

Training Notes and Suggestions

Effective training starts with clearly defined goals and understanding the process of how NAVDHA works. If you are new, or not sure what to say. That is okay. Never be afraid to ask questions. NAVDHA works on the premise of helping each other train. So being able to define your accomplishments for each training session is extremely helpful. Here are some primers for each level of your training:

Totally New / Natural Ability

- First bird exposure
- First water exposure
- Improving swimming confidence
- Introducing / improving steadiness (*aka staying still*)
- Exposure to gunfire
- Tracking (Pheasant track)

Intermediate / UPT / UT

- Introduction to ducks
- Improving steadiness
- Dog is not steady to flush, wing, shot, fall, etc.
- Specific UT activity (*e.g., training steady by the blind*)
- Search (Duck Drag)

Invitational

- You probably know what you need to work on at this point. If not, let's talk.

When you attend a training, the Training Director will place you in the group that they believe will most-effectively facilitate your progress based on your response to our training questionnaire.

A typical training weekend starts off with a safety briefing and some introductions. From here the attendees will break out into groups based upon skill level and training needs. Each group will have a training leader to help keep things moving along and give assistance especially to those who are new. Groups will break off and go to their respective training location. Typically, training continues throughout the day with a short pause for lunch. Since we are all at various stages of training and have several goals, the training groups may switch from table to field to water from morning to afternoon. Keep this in mind when ordering birds as you may need none to several different birds for your respective training activity.

Typical Table Work:

The goal of table work is to establish strong foundations for your dog in a controlled environment. From the table, training is transitioned to the field where these base skills are tested and refined to fit all the infinite possibilities of real work situations. Most table work is done without the use of birds. The use of bumpers and other training aids are used. However, there are several training situations that both live and dead birds, typically pigeons, are used to instill the strong foundations that are key to having a well-trained dog.

Typical Field Sequence:

A typical field sequence starts with 3-4 planted birds out in the field. These can either be dizzied birds or placed in traps. Once everything is set, the handler can release the dog. From here the field sequence will change based upon on what you are trying to accomplish. Whether you are working on bird intro, pointing, steadiness, etc. the handler is in charge of each bird interaction. Once a point is established, the handler will position gunners to create a safe and hopefully successful shot at the flushed bird. After each

interaction, it is best to regain control of your dog and give the dog water. Now is the perfect time to adjust your strategy if the interaction did not go as planned. Once through the field, the handler should leash the dog and return to their dog to the vehicle/crate/tie-out.

Typical Water Sequence:

Water work can greatly vary from stage to stage. So, there is no actual typical scenario. For NA dogs, water work is as simple as getting the dog used to entering the water freely where it is swimming on its own without touching the bottom. Using bumpers thrown 8-10ft from shore is usually sufficient. Occasionally a live pigeon will be used to encourage puppies to swim the first time. For UT dogs, water work starts with short visual retrieves of a duck to boost a dog's confidence in swimming and retrieving a bird to hand. From here, the water sequence is expanded to a hidden duck out on the water with some distraction shots to keep the dog steady. The goal is to have the dog searching the water continuously for 10+ minutes without help or commands from the handler. If a duck is found the dog must retrieve the bird to hand.

Helpful Notes to Keep Training Moving:

As with most things, our time training can be limited. We should all try to maximize time during any training session. To help keep things moving here are a couple tips:

- **On-Deck:** If possible, the next handler in the running order should stay back and prepare for their turn to run. Get your dog ready. Grab your water bottle. Be at the starting line with your leashed dog for when the group returns.
- **Back-planting:** The on-deck handler should give their birds to someone else to back-plant birds for them. This way as one dog is exiting the field, the next can enter.
- **Clean-up:** Please make an effort to offer assistance cleaning up. Whether it be picking up traps in the field, returning equipment to the trailer, breaking down tables, or even just picking up some trash. This is extremely helpful.