend closely with the terrain, i.e. plough, stubble, pasture, heather, corn, etc. Articles can even be pushed with care into long grass (so as not to present any excess scent) with only the human scent remaining on the article.

There is certainly no shortage of articles if you use your imagination and also become 'article conscious' yourself. Remnants of carpet, off-cuts of linoleum, old trousers, the list is endless and you can always use pieces of dead stick. Use articles that will hold scent and avoid metal and hard plastic in the initial stages. Using articles that blend with the terrain also means that they can be of a reasonable size. I want you to appreciate that if an article is placed in full view (i.e. a red cartridge case on green grass), and this only has to happen a few times, your dog will begin to use his eyes to locate the article. As a handler, you will then have established in the dog's mind, that when he starts from the pole, he is going out to 'look' for the article. You will have defeated the object of instilling into the dog that he will only find his article by solely using his nose. This develops his powers of concentration on the track and detracts from the dog lifting his head and deviating from the track in case he misses his article.

9. Equipment

The only equipment required is a tracking harness, a twelve yard line and tracking poles. There are various types of tracking harnesses on the market and you would be well advised to invest in a good leather harness for your dog. Ideally, your dog should be measured and a harness custom-made to fit securely and comfortably. If you own a small, lightweight dog, you do not need the heavy type harness sold for use on a G.S.D. or Rottweiler. The initial cost will be rewarded by having a harness that should last a lifetime if it is regularly cleaned and oiled. The webbing or nylon harness may chafe some smooth coated dogs and they are more difficult to clean.

A visit to a mountain climbing shop will provide you with a large selection of lines from which to choose. The very lightweight lines are unsuitable as they are often difficult to manage in a strong wind, and the nylon type have a tendency to bite into the hand if you have a large dog that pulls strongly into the harness. The thick type of line is equally unsuitable, as when it gets wet, it becomes very heavy unwieldy and difficult to wind up. A tracking line is a very personal item of equipment and I know handlers that swear by one particular type. Choose one that suits you and feels comfortable to you personally. Some societies do stipulate that the line must be twelve yards in length, so it would be sensible to buy accordingly.

Do not be tempted to attach any form of toggle or handle to the end of the line as on some occasions you may wish to trail the line behind you; you will come to an abrupt halt when it gets caught on something. Ensure that the release clip is of good quality and is securely spliced onto the line.

Tracking poles can be readily purchased, some with fluorescent tape attached to the top, but it is a simple matter to make a set of six poles yourself. Broom stakes cut into a suitable length and painted white are ideal. Insert a large nail in one end to make it easier to stick into frozen or hard ground. Always use a pole which is plainly visible as this will be a definite advantage when laying your tracks.

It may be useful to bear in mind that you will be training in good and bad weather conditions, and your hands will become very cold and wet. Gloves are not ideal, especially in the later stages of training as it is more difficult to extract the smaller track articles from the dog's mouth. I have found that the fingerless mitts used for shooting are ideal as they leave the fingers free but keep the hands warm. You also need your fingers free when fitting the harness on the dog.

Keep your line coiled neatly and attached to your harness and check them regularly for any sign of damage or wear.

10. First Stages

You should now have clear idea in your mind the principles of teaching your dog to track and ensured that he is fanatical on articles and that you can accurately lay him a track. You are now ready to enter the first stages of tracking.

Take your dog onto the place you intend to track, ideally a field with a fair growth of grass which is not walked over by people and is clear of stock. Play with the dog using your tennis ball (or garden hose) with plenty of tug-of-war for three or four minutes. Then put him on a collar and lead (a leather collar, not a check chain) and walk along the hedge or fence well clear of the area in which you have been playing. Secure him to a fence post with the collar and lead, teasing him with the article. Tie a piece of cord onto your article, walk a few paces from the dog, place your start pole in the ground and tease the dog again. From the pole trail your article out along the ground for approximately 30 yards and cover it with grass. The whole 30 yards should be heavily scuffed.

It is very important to trail the article along the ground as this is the place that the dog last sees the article disappearing into the grass; obviously that is where he is going to start searching. If you hold the article in your hand, or aloft, it will encourage the dog to lift his head. This is a classic mistake made by handlers, training

the dog to do the exact opposite of what is required! All the articles on tracks at trials are not in mid-air but on the ground and that is where we wish to focus the dog's attention. Secondly, the article is hidden, and I repeat again, the dog must never be allowed to 'sight' it.

Having hidden the article, walk on normally another ten paces and return to the dog in a semi-circle (see Fig. 4). Return immediately to the dog and take him to the pole on his collar and lead, telling him to 'seek'. Providing he wants the article, he should pull you straight out where you have been and find the article. The manner in which he does this is irrelevant as we do not expect him to put his nose down and track out to the article at this stage. The article is so well scented and the handler knows exactly where the article is hidden that the dog cannot fail to get it and achieve success. When he gets the article, unclip the lead and have a tug-of-war, genuinely praising the dog. Take the article from him, throw it for him, return to the post and tie him up again, then take the article from him.

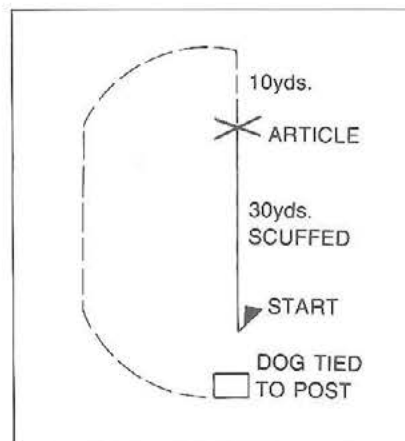


Fig. 4 – First Scuffed Track

At this stage, all we are looking for is the dog's attitude to the exercise and 100% success. There should be in no way, shape or form any control or obedience. If he is barking or whining in excitement when tied to the post or jumping or pulling at you as you take him

off, do not scold or shout at him to 'be quiet' or 'wait'. When he gets the article, do not scream 'get down', 'don't chew it', 'give it to me', etc. The only thing we are observing is attitude and the dog finding the article with his nose. The success in these early stages of training is crucial. Remember, you are training the dog and he will only become as good a tracking dog as you have trained him to be. You will never really cure the dog 100% of trying to 'sight' an article if that is what you have taught him to do in these initial training sessions.

This is the dog's first introduction to tracking, but as yet he has not actually 'tracked' in the full sense of the word. Repeat this procedure four more times, remembering to move to a fresh (unfouled) piece of ground for each track, always scuffing the ground and moving the dog to a different post so that the start pole is in front of him. Finish the training for that day.

Repeat this procedure exactly the following day.

The third day's training is slightly different as we now intend to increase the distance, at the same time increasing the dog's chances of finding the article, by using not only one, but three articles. The initial set-up remains the same but you will now walk 50 yards scuffed from the pole and hide your first article, walk on a further 10 yards and hide the second article, then a further 10 yards and hide the third article.

So now we have three articles hidden at the end of a 50 yards track, the first at 50 yards, the second at 60 yards and the third at 70 yards. If the dog finds the first article, all is well, release him and play and praise as usual; you can recover the other two 'safety' articles yourself at your leisure. Should the dog, however, go over the first article, ignore the fact, and if he succeeds in finding the second article, play and praise as usual. In the unusual event of the dog passing the first two articles, ensure that he gets the last. By using three articles, we are weighing the odds heavily in the dog's favour.

At this stage we will now consider what we have been achieving.

The dog has been tied to a post with collar and lead, played and teased with the article which is then trailed along the ground for 50 yards, well scented and hidden with grass. A further two equally well-scented articles have been hidden, one ten paces beyond the first and the other 20 paces beyond the first. All the tracks have been well scuffed.

After about four or five days with two or three sessions a day, the dog should be pulling the handler madly along where he has walked, not necessarily tracking with his nose down, inch perfect, to the article. Allow the dog a good yard either side of the track, as he knows approximately where the article is hidden and should be wanting to get there as soon as possible to find it. It should now be obvious to the handler the importance of the statements emphasised in the previous chapters; if the dog does not want to find the article, the initial training will have been a disaster!

If the dog should go off the track, stand still and encourage him onto the track again; even if you have to lead him up the track by holding the lead in your left hand and getting him to follow your right hand along the track. No harsh corrections verbally should be made, just encourage with the word 'seek'.

11. Initial Tracks.

Assuming that the training has gone as planned and the dog has been pulling strongly to reach his article, the next stage is to encourage him to track with his nose down and thoroughly investigate every inch of the 50 yards that the handler has walked. This is achieved by having the dog secured to a post, as before, by his leather collar and lead, but wearing his tracking harness with about 5 yards of line attached. It is a point to note that in no way do we wish to curb the dog's enthusiasm to get his article. As the harness is already on the dog, we eliminate the time and exasperation at the pole of an excited dog and a novice handler fighting to get the harness fitted!



— Mary and Barkie setting off. —

The handler should have the article tied onto a cord, as usual, and tease the dog as before. A second, well-scented article is carried in the handler's pocket. Place the pole and walk out, scuffing the ground, allowing the dog to see the article trailing along the ground. After walking only twelve yards; stop; scuff the ground with one foot and place the article from your pocket on the scuff mark and cover it with grass. As you are doing this, you must distract the dog from what you are about by jerking the trailed article, ensuring that the dog sees it. Continue walking another 15 yards, stop and face the dog, jerking the cord again. Continue walking out until you have covered

50 yards. Make a great performance of pretending to hide the article, call the dog's name, etc., and then put the article secretly in your pocket. Return in a semi-circle, well clear of the track as usual.

