



PBGV (Proud Beginners Getting Vocal) or ... Tips To Help An Adult PBGV Learn To Hunt

Bob Cohen called me shortly after reading the article in the last *Saber Tails*, "Conditioning Puppies for Hunting." He asked, "How about those of us with grown up dogs that didn't get early conditioning? How can we get started?"

It's a good question, one I avoided when I wrote the first article because it's harder to start a novice dog that hasn't had the benefit of early conditioning. My first words to Bob were, "Temper your expectations." The key is to get your dog out in the field and see what he can do. Find out where you are starting from and then be willing to give your dog time to make progress without being frustrated if he doesn't pass the Hunting Instinct Test on the first try. Every handler



on the field started where you are right now, with an inexperienced dog, so don't worry about what others think.

I sat with a bunch of experienced handlers and judges at the Wisconsin hunt, and asked them for ideas for this article. Here's what they said.

The first thing is to start. Where's the closest hunt test to where you live? Make plans to go and enter your dog. Don't hesitate because you've never tried it before and you don't know what will happen. How else will you begin? Joan Burke says to get out on the field and "Watch everything!" Go out on every run that you can and watch as many dogs as you can. Get a feel for what's going on and ask lots of questions. If there is a practice day at the start of the hunt, try your best to attend. Sign up for the Puppy/Novice Learning Experience if one is offered in order to get some guided experience for you and your dog, then see if you can go out for practice with some experienced dogs and handlers to get a head start. The Carolina PBGV Club has fun days from time to time,

and the Midwest hunt group also has some organized fun days for dogs and handlers to get practice. Get on their email lists so you'll know where and when the informal practice days take place. You might also try to find a local Beagle running grounds and see if there is any option for practice. Some Beaglers have their own practice pens and might be willing to let your take your dog out to run. That's

how Paul Urban got his pack started. Paul's saying for novice dogs is, "Exposure, exposure, exposure!" It worked for him!

Once on the field, your dog has to understand how to use his nose and search for scent. We're so prone to tell our dogs, "No sniff!" and get after them if they chase a squirrel. Char Allmann says, "Let your dog sniff and trail the wildlife in your back yard." Don't correct your dog if he finds a squirrel or rabbit trail in your yard and starts voicing — praise him and let him know what a good dog he is!

Bruce Toenjes says, "Take your dog for a walk." Find a green way or open field where wildlife is present and walk your dog on a long line. Let him range around you and use his nose to find scent.



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If your dog shows interest in following a trail, encourage him. Try to do this in all kinds of conditions — hot/cold, wet/dry. You can also get your dog to learn to search and use his nose by taking classes in NoseWork, a canine sport where the dog searches to find a specific scent and then give an alert to the handler. Hide food (like freeze-dried rabbit parts!) in the house and play "Find It" with your dog. Teaching tracking can also be a helpful exercise for hunting. Basically, anything where the dog is encouraged to use his nose and search will help in the hunt field.

It's important to have a pretty good recall when you take your dog into the field. Not only does teaching a recall help to build your relationship with your dog, it also helps to keep your dog checking in with you on the hunt field. You don't have to have a perfect recall to start hunting, but it sure helps to have it as you progress. For specifics on teaching the recall, try Leslie Nielsen's *Really Reliable Recall*, available as an e-book or a DVD, and Pamela Dennison's *Training the Whistle Recall* DVD, both available from www.dogwise.com. Also good is Pippa Mattinson's *Total Recall: Perfect Response Training for Puppies and Adult Dogs*, available from www.amazon.com. Again, if you don't have a perfect recall, don't worry. Hunting grounds are fenced, and other handlers will help you catch up your dog if you are having trouble.

