

Care Of Your Lab! By Bryan Taylor

Let's see what we should cover this time around. Well starting into the fall we should all be aware of our dogs' vaccinations are all up to date. There is a new development along those lines. In response to consumer questioning and increasing concern about some immunizations causing diseases instead of preventing them, the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) and the American Animal Hospital Association (AAHA) have produced and updated guideline for the use of vaccines in dogs.

The guidelines identify four diseases—rabies, distemper, hepatitis, and parvovirus—which are deemed severe enough that the AVMA and AAHA recommend that all dogs receive regular vaccinations. The guidelines go on to suggest that some currently available immunizations for these core diseases might well provide protection beyond the annual booster schedule recommended by their manufacturers, resulting in fewer vaccinations over the life of the dog.

Immunizations for all other diseases according the guidelines fall into the category of non-core vaccines. Use of these immunizations for your retriever should be tailored to their specific needs. Some immunizations, such as the corona virus vaccine, are denounced in the report as unjustifiable while use of others is only recommended as optional. Meaning they should be considered on a case-by-case basis. Disease factors such as geographic prevalence, communicability, as well as activities that you anticipate your retriever participating in would be considered when choosing what non-core vaccines to use and how often to use them.

The next time you take your retriever in for his shots ask your veterinarian about the new guidelines.

For a summary of the vaccine recommendation set forth by the AVMA and AAHA reports, along with copies of the reports themselves, go to www.sportingdogclinic.com and click on the vaccine info link.

New Ways to Fight Old Age in Dogs

Beginning at around six to seven years for most retriever breeds, old age signals a new phase of a dog's life—one that commonly includes the disease of osteoarthritis. Just like the creaking of bones that happens to us, our dog's joints also deteriorate over time. Add the wear and tear of several water fowling seasons and nearly all aged retrievers will end up battling hip arthritis to some degree.

Not so long ago even as late as 1997, veterinary orthopaedists were still recommending common over the counter aspirin as an effective method of controlling the pain. Well that has all changed now thanks to major advances in drugs available to fight arthritic pain.

One of the most exciting advancements has been the introduction of a new class of non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) for dogs. These new drugs are called "cox-1 specific" because they block only the chemicals from the cox-1 path but other beneficial chemicals are allowed to pass, older NSAIDs like aspirin and ibuprofen, can cause damage to other organs such as the stomach and kidneys because they not only block the cox-1 path but beneficial chemicals as well.

One of the first true veterinary-approved "cox-specific" drugs, called Deramaxx, was released a little over two years ago. Since then several other new NSAIDs, have hit the market. Clinically these new drugs have proven to be just as or even more effective than popular NSAIDs, like Rimadyl. Not all discomfort is evident; it can be hard to tell that your retriever has pain when it builds slowly over time. Even if your older retriever is not currently showing lameness you might consider asking your veterinarian for a prescription of something like Deramaxx if there is hidden arthritis pain occurring the results may surprise you. You might

find that your “old” retriever begins acting more like that new puppy you were thinking about buying to replace him.

Top 10 Retriever Training Mistakes

Training a retriever is a journey—often fun—but it can lead to disappointment due errors in training that lead to less than what we hoped for. Two of North America’s foremost experts on this subject are Robert Milner and Mike Stewart. FOLLOWING are several of the most common training errors we fall into as amateur trainers and expert advice from Milner and Stewart on how to avoid them.

1. **Picking the Wrong Puppy**—locate a breeder who has a proven brood stock and a credible reputation for producing healthy dogs. Evaluate the parents of a litter based upon gun dog standards important to your needs.
2. **Inadequate Socialization**—Any puppy relegated outside to a pen will grow up in relative isolation, deprived of the social interaction that it will need to develop communication skills and more important deprived of the bond with people that gives it the desire to please which is the foundation of reward-based training. Without it you’ve made your job much harder.
3. **Poor Planning**—In these busy times most owners have limited time to spend with their dog. Consequently it’s critical to make the most of training sessions by focusing on the behavior and skills that will best serve you and your retriever in the future. So develop a detailed training plan and schedule to accomplish your goals and evaluate session by session if it is working. If you as a team are not meeting the schedule change it to fit your circumstances.
4. **Tolerating Disobedience**—novice trainers usually don’t invest enough time on the basic commands—heel, sit, stay and here—before advancing to field exercises or, worse, hunting. There are no shortcuts in retriever training.
5. **Pushing to Hard**—More than anything else retriever training takes time and patience. Make haste slowly—burnout in young dogs results in confused lacklustre dogs that quit. Keep sessions short, fun focused on a specific skill—once achieved stop. Dogs have bad days just as we do. So monitor your dog closely and teach through consistency and repetition and a positive attitude.
6. **Too Much Retrieving**—most retrievers are born with strong retrieving instincts. While these are honed with proper training too much retrieving can actually be counter-productive especially in young dogs. Rather, emphasize the non-retrieve—if the pup sees a bird or dummy fall but doesn’t get to retrieve it have the dog quietly at heel and toss out three dummies and then pick up two and the have the dog retrieve only one it enhances the stay, marking and steadiness abilities you are wanting to achieve.
7. **Failing to Communicate**—Dogs communicate by visual cues –such as posture, facial expressions and eye contact, more than using their voice and hearing. Many of us forget and think that our voice is the primary path of communication. Dogs learn by association a command with a behavior. The command does not cause the behavior until the conditioning process is complete. Praise or corrections must occur exactly when the desired or undesired behavior occurs. For example we want to reward a great cast or stylish retrieve we do so upon the dog returning to heel but the dog associates the praise with returning to heel not the cast or the retrieve. Timing is crucial.

8. Delaying Whistle Training—Pups very young on the whistle for recall, sit pays huge dividends, yet most of us greatly delay introduction of the whistle commands. Do it early associate it with pleasurable events—eating treats or a short retrieve.
9. Skipping Transitional Training—The oft repeated expression practice like you play is applicable to retriever training between field drills and hunting, You can't expect a dog to be able to go straight from fetching bumpers in the yard to retrieving ducks on a hunt without transitional causal relationship in your training. Make some of your training sessions as much like hunting as possible—dress in hunting clothes use your gun use decoys use calls have other partners present and have them shoot.
10. Jumping the Gun on Hunting—many owners will take a four-five-or six-month-old puppy on dove or duck shoots for experience. This is like taking a preschooler to high school Dogs learn through causal relationships and repetition, so there's virtually nothing positive that a young puppy can learn in a duck blind. Also don't quit training your dog when hunting season opens. The first year of hunting should be an extended training session and owners should set specific goals for their dogs to accomplish on their first several hunts.
11. Have fun out there and remember you are a team of two and not just the owner of a new hunting tool.