Take off the collar and lead and take firm hold of the line about a yard from the harness. Take him to the pole and urge him to 'seek'. For the last week, the dog has been pulling the handler very strongly, but now he must be held steady. Go with the dog providing he is on the line of track, but do not run. As the dog reaches the article, (which is only twelve yards from the pole) run up to the dog, lavishly praise, grab the article and have your customary tug-of-war game. Unclip the line and throw the article for him.

Let us now look at what the dog has been taught. He was convinced that his article was about 50 yards out, but the first article was so well scented and only at 12 yards out that the dog could not fail to find it. He has also been physically restrained and allowed to go forward only when he was on the track. This establishes in the dog's mind that if he keeps his nose down on the track he could come across an article anywhere. Therefore, he should not be tempted to leave the track for fear of missing his article: he also knows that he can only find it by using his nose.

Repeat this exercise twice more using fresh ground and then finish this session of training.

The next day we continue to build on this theory. The first track will have the 'surprise' article at 12 yards as on the previous day: the second and third tracks will have the 'surprise' article at 20 yards and finish with a fourth track with the article at 12 yards. The total length of each track remains at 50 yards.

The next day, tracks will be run, (1) with the article at 15 yards; (2) at 20 yards; (3) at 15 yards; (4) at 20 yards respectively, on four different tracks, all of 50 yards length and scuffed.

On the next day we will take the training a stage further; this time the dog will not be allowed to watch you lay the tracks. This will be his first 'blind' track, and the dog can either be securely tied

up outside the field or left in the car. You will continue to use this same field in which the dog associates tracking.

Walk into the field with your pole and place it at the start of your track. Scuffing your feet as you go, walk out 15 yards and hide your first well-scented article. Proceed another 5 yards and hide your second 'safety' article. Walk on another 5 yards and then return in a semi-circle past your pole and well clear of the track.

Now take a second pole and walk along the edge of the field for 25 yards. Place your pole and lay a second track, well scuffed with the first hidden article at 30 yards and the 'safety' article at 35 yards (see Fig. 5).

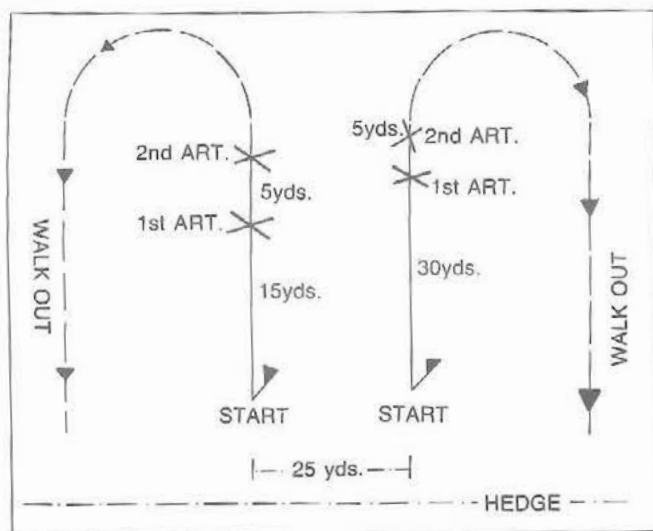


Fig. 5 - Laying two 'blind' tracks with 'safety' articles.

Bring your dog into the field on his collar and lead and take him about 3 yards from the start pole of the first track which you laid. Put your harness on the dog as quickly as possible, remove the collar and lead and holding the line firmly, urge the dog to 'seek'. Allow the dog to 'pick up' the track on his own and as soon as he starts off correctly, follow about a yard behind him, holding him steady on the line. When he gets the article, get up to him as quickly as possible,

praising, grab the article and play the tug-of-war game. Take the article from the dog and put it away in your pocket. Remove the line from the harness, but leave the harness on the dog. Place him back on his collar and lead and take him to the start pole of the second track.

Follow exactly the same procedure as for the first track. On completion, the dog can be returned to the car and the handler can walk the tracks and recover the 'safety' articles.

The dog has now completed his first two 'blind' tracks. He should have found the article a) because it was so well-scented and b) there was so much extra scent around the area where the article was hidden, i.e. pulled grass and extra pressure where the handler stood. The dog should have been kept at a good steady pace on a short line and not allowed to pull madly.

There is a very good reason for using such a short line, which by now should be obvious. This method of training is a competitive game between dog and handler to see who is going to find the article first. Every time the dog wins the game, but the handler is in such a position closely behind the dog that he can reach the dog much more quickly for the tug-of-war game. There are sound reasons behind all the instructions given, and this is where attention to detail becomes most important. From the very first 'seek' games with the article, we have been steadily impressing in the dog's mind that when he finds an article he receives great pleasure and reward in a game with the handler. There should have been no negative commands or disagreeable experience and both dog and handler should have thoroughly enjoyed their training session and been 100% successful.

The next day we will consolidate further by repeating the work of the previous day but with the first 'blind' track of 50 yards in length with three articles at the end, each two yards apart. Constantly bear in mind that you must know exactly where the track goes and where the articles are hidden. The whole track must also be well scuffed. It is important that the dog is successful; this is where a good trainer

will always put everything in the dog's favour and to his advantage.

The second 'blind' track that day should be 20 yards in length with three articles at the end, again 2 yards apart. On completion of this second track, with the dog out of sight again, lay four more tracks, with three articles at the end of each. The length of each track should be 50 yards, 25 yards, 75 yards and 50 yards, all well-scuffed. This completes this training session.

The next day, lay four 'blind', well scuffed tracks for the dog as previously: (1) 50 yards (2) 80 yards (3) 30 yards (4) 100 yards each with three articles at the end, two yards apart.

Should the dog have a tendency to go off the well-scuffed track, the handler should stand still and allow the dog to cast round until he comes back onto the track again. As soon as he takes the track, praise him and encourage him to 'seek'. In the event of him not taking the track, but continuing to cast, the handler should walk along the line of track with the tracking line held in the left hand and indicate the direction of the track along the ground with the right hand, encouraging the dog to 'seek'. Immediately he takes the track again, praise him, follow behind and let him take you to the article.

I emphasise again, all this is based on the dog wanting deperately to find the article. If the dog is not pulling you, not showing much enthusiasm and not overjoyed at finding the article, you have done something or everything wrong and you need to re-think what I said in the previous chapters.

All this careful and detailed preparation is heading ultimately to a track which is laid in atrocious weather conditions, bad terrain with sparse vegetation, at least half a mile in length and three hours old. There may be twenty or more legs, small articles and a strict time limit of fifteen minutes. I hope that you will appreciate how important it is to have the basics and the dog's attitude 100% right.

12. Training for Accuracy

At this stage of training, before we even think of introducing a corner, we should be aiming for the dog to be doing a straight track of 150 yards, concentrating the whole length without casting. The dog should be going at a good steady pace, ignoring all distractions. Only one thing should be on the dog's mind, 'Where is the article hidden?' The track should be laid by yourself, using short paces so leaving a continuous line of track.

Many handlers at trials would much prefer to have their track laid by a tracklayer over 6ft tall and weighing 17 stoncs, the theory being that he will make a stronger imprint on the ground thus leaving more scent! Now consider the difference in length of stride between someone over 6ft tall and someone 5ft 2ins. The shorter person is more inclined to leave a continual track than the tall person with long legs who takes enormous strides, especially when travelling down-hill. This is why, when teaching a dog to track in the early stages, I always advise laying a continual track. Another good reason for always laying your own tracks.

We have established that dogs can track, but it is the manner in which they perform on a competition track that we are concerned. Every cast, every deviation will lose marks, so it makes sense that the dog should be taught to track accurately. This can never be achieved by the 'free tracking' method (i.e. the dog working a track without a harness and line). This is the cause, I believe, of many problems: the dogs are undoubtedly enjoying themselves but 'doing their own thing', which is to be discouraged. All the disciplines in working trials are quite natural for a dog: jumping, running, retrieving, but it is the controlled manner in which they are required to perform these exercised that matters, and tracking is no different.

We shall now lay a 150 yard track, using short strides, in our usual field of good length grass in ideal conditions, a calm, damp day with no distractions. The article will be hidden at the end of the track plus two 'safety articles' 2 yards apart, (the dog to find one only). The track

ends once the dog has found the article. It is very important to establish in the dog's mind that it is not the tracking with which we are primarily concerned, but the finding of the article. A statement often made by handlers is that when the dog finds an article, he was really not too bothered and was much more interested in 'tracking on'. This attitude must be avoided at all costs. The whole idea of laying such short tracks is to ensure that the dog searches the whole length of the track for his article and not to pull madly as he did in the early stages to build up enthusiasm and attitude. A mistake made by handlers entering trials in their first tracking stake, U.D. open, is to train for a track of half a mile long with one article at the end. The dog is therefore conditioned to track for a long way before he finds the article, usually pulling madly to get there as soon as possible. This is not a good policy and bad training practice.

Lay the track, one straight leg of 150 yards without the dog watching, knowing exactly where the track goes. Place your start pole and scuff the first 10 yards of the track, then proceed walking normally, keeping your eye on your marker so that you walk in a straight line, and hide your three articles at the end. Ensure that you walk back well clear of the track.

Bring the dog from the car and approach the pole on his collar and lead. Put your harness on the dog approximately 2 yards from the pole and observe how keen he is to track. Urge him to 'seek'. He should immediately pick up the track as the first ten yards are scuffed, and as he sets off, praise him. Walk about three yards behind him and if you have done the previous training correctly, the dog should take you the whole 150 yards without casting, without lifting his head and pulling at a good steady pace. He should be showing lots of enthusiasm, scenting for the article and giving you every indication that he wants to do it and is dedicated to finding the article. As he finds the article, run up to him as soon as he picks it up and play tug-of-war. Take the article from him, throw it for him and allow him to chew and play with it whilst you roll up your line.

