

Health! By Bryan Taylor

This is the first of a years worth of tips that I hope will be of interest and help to all of us.

The first tip is for the health of our dogs thru new research and comes to us from the folks at the Research for the Gerontology at the Research Center in Baltimore.

Dogs enjoy fruit in their diet, and the chemical compounds that make fruit so good for us works for our canine companions as well.

Of the fruits that dogs enjoy, Blueberries are a good source of vitamins A, K and C. They also provide the minerals potassium, phosphorus, magnesium and calcium. And as an added bonus, blueberries contain significant amounts of the carotenoid lutein, which is currently being studied for its role in maintaining good eyesight by preventing the development of cataracts and by slowing the process of macular degeneration. And finally, the same thing that gives blueberries their color is a class of antioxidant bioflavonoids which some of the strongest physiological effects of any known plant compounds.

In the past few years, researchers have come to believe that oxidative stress plays a key role in the brain's aging. This natural process, can be slowed and they believe that based on studies of older dogs an anti-oxidant rich diet performed just as well as younger dogs in several cognitive tests. The conclusion of other studies agree that diets rich in anti-oxidants have the potential to slow down the damage associated with brain aging. Animal fed diets with high concentrations of blueberry were found to have reduced levels of the factor which indicates oxidative damage in the brain. Researchers have gone so far as to make the following statement; "results suggest that the consumption of blueberries and perhaps other fruits and vegetables could have a positive neurological impact on the ageing brain, Alzheimer's disease, and other neurological disorders."

Will blueberries keep our dogs' mind active? Will they protect his eyesight? It's hard to say conclusively, although the scientific evidence is pointing in that direction. We may never have all the facts, but for now it sure seems like supplementing our dog's diets with anti-oxidant rich foods such as blueberries is the right way to go.

2) Next tip is for all of those gunners working for their dogs pleasure of retrieving downed birds that they have so diligently found and put in the air-SLOW DOWN-yes that's right slow down. Let the bird get airborne for about a count of three and you will find that a lot more hit the ground dead not running.

As we are about to start another training year in earnest for upcoming trials and tests it is easier on you and your dog if we all remember to relax and have fun at all times when training. If you control the environment and channel the behavior in the directions wanted-and keep from interfering too much your partner will practically train him or herself. Some frequently practiced steps in training that are totally counterproductive to producing a finished gundog are-in no particular order of importance:

1. Giving an unlimited diet of uncontrolled retrieves "to develop his marking."
All of our dogs are born with the instinct to retrieve, and this will not improve upon it. You are really just building in breaking.

2. Thinking that obedience is not necessary in a gun dog.
Wrong it is essential in all dogs field or otherwise. Behaving on command is or should be a way of life for your dog not just a 15 min. drill once a day or just before field training.

3. Repeating commands to get a response:

Excellent way to train your dog to respond on the sixth or seventh repetition. One command-then trigger response by correction not repetition.

4. Shouting to get a response; hand in hand with step 3, one usually encounters yelling.

Lack of response of the dog isn't because they didn't hear you.////////// This is usually-assuming you have trained for the correct response-not a hearing issue but dominance issue and should be corrected now with a mild correction rather than waiting until you've come unglued and firmly enforce the trait of "only respond when yelled at" trait.

5 Changing voice tone to begging when dog is out of reach

When the dog gets far enough away we think he's beyond our control, we revert to an asking tone . They understand all too well that tone and that signals "don't obey" Here is where consistency is the key in your training. ALWAYS project yourself as if you are in total control. Act the same and use the same tones as if your dog were on the end of a leash at heel or if he is 200 yards away.

6. Let your dog run around out of control daily "to run off energy" just prior to training.

This is a terrible practice it very likely will or could get the dog killed one day and it trains them to be under control only when tired.. The time you need control is when they are brimming with energy and anticipation.

7. Give 10,000 marked retrieves before starting him on hand signals.

Dogs get a marked retrieve every time they see a bird or dummy fall and thus mark its location. A blind retrieve is justified as soon as they are steady and doing doubles on land and water. Because blind retrieves are a matter of trust more than anything else.

8. Testing instead of training:

Typical way of teaching say long retrieves is to go out and try it. A helper throws a 150 yd. bumper and you send dog and he stops and starts hunting at the distance of his longest retrieve so far. Now you've tested rather than trained and you've built in failure.

Training to the right results should have gone:

Remember the longest retrieve so far has been say 30 yds.

Send thrower out to 150 yds

Walk out with dog to 30 yds from thrower

Helper shoots and throws

Send dog for 30 yd retrieve you know he will win

Back up to 60 yds and repeat

Continue backing up from thrower in 45 yd increments until on the fourth retrieve the dog is now doing a full 150 yd.

Properly structured lesson are a success, and you and the dog maintain confidence and trust

Changing the rules in the hunting field.

None of us are guilty here are we?....-no, not much :)

Many of us invest hundreds of hours and sometimes dollars to train our dogs and then throw away the rules when we hunt. We forget what a leash or collar is for and let the dog indulge in whatever disobedience he fancies.

We train for steady and wait until sent to retrieve. Then we get in the blind and let the dog retrieve while the duck is falling and after a few repetitions our dog is now in control of the retrieve and we are just the shooter. Our dogs need to be under control in all situations wherever we are for their safety and our enjoyment. So folks just enjoy and relax and your year will be great.