If you don't have access to a rabbit pen, you can still use freeze-dried rabbit feet and ears as treats and to make a drag (available from www.northcoastpets.com). You can get bunny "scent in a bottle" to liven it up a little and create

trails for your dog to follow in the yard (available from www.gundogsupply.com). Drag a line between a couple of surveyor flags and place small treats every couple of feet along the way — exactly like basic tracking, but using the bunny scent instead of human scent. *Continued on page 31*



Hunt *continued from page 11* So you've entered a hunt and you've been working on the recall and some search-and-scent activities. Now you're out on the field and you need to know what to do. Your dog might run off with a mad case of the zoomies, with absolutely no interest in what the other dogs are doing. He'll probably check back in with you at some point. Make a fuss over him and send him back out to run some more. See if you can get him to come along with you by using food and praise. If there are other dogs hunting and you hear a dog voice on a trail, run to where the action is happening! Your dog needs to see a rabbit, and that's more likely to happen if he's in the vicinity of the dogs that are flushing out the bunnies. As you go out more often with your dog and he starts to get the idea, he'll learn to trust you and take direction about where to go into the cover and where there is a hot trail. You might see other handlers use a stick to point or touch the ground where the scent trail is. You don't have a nose that works as well as his, but you can see where the rabbit goes and help him out. In a way, you are a member of his hunting pack.

Now that your dog has run off the zoomies and started to pay some attention to you, see if you can get him to go into the cover. The best way is to go in yourself and get him to follow you. Once you're in the middle of a section of cover, stand still and let him ramble around. If his nose is down, don't distract him. There is a fine line between praising your dog and shifting his attention from the scents around him. Some dogs are jazzed up by their handlers' voices; some are distracted away from the action. Figure out what works the best with your dog.

If your dog is staying in your general area on the field, make sure that you stay with the other handlers. The dogs are more likely to stay with each other if the handlers are together. If the dogs are together, they are more likely to start working as a pack and learn to hark to each other.

It's going to take time to see your dog make real progress. Sometimes you'll take him on the field and he'll spend his time humping another dog and have to be leashed up. Sometimes he'll go head first into a rat hole and you won't be able to keep him away from it. He might spend all his time running the lanes and never step into a bit of cover. You might see that he's using his nose only to realize that he's spending all his time searching for bunny turds or other yucky stuff to eat. Don't lose heart. Keep trying. You'll know that you've made a commitment to hunting when you come home from work one night and see a rabbit in your yard, and your first thought is to get the long line and take your dog out to see if he can find the trail. Good luck and stick with it! ■



Someone questioned why there was a recurring monthly transaction charge of \$150. Gloria explained that when Jeff Pepper set up the specialty account, the bank waived service fees if we maintained a monthly deposited amount of \$150. Gloria set it up as an automatic transaction.

There was question as whether there was a board motion allocating \$1,080 for Wild Apricot. Gloria explained the \$1,080 has to do with the club's membership database, and the payment has been a recurring payment in January each year. There was no recent board motion.

Recommendations. The committee is happy to report that this year we found no issues and have no recommendations on how to change or improve how things are being accounted for. We were satisfied with our individual review of the books for the quarter we were given to audit. All appears to be in good order. Gloria is doing a great job of keeping detailed records of all transactions and applying proper accounting diligence. She responded to all questions, provided clarification and supporting documents to help us each understand the detail reports, and how items are categorized and found in the chart of accounts.

The only concern is that it is increasingly difficult to find time at the nationals to conduct these audits. At national, everyone has so many demands on their time and are spread in so many different directions, it is difficult to find the hours it takes to sit and conduct an audit. An audit isn't something that can be accomplished in half an hour or even an hour. It isn't something that can be done in a hurry. As a result, we had to conduct the audit as we did this year, which added a delay getting the report completed and presented.

In closing, I would like to thank Gloria for all her efforts on behalf of the club's treasury, and the effort she put forth in hauling boxes of paperwork and folders to the national, for providing us with copies of everything we needed via email, and for her patience in answering all questions thrown at her.

I would also like to thank the committee: Jo Anne Hacker, Karen Clugston and Susannah Cooper for their willingness, time and effort in auditing their respective quarters. We promised Karen that if she is asked to audit again she will be given a quarter that doesn't include the expenses associated with the national. ■