If, on this track, you found that the dog was casting, the next 150 yard track that you lay should be scuffed the whole distance. In the event of him still casting, admonish him gently (Ah!) and as soon as he picks up the track again, praise lavishly. It should be appreciated that it is an enormous step for a young dog to progress from a scuffed track to one which is laid at normal walking pace, and it should be introduced gradually. I believe that this is one of the causes of many dogs casting on straight legs; yet another reason for laying your own tracks.

At this stage of training, providing that your dog is extremely keen to go out and find the article, a degree of compulsion should be introduced if the dog is pulling too hard or casting unnecessarily. Do be extremely careful in the timing of your correction. If the dog leaves the track I would say 'Ahh' immediately in not too severe a tone, but nevertheless letting the dog know he has done wrong. I would follow up the track myself as if to get to the article before he does, but not overtaking the dog. As he takes the track again, (as he should because it is so well laid that he cannot fail to do it) immediately praise and follow at approximately 3 yards again.

These handling techniques are so valuable but are not always easy to acquire. They take much practice until they become almost second nature; the more experienced you become the more automatic the response. Having learning to drive are you always aware every time that you change gear? No, you do it without thinking, and so it is with teaching a dog to track. The dog has to be encouraged, corrected, taught not tested and above all, he has to be successful.

Lay another blind track fifteen minutes later at 25 yards in length with your three hidden articles at the end, two yards apart. Run this track as before and then finish for the day. Throughout the next week, incorporate the surprise article 12 yards from the pole and finish.

The next time you will lay the 150 yard track as before, only if you are totally convinced that he is dedicated to finding the article.

This time we intend to introduce articles on the track, but it should appear to the dog that he is actually doing two tracks with one article on each, as we have previously carefully conditioned the dog into thinking that the track always ends with an article.



Lay your track as usual, but at 75 yards hide a well scented article, then proceed laying the track, scuffing for 10 yards. Then walk the remainder normally and hide your second article at 150 yards plus a 'safety' article 2 yards further on. Run the track with your dog and immediately he finds the first article, go through the same routine as before (tug-of-war, praise, etc.). Remove the line and throw the article for the dog to either side or behind, NOT along the line of track.

Stand still yourself and do not step off the track. Take the article from the dog and put it in your pocket. Clip the line back on the harness and encourage the dog to 'seek' once more. He should resume the track again and take you to the second article to receive his game and praise.

From this time on, stagger the three articles along the 150 yard track; the first time at 15 yards, 60 yards and 150 yards: then at 60 yards, 100 yards, 150 yards and continue to vary the distances.

13. From the Pole

Up to this point your dog has been accustomed to the track going straight forward from the pole, but now we have to teach him to investigate the base of the pole thoroughly to determine the direction of the track. In competitions, after the U.D. stake, the first leg can go in any direction from the pole, even cutting back behind, so we should introduce this new lesson before teaching corners.

The one fact remaining constant is that the track always starts from the pole and nowhere else. Some dogs become so conditioned to the track going forward that they develop a tendency to rush forward in their eagerness past the pole and then start to track. To avoid this, I suggest that occasionally you intersperse your training with start tracks.

The easiest way of doing this is to lay four tracks in your usual field as follows. From the start, you will carry with you four poles and four articles.

Walk 10 yards into the field and place pole (1) in the ground. Instead of walking straight on, turn 90° right, scuffing the first 3 yards and then walk normally for 20 yards and hide your first article. Now take long strides for approximately 10 yards and place pole (2) in the ground.

This time turn 90° left, again scuffing the first 3 yards and walk on normally for 40 yards and hide article 2. Take long strides again for 10 yards and place pole No. 3.

Turn 90° to the left, again scuffing the first 3 yards and walking normally for 15 yards and hide article 3. Taking large strides again for 10 yards place your last pole in the ground.

This time turn 45° to the left, scuff the first 3 yards and walk another 25 yards and hide your last article. Walk out well clear of your first pole and track.

Fig. No. 6 shows the pattern of the four tracks.

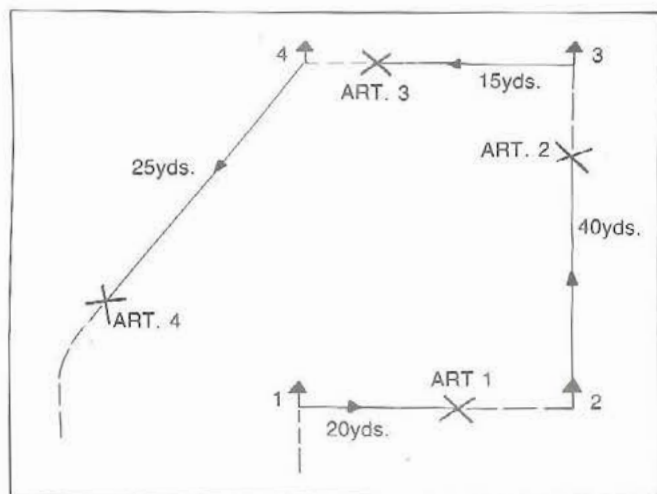


Fig. 6

The dog very quickly adjusts to thinking that the track can go in any direction and he has learned that by following the track he will find the article. As that conditions has always been met, he should have no hesitation in taking the track from the pole. Should the dog initially leap forward, hold him steady, but immediately he takes the track, praise and follow him.

At the completion of each short track, play as before, unclipping the line and throwing the article. Pocket the article and then on collar and lead take him to the next start pole. Clip the line on the harness and encourage him to 'seek' as usual, running all four tracks in sequence, carefully observing your dog's reaction and attitude.

At this point in training, you can begin to vary the direction of the track from the pole but always lead the dog along the 'walk in' to the pole. This ensures that you are not asking the dog to sort out a back track from the pole. It is no longer allowed in trials to incorporate a back track and you will always be told where the tracklayer walked in to the pole at the start of your track.

After each training session I have found it very helpful to write down in a small notebook the details of the day's work and how the dog performed. It is most important that the handler learns to observe very carefully the attitude of the dog and any errors that are made. Learn to be very critical of your handling and the dog's level of achievement. Dogs (and handlers) do not all learn at the same rate and it is for this reason that I do not advise a rigid schedule of work or tracking programme. It is far more important to be confident that each training session has been 100% successful. Do not be tempted to rush onto the next stage before you have consolidated the lessons as initial mistakes and bad habits formed now are difficult to eradicate later.

Once you are happy that your dog is tracking well and confidently, meeting all the requirements, you are now ready to move on to another area. Choose another grass field and introduce the dog to tracking in this new environment by laying short, easy tracks. Ensure that the dog has success by laying three straight leg tracks, one at 50 yards then 150 yards then 80 yards all with one article (plus two safety articles) at the end as usual. This change of area should present no difficulties to the dog, providing the terrain is good. Increase gradually the number of different areas in which to track.

14. Teaching Corners

The dog must now be taught to turn a corner which is a very important stage in his training. This is so often done badly or simply not taught at all and is approached with a 'fingers crossed' philosophy.

Precious marks can be lost on corners and it is as well perhaps to look at what we do not want. Firstly, we do not wish the dog to overshoot the corner and possibly lose the track completely and secondly we do not want him casting round and round to find the next leg. If he never develops this habit and is taught properly from the beginning we do not build in problems for later. Casting on corners also means waste of precious time and on a long T.D. track with twenty or so legs and a strict time limit this should be considered carefully. Apart from this, the dog wastes energy which in bad conditions, especially the heat, could be reserved for the search which follows.

The first thing to establish is which way the dog turns naturally. Simply observe which way he turns when you call him to you when he is running free and which way he faces when he lies down. This will influence the direction of your second leg, i.e. the corner. The method I prefer is to lay a short track of 30 yards which ends at a hedge or wall. Walk right up to the barrier and then at right angles the opposite way to the dog's natural instinct. Scruff the ground all the way from the corner keeping as close to the barrier as possible for about 30 yards and hide your well-scented article plus two 'safety' articles, each a further twelve yards apart. Practice this for a few days and then change direction for the next few days, ending with two sessions, one to the left and one to the right.

The next stage is to introduce a turn in the middle of the field. Lay a track of 100 yards, stop and turn at right angles. Really scruff the ground well for about 25 yards and lay your three articles. I cannot stress too strongly the importance of the handler knowing exactly where he has turned: step on a mole hill or look for a prominent thistle or nettle and turn over the top so that you know precisely where the corner is. In the event of the dog overshooting the corner by three or four yards, give the line a sharp tug. We are introducing a little compulsion now. Obviously, if this tug on the line is overdone, it could place stress on the dog or deter him from tracking, which is the last

thing we want. Therefore, this compulsion is only applied when you are convinced that the dog's attitude is 100%. The tug should only be applied to a dog that is pulling strongly, very keen to get to the article or a very strong-willed dog.

The severity of the tug on the line is governed by how hard the dog is pulling and by how much he overshoots the corner. When applying the correction do not say anything to the dog. We are instilling into the dog that as soon as he runs out of track, he should stop dead, waiting for the tug, and look for the next leg. We are aiming to have the dog under control when he is tracking. A word of caution to novice handlers: if you think that you are not capable of handling this situation correctly, you would be well advised not to attempt this form of correction until you are more experienced.

I worked a large, powerful Rottweiler, W.T.ch. Jacinto's Bolero (Jake) who was a superb tracking dog. I laid all my own tracks and the only time someone else laid the track was at a trial. He was fanatical on articles but on the track he was controlled, going at a good steady pace, not overshooting corners, seldom cast on a leg and was never distracted when tracking. This was only achieved because (a) nothing I did could detract from his wanting the article, (b) I knew exactly where the track went (c) if he pulled too hard to go faster (cause of missing articles) he was corrected and (d) if he overshot a corner or cast unnecessarily he was corrected. Through consistent, thorough training it was established firming in the dog's mind that I knew exactly where that track went and if he made any 'mistakes', he would be in trouble. To avoid the compulsion, he learned to follow the track accurately and not make mistakes. Let me state now that you are in no way helping the dog to do the corner by pulling on the line; all you are doing is conditioning the dog that every time he runs out of track he must stop and look for the corner. He has to work out the new line of track for himself. If this compulsion is applied correctly, to avoid the jerk, the dog will automatically stop and look for the corner. Naturally, the handler does not know where the corners are

on a competition track laid by someone else, but you are teaching the dog during training that he must not overshoot corners. There is a world of difference between teaching the dog the correct way to track or allowing the dog to 'go it alone' and make all the mistakes along the way.

If the dog has been taught to execute one corner correctly it follows that he should be able to do twenty corners, providing that the handler knows precisely where he turned enabling him to praise or correct. Nothing is left to chance that the dog may get it right. Again, if you do not know where the track goes, in detail, you can apply neither praise or correction, and the whole idea is that we are 'training' the dog.

There is more than a good deal of argument on this subject and an opinion held by many is that by adopting this method, one is in danger of influencing the dog and either 'steering' or 'talking' the dog round the track. This is an absolute fallacy. By this stage of training we have a dog that is following a track with great enthusiasm to get to the article. The dog is 'taking' the handler round the track and if the basic training has been successfully established from the beginning as outlined in the previous chapters, the handler has little or no influence on the dog's attitude. In fact, you should be able to tell someone to simply hold onto the line and follow the dog. What we have done is control the dog in order to assist him to find the article, and in order to do that, he must follow the line of track accurately.

Once the dog is executing right angled corners accurately, then more acute angles should gradually be introduced. As always, when teaching something new always assist the dog by laying the first few yards of the new leg well scuffed. As the dog becomes more proficient, and the handler is acutely aware of the dog's progress, all tracks should be laid at normal walking pace. Never introduce a further step in training without firstly considering 'helping' the dog.

Assuming that all has gone well, curves and circles can be

introduced on the track, remembering that the initial curves should be scuffed for the full length. To start this training, lay the first leg of 50 yards and then start the semi-circle, scuffing as you walk and also the first three yards as you return to a straight line. See Fig. 7.

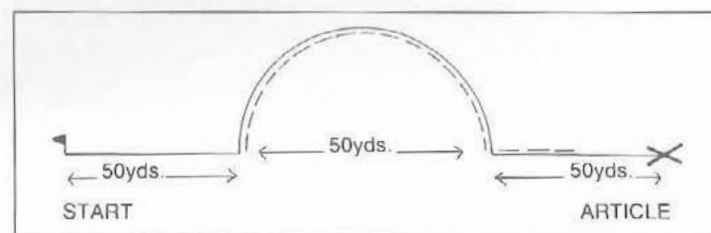


Fig. 7 – Introducing a curve. Dotted line = scuffed

You can also increase the degree of difficulty by increasing the angle as shown in Fig. 8.

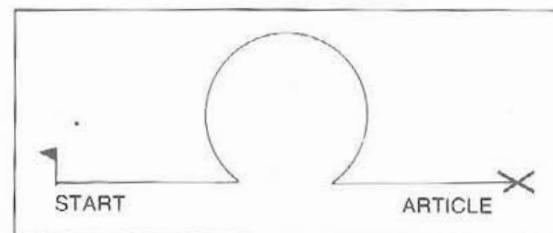


Fig. 8

15. Building Experience

The dog has now been tracking well on a track with 8–10 legs incorporating corners of both right angles and acute angles, can negotiate a curve and recover all the track articles. Up to this point he has tracked in several different areas, but all tracks have been laid on grass in good conditions. It is important at this point that you do not now become complacent and feel that your dog is now ready to do any competition track. It is of very little value simply to lay a track everyday or whenever without the dog specifically learning or the handler having some object in mind. Be constructive and consider carefully the tracks you are contemplating laying and why

you are laying it that particular way. It is unnecessary to do 880 yard tracks in training, in fact it is helpful to lay longer tracks, including tracks going from one field into another, crossing ditches and walls, etc.

This will all build on your dog's level of experience, which is what you are now aiming to do. Use as many different surfaces as possible, plough, winter corn, stubble, rough pasture, moorland, woods, heather, oil seed rape, etc. Each surface may present a different degree of difficulty to your dog. Often, tracking on stubble presents a problem in that the stalks lay in definite rows. The dog usually exhibits no difficulty when the leg goes 'with' the rows or across them, but when the leg goes diagonally, he may initially 'dog leg' instead of following the exact line of track. Give him practice and make it easy for him at first.

Woodland, deep heather and rough terrain will increase the handlers line handling expertise as it will be quite impractical to trail the excess line behind and conditions necessitate holding the line coiled in the other hand.

Rolled or rough plough may confuse the dog initially as he has been used to tracking along a continuous line of scent. With no vegetation the dog now has to learn to step track, i.e. going from one footprint to another.

Start to lay tracks of one straight leg, scuffed along the whole length on ground that has been fouled with game and other animals. Lay tracks on ground used by cattle and sheep, along a hedgeline inhabited by many animals such as rabbits, voles, mice, etc.

Lay tracks in bad conditions of strong wind and heavy rain and leave the track up to two hours old. Lay tracks under extreme conditions, gale force winds, torrential rain and leave them four to five hours old. Track in the hottest part of the day and acclimatise your dog to tracking in the heat.

By this time you should be reading your dog well, knowing how he does his corners, if he overshoots, casting on a straight leg or

paying attention to game smells or droppings. Both handler and dog should feel confident and competent. Now is the time to enlist the services of an experienced track layer. Request a track of total length of 800 yards incorporating 10 legs with three large, well-scented, well hidden articles (with one safety article on the end). The track should be laid in good conditions on good terrain, but the age is immaterial. As your dog works the track, have your tracklayer walk about ten yards behind you. On completion of the track have the tracklayer analyse both your performance and that of the dog, how you handled the dog and to what extent you believed him. This will give you your first experience of handling the dog on a competition track, not knowing where the track went, where the corners were or where the articles were hidden. This is a measure of how well you have taught your dog and what a marvellous feeling it is to complete the track successfully.

Being quite confident now in your dog's ability to track I suggest that you put down two different tracks, both under good conditions and terrain of eight legs each. The first track will be run at 30 minutes old and the second track at 3 hours old. After completing both tracks consecutively, sit down and contemplate all those people who had told you how they had gradually got their dogs doing tracks of 45 minutes old after nearly a year of training! It is as important to dispel these spurious theories on timed tracks as it is to accept the correct ones.

Track as often as possible and don't be tempted to believe that you can 'sicken' a dog by overtracking him. This is simply not true. I speak from experience of working various different breeds and temperament and I work on the theory that in teaching and training a dog to track he gets the maximum pleasure from being 'allowed' to track and find his article to have a great game. Finding the article is his biggest reward and all my dogs, without exception, would track all day and every day. Remember that to them it is a game, a game at which they are always successful. Nothing succeeds like success. At a trial, if for some reason the dog goes wrong and is blown off the

track, never blame the dog, but always thrown down an article and finish on a good note. You will never know why he failed, but to the dog, he has been successful.

16. The Last Word

Some handlers will lay a track and their thinking is "I have a trial at the weekend so I suppose I ought to put a track down!" This negative attitude from the handlers and trainers is deplorable. Is it surprising that they end up with a dog with an attitude of "Oh, well, I suppose I ought to make some sort of effort!" The enthusiasm of the handler is always reflected in the dog's attitude and subsequently it's performance.

Another lament is lack of land on which to train, but it is like anything else in life, if you want a thing badly enough, you will get it somehow! I worked in North London for a number of years where tracking land was as scarce as hen's teeth. I was employed on mobile security and all my tracks were laid in built up areas on building sites for which I was working security. As you can imagine, it was mostly turned-over ground where drains and footings were being dug. After tracking on this type of terrain, when I competed at a trial, my dogs found it to be considerably more easy. So don't make lack of land an excuse, as a determined handler will always find grass verges, rough land, public parks in the very early morning and wet and windy days when 'sensible' people are indoors!

After one reading of this book it is impossible to assimilate all the information, at least half of it will be left on the pages. Further reading will ensure that you absorb all the details and receive the maximum benefit to enable you to train your dog to a very high standard of tracking and article recovery. If the dog does not perform well, examine what you are doing wrong. Often it is not a case of what you do but the way in which you do it. By that, I mean half-hearted training, lack of enthusiasm and inhibitions of the handler.

If you are absorbed in your training and your dog, he will reward you by being attentive and enthusiastic about this wonderful new game and the mere sight of the harness and line will stimulate his excitement. If you have a dog that shows little interest, then generally it is the fault of the handler.

Enjoy your training, enjoy your dog and here's to successful tracking.

Appendix

‘Everything around us, every object and every circumstance, is the result of action of some kind. There cannot be any such thing as action without there having been a preceding thought: there is no such thing as chance-action anywhere. It follows therefore that Thought is Cause, and Action is Effect’.

Wisdom Through The Ages
Mark Gilbert

This appendix has been written to enable handlers to methodically progress in training until they have a dog capable of successfully completing competition tracks. Each section is meant to be completed in sequence and careful assessment made after each session.

It is hoped that this will be of great assistance, especially to novice handlers, as each section can be read and digested before each training session, rather than trying to grasp the total concept by one reading through the book. There is always so much to absorb and it is attention to detail which bears fruit.

Having thoroughly read through the book, and understood all the theory and sequences of training, I would ask you to pause and consider. Reading and understanding is one thing, the correct application of knowledge is another. Only experience will tell you when to immediately chastise or praise, to spot mistakes almost before they happen and correct timing is of the essence. BUT we were all novice handlers once, and we learn by mistakes. Hopefully this appendix will help you make less.

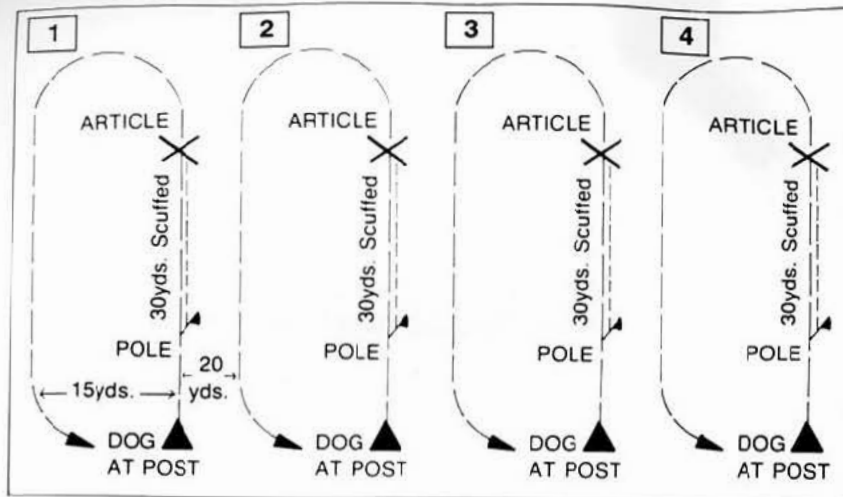
Appendix Practical Training Procedure

The Very First Track

Check List

Good weather conditions.
Good growth of grass.
No stock, other people or dogs.
Leather collar and lead.
Articles: rubber ring, hose pipe, tennis ball.
(tied onto cord)
Tracking poles.

- 1) Tease dog and play with article.
- 2) Walk clear of play area.
- 3) Tie dog to fence post on collar and lead.
- 4) Walk out 5 yards in front of dog — place pole.
- 5) Tease dog again with article (well scented).
- 6) Lay track, scuffed for 30 yards, trailing article.
- 7) Cover article with grass.
- 8) Walk on normally another 10 paces.
- 9) Return to dog in semi-circle (well clear of track).
- 10) Take dog to pole on collar and lead — urge to seek.
- 11) Follow on behind dog.
- 12) Dog finds article — lead off.
- 13) Tug-of-war — praise.
- 14) Play with article, take dog to another post.
- 15) Tie dog up THEN take article from him.
- 16) Lay 4 or 5 more tracks, moving to fresh ground after each track with start pole immediately in front of dog.



Observations

Dog

- 1) Watch for dog's attitude when playing initially.
- 2) Watch for dog's attitude when tied to post.
- 3) Observe carefully how he tried to track.
- 4) Observe attitude on finding article.
- 5) Observe increase or decrease in enthusiasm as more tracks laid.
- 6) Did he enjoy himself?

Handler

- 1) Did you scold at all?
- 2) Did you really play?
- 3) Did you genuinely praise?
THROUGHOUT THE WHOLE SESSION??
- 4) Did you really know where the track went?
- 5) Could you 'see' the article?
- 6) Did you enjoy yourself?

— Only if all has gone 100% should you proceed —

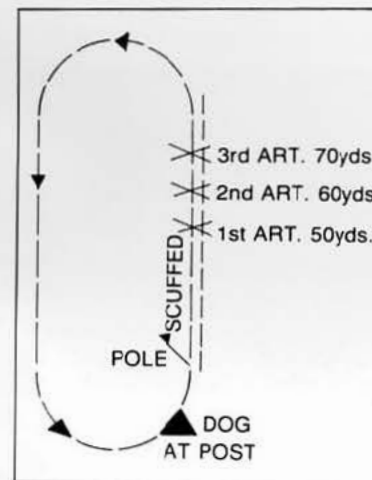
Second Session

Repeat exactly as for the first session.

Third Session

Initial set up as before, same ground, same conditions BUT

- 1) Increasing the distance.
- 2) Using three articles.
 - 1st article at 50 yards
 - 2nd article at 60 yards) 2 safety
 - 3rd article at 70 yards) articles.



Repeat 4 or 5 times moving dog and pole as before using clear ground.

- 1) Dog to find one article only.
- 2) Other articles to be retrieved by handler later.
- 3) Tug-of-war game and praise as before.

Observations

As before PLUS

- 1) Did the dog 'go over' first article?
- 2) Could you retrace your steps and pick up other articles?
- 3) Was the dog more enthusiastic?

— The dog must always win, i.e. get his article —

Repeat for four or five days with two or three sessions per day, checking that:-

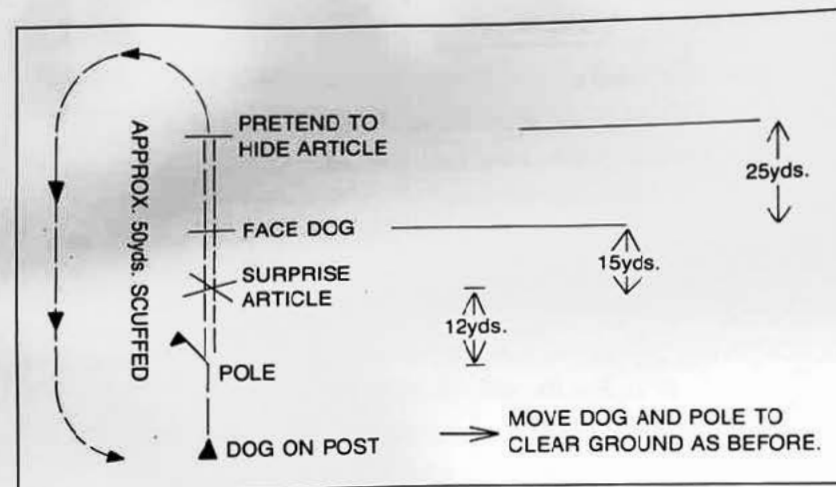
- 1) The dog is pulling to article along track.
- 2) Allow some deviation off track.
- 3) Does he want the article?
- 4) Encourage and teach, showing him track if necessary.
- 5) No harsh verbal correction.

Assuming that all has gone well, you are ready to proceed a stage further.

BE HONEST in your assessment and observations. Mistakes will not disappear, these initial tracks are crucial to the dog's training. Make haste slowly!!

Harness On, Nose Down, Surprise Article

- 1) Tease dog and play and with article.
- 2) Put harness on dog with 5 yards of line attached.
- 3) Tie dog to post on leather collar and lead.
- 4) A second well-scented article in pocket.
- 5) Tease dog with article on cord.
- 6) Place pole and walk out, scuffing ground.
- 7) Allow dog to see article trailed out.
- 8) After 12 yards, stop.
- 9) Scuff ground with foot.
- 10) Distract dog with article on cord.
- 11) Drop article from pocket on scuff mark and cover using foot.
- 12) Walk another 15 yards — scuffed — stop and face dog.
- 13) Jerk article again, so he sees it.
- 14) Proceed approx. 25 yards.
- 15) Pretend to hide article, calling dog's name.
- 16) Secretly put article in pocket.
- 17) Return to dog in semi-circle as before.



- 18) Take off collar and lead.
- 19) Take firm hold of line 1 yard from harness.
- 20) Take dog to pole and urge to seek.
HOLD DOG STEADY : DO NOT RUN : FOLLOW ONLY WHEN DOG IS ON TRACK.
- 21) On finding article at only 12 yards, run up to dog, praise, tug-of-war.
- 22) Remove line and throw article for dog.

— Repeat twice more, moving dog and pole —

Observations

- 1) Watch dog's reaction on finding 'surprise' article.
- 2) Observe reaction on being 'restrained'.
- 3) Did he follow track more closely?
- 4) Did he want to track on???
- 5) On second and third track, are you more convinced that dog is scenting for his article?
- 6) Is dog's nose down?

Consolidating – First Session

- 1) Total of 4 tracks.
- 2) Article 'hidden' as surprise at different distances.
- 3) All tracks 50 yards long and scuffed.
- 4) Same field and conditions.
- 5) Identical set up as before, i.e. dog tied to post, teased, etc.

1st Track

- 1) With dog tied to post (with harness on) tease with article on cord.
- 2) Place pole and walk out, scuffing ground.
- 3) Allow dog to see article trailed out.
- 4) After 12 yards stop, scuff ground with foot.
- 5) Distract dog with article on cord and drop 'surprise' article.
- 6) Walk 15 yards – stop and face dog.
- 7) Jerk article again, so he sees it.
- 8) Proceed approx. 25 yards and pretend to hide article.

– Run track as before –

2nd Track

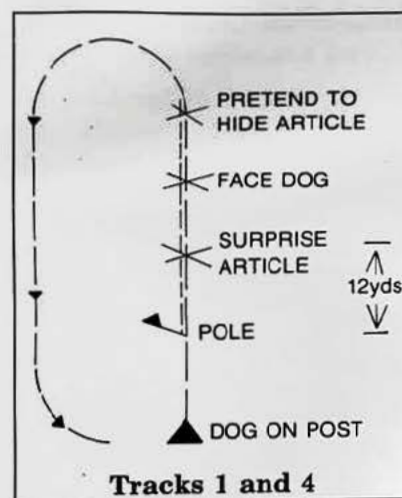
Proceed exactly as above but dropping 'surprise' article at 20 yards.

3rd Track

Exactly as for second track.

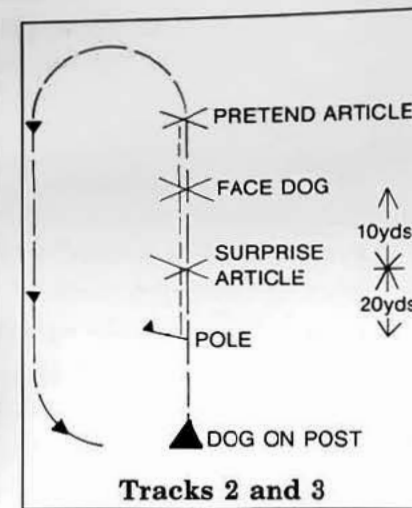
4th Track

Exactly as for track one.



Tracks 1 and 4

Finish for that day.



Tracks 2 and 3

Observations

- 1) Observe carefully dog's attitude for any decrease in enthusiasm.
- 2) Dog should be fully aware of procedure now.
- 3) Observe attitude on way to tracking area and sight of harness.
- 4) Maintain full handler enthusiasm and praise.
- 5) Keep notebook on dog's performance and faults.

Second Session

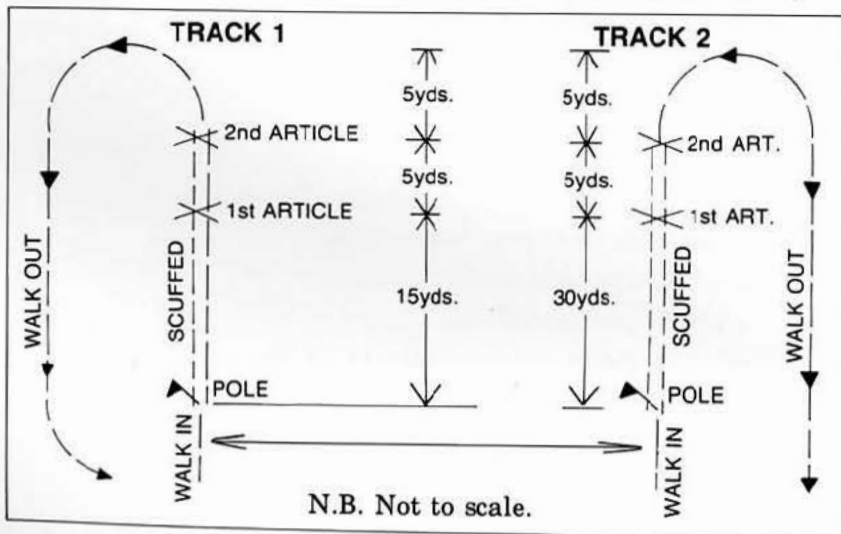
- 1) Total of four tracks.
- 2) All tracks 50 yards long and scuffed.
- 3) Same field and conditions.
- 4) Dog tied to post as before.
- 5) Track 1: surprise article hidden at 15 yards from pole.
Track 2: surprise article hidden at 20 yards.
Track 3: As track 1.
Track 4: As track 2.

Do NOT attempt to proceed if there are faults. Re-read.

The First 'Blind' Track

- 1) Leave dog in car or tied securely outside field.
- 2) Continue to use same field, providing he has had no disagreeable experiences.
- 3) Equipment: four very well-scented articles. 2 poles.
- 4) Walk into field and place pole.
- 5) Walk 15 yards scuffed.
- 6) Hide first well scented article.
- 7) Proceed 5 yards (scuffed) and hide second 'safety' article.
- 8) Walk on another 5 yards.
- 9) Return past your pole well clear of track and pole.
- 10) Take second pole, walk 25 yards along edge of field.
- 11) Place pole and lay second track, well scuffed.
- 12) Hide first article at 30 yards.
- 13) Walk another 5 yards.
- 14) Hide 'safety' article.
- 15) Walk on 5 yards.
- 16) Return well clear of track and pole.

Laying Two 'Blind' Tracks with Two 'Safety' Articles



- 17) Bring dog into field on collar and lead.
- 18) Take him 3 yards from start of TRACK 1.
- 19) Put harness and line on dog quickly.
- 20) Remove collar and lead, hold line firmly and urge to seek.
- 21) Allow dog to pick up track on his own.
- 22) Follow 1 yard behind, holding dog steady.
- 23) On finding article, get to him as soon as possible.
- 24) Praise, grab article — tug-of-war.
- 25) Play, throw article for him, then put in pocket.
- 26) Remove line from harness, but leave harness on dog.
- 27) Put on collar and lead and take to start of TRACK 2.
- 28) Same procedure.
- 29) On completion, return dog to car, walk tracks and recover 'safety' articles.

Observations

- 1) Was there any confusion in the dog's mind as to what he should do?
- 2) Was he pulling strongly to get his article?
- 3) Did he wander off the track?
- 4) Was he very excited on finding the article?
- 5) Did he go a good steady pace?
- 6) Were there any disagreeable experiences?
- 7) Was the dog successful?
- 8) Could you recover the safety articles easily?

Further 'Blind' Tracks using 3 articles

Track 1

- Repeat as for the previous day, same field.
- Length of Track: 50 yards — scuffed.
- No. of articles: 3.
- Distance between articles: 2 yards.

Track 2

Length of Track: 20 yards — scuffed.

No. of articles: 3.

Distance between articles: 2 yards.

After completion of these two tracks, return the dog to car (or out of sight) and lay four further tracks as follows.

Track 1

Length of Track: 50 yards — scuffed.

No. of articles: 3.

Distance between articles: 2 yards.

Track 2

Length of Track: 25 yards — scuffed.

No. of articles: 3.

Distance between articles: 2 yards.

Track 3

Length of Track: 75 yards — scuffed.

No. of articles: 3.

Distance between articles: 2 yards.

Track 4

Length of Track: 50 yards.

No. of articles: 3.

Distance between articles: 2 yards.

Observations

- 1) Was the dog as keen to do the last track as the first?
- 2) Did he have any tendency to 'go off' the track?
- 3) Was the dog helped and trained — not tested?
- 4) Is there any confusion or lack of enthusiasm?
- 5) Look for improvement in concentration and motivation.
- 6) Do not ignore any 'little' mistakes. Take time to get it 100%

Increasing Distances

- 1) Lay four 'blind' tracks as before, all well scuffed using 3 articles at the end, 2 yards apart.

Track 1 Length 50 yards

Track 2 Length 80 yards

Track 3 Length 30 yards

Track 4 Length 100 yards

- 2) For the next few tracking sessions, continue to vary the distances, but always using 3 articles.

Observations

- 1) Consult record book regularly — how much better is he now!
- 2) Are you 100% convinced that it's the article, not the track that the dog wants?
- 3) Are you really hiding the articles?
- 4) Is the dog always finding the first article?
- 5) Are you beginning to 'read' your dog?
- 6) Has he 'investigated' other smells along or off the track?
- 7) Is he enjoying every session more and more?
- 8) If you are having problems, can you pinpoint them from re-reading the book and apply remedy?

Training for Accuracy

- 1) Dog in car.
- 2) Place start pole — walk 10 paces scuffed.
- 3) Proceed walking using very short strides (continuous track).
- 4) Keep eyes on 'marker' so walking in straight line for 150 yards.
- 5) Hide three articles at end 2 yards apart.
- 6) Walk back well-clear of track and pole.
- 7) Bring dog from car on collar and lead.
- 8) 2 yards from pole, put on harness and line (removing collar and lead) and urge to 'seek'.
- 9) Walk 3 yards behind dog.
- 10) On finding article — praise and play as usual.
- 11) Lay second 'blind' track, 15 minutes later, 25 yards long, 3 articles using short strides.

Observations

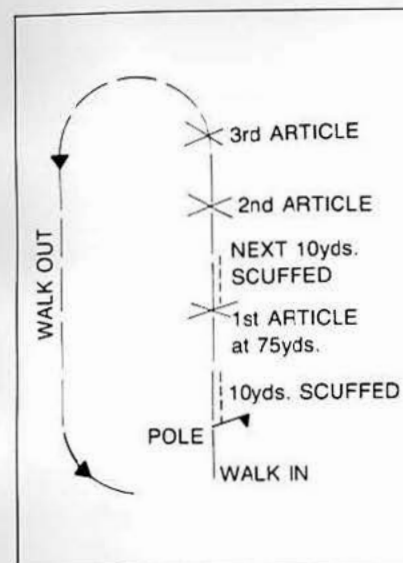
- 1) Was there any difference after the first 10 paces?
- 2) Did he search the whole length of track for his article?
- 3) Did he cast or lift his head?
- 4) Was he dedicated to finding the article?
- 5) Read again the handling techniques in chapter 12.

Continue this sequence throughout the next week BUT incorporate some tracks with the 'surprise' article at 12 yards and finish.

Introducing the Second Article

- 1) Dog in car.
- 2) Place start pole — walk 10 yards scuffed.
- 3) Continue walking normally for 75 yards.
- 4) Hide well-scented article.
- 5) Proceed laying track, scuffing for first 10 yards.
- 6) Walk remainder of 150 yards track.

- 7) Hide second well scented article.
- 8) Walk 2 yards and place 'safety' article.
- 9) Run track with dog.
- 10) Immediately he finds first article, praise, tug-of-war, etc.
- 11) Remove line and throw article for dog. Handler to stand still.
- 12) Take article and place in pocket.
- 13) Clip line back onto harness and encourage dog to seek again.
- 14) On reaching second article, play as before.



Observations

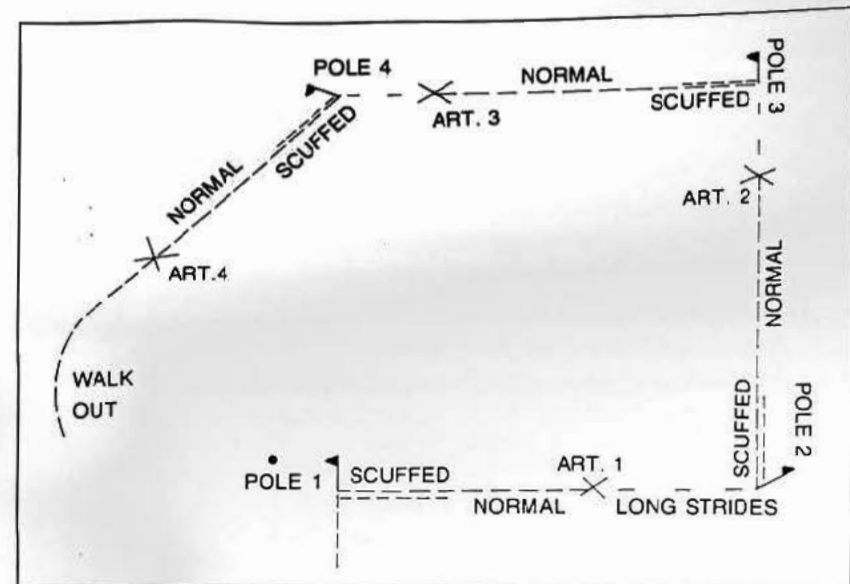
- 1) Watch for attitude at pole.
- 2) Watch for any deviation from track.
- 3) Ensure when playing at first article that track is not fouled, i.e. throw article to side or behind.
- 4) Did dog show any reluctance to track?
- 5) Was he just as enthusiastic for second article?
- 6) Are you recognising dog's indication of article?

From this time on, lay tracks as above but vary the distances of the articles, for example:-

- 1st Track Length 150 yards. Articles at 15, 60 and 150 yards
 2nd Track Length 150 yards. Articles at 60, 100 and 150 yards

Introducing Different Directions from Pole

- 1) Equipment: 4 poles and 4 articles carried with you.
- 2) Walk in and place pole 1.
- 3) Scuff 5 yards then walk on another 15 yards normally.
- 4) Hide article 1.
- 5) Taking huge strides for 10 yards.
- 6) Place pole 2.
- 7) Turn 90° left. Scuff 5 yards then walk normally for 40 yards.
- 8) Hide article 2.
- 9) Taking huge strides walk 10 yards.
- 10) Place pole 3.
- 11) Turn 90° left. Scuff 5 yards and then walk normally for 15 yards.
- 12) Hide article 3.
- 13) Taking huge strides walk 10 yards.
- 14) Place pole 4.
- 15) Turn 45° to left, scuff 5 yards and then walk normally for 25 yards.
- 16) Hide article 4. Walk out well clear of pole 1.
- 17) Introduce dog to pole 1 on harness and line.
- 18) Urge dog to seek and hold steady.
- 19) Allow him to pick up direction of track.
- 20) Praise and follow as normal, find article, play, praise, etc.
- 21) Put article in pocket, dog on collar and lead.
- 22) Take to pole 2, clip on line and urge to seek.
- 23) Allow dog to pick up track.



- 24) Follow same procedure until all tracks are completed.

Observations

- 1) Did dog lunge forward?
- 2) Did he investigate pole thoroughly to find track?
- 3) Was he confused or lacking motivation?
- 4) Was second start easier for dog?
- 5) By the fourth start was he investigating closer?

Occasionally, incorporate these directional starts in your training.

If your dog is tracking confidently, meeting all the requirements, you are ready for a change of area.

Change of Tracking Ground

- 1) Choose another grass field.
- 2) Lay three short straight leg tracks:-
 Track 1 Length of track: 50 yards.
 No. of articles: 1 (plus two 'safety' articles).

- Track 2 Scuff first 5 yards, then normal walking.
Length of track: 150 yards.
No. of articles: 1 (plus two 'safety' articles).
Scuff first 5 yards, then normal walking.
- Track 3 Length of track: 80 yards.
No. of articles: 1 (plus two 'safety' articles).
Laid at normal walking pace.

Increase the number of different areas to track. Bearing in mind

- always scuff the first few yards.
- always use safety articles whenever you introduce a new area initially.
- articles always hidden and well scented.
- track in differing weather conditions.
- have a clear training plan in mind.
- always make sure the dog wins.
- maintain high level of enthusiasm (dog and handler).
- don't try to progress unless 100% successful.
- work up to the 150 yards track with 3 articles on every new area.

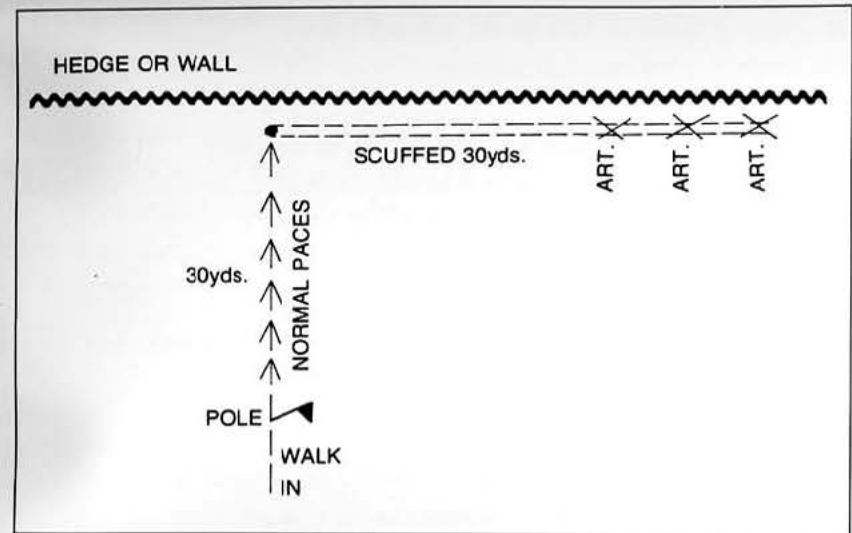
Eating Grass or Spring Corn

Although the author has never personally experienced this habit with any of his dogs, this is a common problem for many handlers. The answer to this annoying habit is to have the dog so enthusiastic to find the article, so single minded, that the temptation to eat grass or corn never arises. Watch for any tendency to 'snack' and act accordingly. Heavily chastising for eating is giving the dog a bad experience in the very field that he is supposed to be having most pleasure.

Teaching the First Corner

- 1 Establish which way the dog turns naturally (see Sect. 14).
- 2) Use field you laid your very first track.

- 3) Place pole approx. 30 yards from hedge FACING into hedge.
- 4) Lay track from pole 30 yards right into hedge, wall, barrier.
- 5) Turn 90° to right (or left) opposite to dog's natural instinct.
- 6) Scuff heavily all the way along hedge for 30 yards.
- 7) Hide well scented article.
- 8) Scuff a further 12 yards and hide 'safety' article.
- 9) Scuff a further 12 yards and hide second 'safety' article.



- 10) Fetch dog from car and take to pole. Put on harness and line.
- 11) Urge dog to seek as usual.
- 12) Allow dog to work out the corner.
- 13) As soon as dog takes the corner — praise.
- 14) On finding article, praise, tug-of-war as normal.
- 15) Handler to retrieve other two articles at leisure.
- 16) Practice for next few days.
- 17) Proceed by turning in opposite direction.
- 18) Practice for next few days in new direction.
- 19) Then lay two tracks, one to left, one to right.

Observations

- 1) Was there any confusion from dog?
- 2) Did he take track from corner easily?
- 3) Did he stop and check both ways?
- 4) Did you praise and confirm he was right?

The First Corner in the Open

- 1) Lay a track of 100 yards, normal paces.
- 2) Pick a good natural marker.
- 3) Turn at right angles.
- 4) Really scuff ground well for 25 yards and stop.
- 5) Lay first well scented article and two safety articles, as usual.
- 6) Run track as usual.
- 7) Allow dog to work out corner.
- 8) Praise to confirm he is right.
- 9) Find article and praise, game, tug-of-war as usual.

Observations

- 1) Did the dog overshoot the corner? Did he stop dead?
- 2) Did you know exactly where the turn was?
- 3) Did you allow the dog to overshoot? Did he cast?
- 4) Was the dog confused?
- 5) Keep careful notes on progress and how many tracks are laid to left and right.

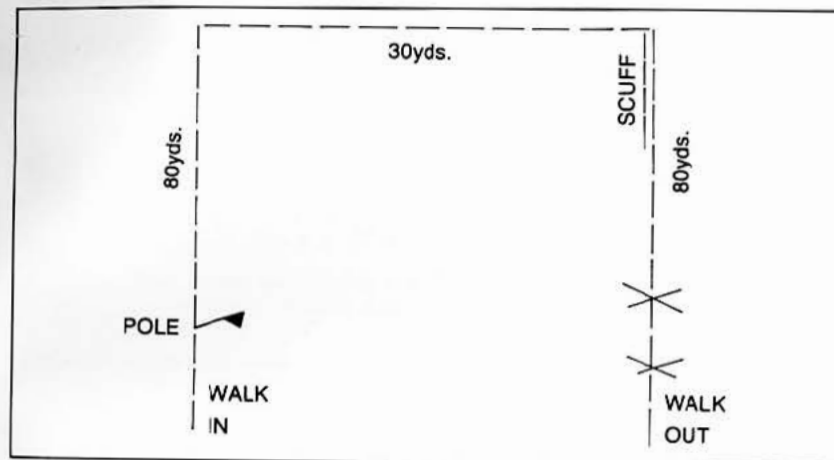
Applying Compulsion

- 1) Truthfully assess dog's enthusiasm to find article.
- 2) If he ignores turn, overshoots, tug the line.
- 3) SAY NOTHING.
- 4) Allow him to work out new line of track.
- 5) Leave nothing to chance – KNOW EXACTLY WHERE YOU TURNED.

- 6) Lay tracks to left and right.
- 7) Gradually reduce scuffing to 5 yards.
- 8) When he does it properly, stop on turn and walk with small steps.
- 9) Graduate to normal walking for whole of track.

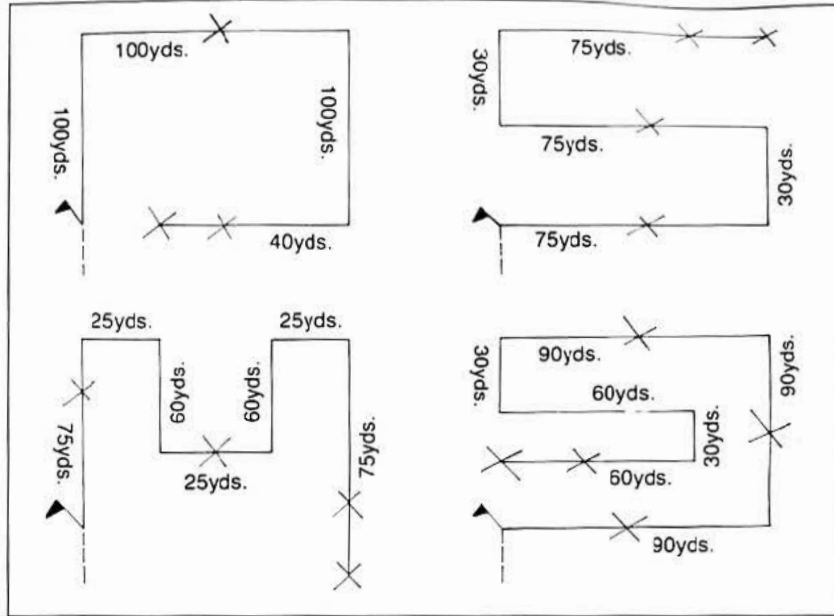
Introducing Two Corners

- 1) Lay first leg of 80 yards.
- 2) Stop, turn 90° right.
- 3) Walk on 30 yards.
- 4) Stop and turn 90° right.
- 5) Scuff 5 yards and then walk on 75 yards.
- 6) Hide article and one safety article.
- 7) Run track as normal.



- 1) Incorporate articles on track, one on each leg (and safety).
- 2) Build up number of corners.
- 3) Change terrain, always scuffing initially with each change.
- 4) Work up to 8–9 legs with 4 or 5 articles.
- 5) Track every day regardless of weather. At this stage it does not matter if it is windy.

Start Track Patterns – All Right Angled Corners

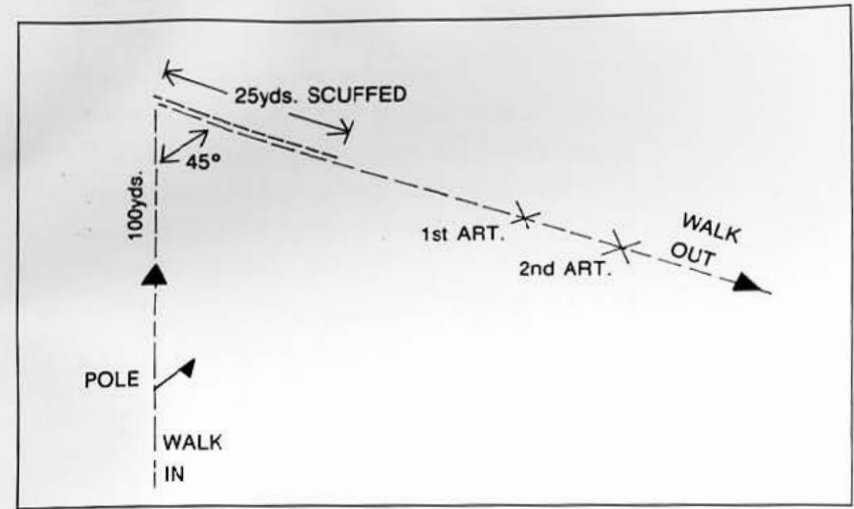


Introducing Acute Angles

- 1) Lay a track of 100 yards, normal paces.
- 2) Stop and lay next leg at 45° , well scuffed for 25 yards.
- 3) Walk normally for 20 yards.
- 4) Lay first well scented article and safety article.
- 5) Run track as usual.
- 6) Allow dog to work out corner.
- 7) Praise and confirm he is right.
- 8) Find article, praise, game, tug-of-war as usual.

Observations

- 1) Did the dog stop 'dead' on the turn?
- 2) Was the dog in any way confused?
- 3) Did he confidently take the second leg?
- 4) Did he cast or stop and look for the next leg?

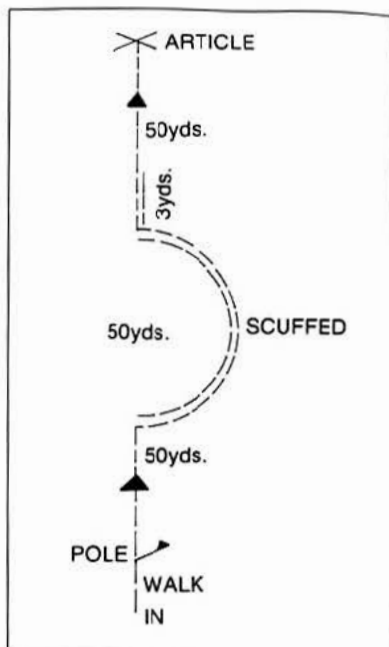


Incorporating Angles

- 1) Lay tracks as before incorporating one or two acute angles.
- 2) Always scuff first few yards of angle.
- 3) Do not make angles too acute.
- 4) If all is 100%, progress to laying whole track at normal walking pace.
- 5) Do not push the dog if there is any confusion, always assist the dog – he must always win.

Introducing Curves

- 1) When laying first curve, always use grass field.
- 2) Place pole and walk 50 yards normal pace.
- 3) Turn 90° as if laying a corner.
- 4) Start the curve, scuffing the whole distance.
- 5) On completion of semi-circle, turn 90° .
- 6) Continue scuffing of first 3 yards of straight leg.
- 7) Walk normally for 50 yards and hide article.
- 8) Lay second track with curve to left (opp. hand).



Observations

- 1) Was there any confusion — did he want to go in straight lines?
- 2) Did he follow curve accurately?
- 3) Was he better on second track?
- 4) Allow dog to work out curve.

Practice curves occasionally and when proficient, make curves more into a circle.

Always scuff circle initially.

Progress slowly to laying at normal pace.

Progress Check

- 1) All tracks have been laid on grass but in different areas.
- 2) Dog tracking well on track with 8—10 legs containing right angles and acute angles.

- 3) Can negotiate a curve.
- 4) Recovers ALL track articles.
- 5) Very enthusiastic and always wants to track.
- 6) Dog concentrates for whole length of track.
- 7) Handler confident of laying longer tracks and knowing corners and location of articles.
- 8) Handler reading dog well.
- 9) Tracks in all but very bad weather.

— Only then can you progress to different terrain —

- 1) Plough.
Always scuff first track.
Dog has to learn to 'step' track.
Progress to short strides.
Work up gradually to normal walking.
Use articles that blend, i.e. brown but no shine.
- 2) Winter Corn.
Very similar to grass when well grown.
Similar to plough when sparse growth.
- 3) Rough grass, moorland, heather.
Watch in tall vegetation that dog does not track nose high.
Use suitable articles, not too small.
Do several short tracks — make it easy.
- 4) Stubble.
Presents definite problems initially.
Initially lay with the sow or against the sow.
Scuff each turn until dog is confident.
Angles present difficulty — going diagonally.
Practice angles, always scuffing whole diagonal leg initially.

5) Cross-Country.

Lay tracks going over fences, over ditches and walls, down hills, etc.

7) Fouled Ground.

Lay tracks on fields recently used for grazing, i.e. cattle and sheep.

Use ground along hedgerows where you know there has been game, etc.

Be ready to correct or praise.

Conditions

Lay tracks in adverse conditions, i.e. strong wind and rain, hottest part of the day.

Leave tracks up to two hours old, then four hours old.

Lay on all sorts of terrain, normal walking pace.

'Your' First Blind Track

- 1) Are you reading your dog well?
- 2) Do you know how he does his corners?
- 3) Are you aware of any problems?
- 4) Does he cast on a straight leg?
- 5) Is he ignoring game smells, etc?

Do you know an experienced tracklayer who will do exactly what you ask?

Request a track of 800 yards with 10 legs and three well scented, well hidden articles (+ one safety article at the end). Choose good conditions and good terrain. Age of track unimportant.

Tracklayer to follow behind about 10 yards. Have tracklayer analyse your performance, both yourself and the dog.

Could you read the dog?

Did you always believe the dog?

Did you thoroughly enjoy this experience?

Put down two tracks on good terrain, one to be run at 30 minutes, the second at 3 hours. Lay 8 legs, both in good conditions. Run them consecutively.

Was there any difference?

Does the time factor matter?

THINK ABOUT IT??!!

Track as often as possible now, building your dog's experience. Be vigilant about any 'mistakes' and correct them.

Do not test the dog, always be in a position to help and instruct.

Enter your first tracking stake with confidence in your dog's ability because you have trained him. His performance will reflect on your ability in his training: if that was successful, so will your dog's performance.

Good Luck
Terry Hadley

