

## Laying a Foundation of Obedience for Natural Ability and Utility Dogs

### RMC NAVHDA – March Training Day

RMC NAVHDA's mission is to help each handler develop their versatile dog into an efficient, well-adjusted hunting companion. **Remember that you are the primary trainer of your dog** – and the chapter is a support system to provide the tools and help you reach your goals. This work list is one of those tools. It provides a training regimen to lay a solid foundation of obedience in your dog – all exercises can be completed in your home and yard. **Consider this your homework; use it as guidance in the coming months. This is a continuation of February so refer to that information for the beginning stages of each progression.** Once your dog masters all these exercises, it will be well on its way to future success in both field and water!

#### Recommendations for Success:

- At least 3 practice sessions per week, 15-30 minutes long
- End each session with success. Keep training fun for your dog! Use more sessions, of shorter length for young dogs/pups – and remember, stop immediately if dog's interest lags.
- Create a calendar to track your progress. This will also aid in making sure you train all the different obedience sections frequently.

#### Recall

- a. On-leash, with dog a few steps from you, call its name, followed by "come". If dog comes toward you, praise AFTER dog arrives at your desired finishing position (in front of you or at heel and either standing or sitting as you prefer). If dog does not come to you, a short tug on leash as you repeat command (praise when dog gets to your side, not before). If dog continues to ignore, issue "come" command and pull in dog to your desired finish position calmly; praise when dog they get to the correct position. Repeat as needed till dog comes on first command.
- b. On-check cord, repeat steps in (a) above, but with dog at increasing distance, until dog is coming every time. Start this in a calm setting without distractions; gradually, work in distractions. Some trainers use small treats to reward dogs at this stage.
- c. As the dog becomes consistent returning to handler with the full length of the check cord, begin incorporating a "whistle tone" as you ask for the recall. Make sure it is a consistent whistle for example. Three short blasts
- d. Off-leash, when dog is reliable on check cord and handler has another mean of enforcement (e-collar) if dog doesn't respond. This step is only for dogs that have been through a proper e-collar introduction.

Learning leash manners: Having our dog's focus and attention is key for loose leash walking. Build the amount of time your dog will keep its focus on you as you are walking slowly and consistently.

- a. Dog stays in position at handler's side while speeding up, slowing down, turning circles both directions.
- b. Increase the length of lead between the handler's hand and the dog's collar. If the dog surges forward and pulls on the leash, turn into or away from the dog to teach them to pay attention to the handler and where you are at. Don't hold consistent pressure on the dog's leash. That will teach them to pull more. Short, quick tugs on the leash to get the dog's attention and use a treat to help the dog maintain proper heeling position.
- c. Leave it – (use two lines of decoys and dog walks down the middle saying leave it if dog leaves handler's side) while on heel and practice "leave it" during training time.

#### Basic Land/Water Bumper Training Progression (It's Not Just a Progression, It's a Game)

Required Stuff: Bumpers (variety)

Time (5-15 min of undivided attention)

Quest for Good Water/Preparing the Game Space (Water):

- a. Gradual transition to depth
- b. Sand/Gravel bottom/Clear of just-below-the-surface hazards
- c. Distraction-free

## Continue Retrieve of Bumpers on Land

- a. "Play Bumpers"/Longer retrieves in confined area off-lead, include "The Finish"/
- b. "Play Bumpers" introduce "Sit"/"Stay"/(throw bumper)/\*\*release word; physical contact\*\*/retrieve/"The Finish"
- c. Transition to "Play Bumpers"/Short retrieve on-lead in open area (start short and work to the end of the lead), continue working on Sit/Stay/\*\*release\*\*/"The Finish"/"Play Bumpers"
- d. "Play Bumpers"/Short retrieves in open area, off-lead, continue working on Sit/Stay/\*\*release\*\*/"The Finish"/"Play Bumpers"
- e. "Play Bumpers"/Longer retrieves in open area off-lead, continue working on Sit/Stay/\*\*release\*\*/"The Finish"/"Play Bumpers"
- f. Chasing = Game Over/Back to Check Cord

## Things to Remember

- a. Finish sessions with "Play Bumpers", it's still a game
- b. Keep sessions short/Don't play until the dog is tired/Leave the dog wanting more

## Whoa

- a. Go up and down the table with energy and enthusiasm one time. On the next time up the table, stop the dog at the end of the table with proper body language and a whoa. The goal is to have the dog stop with no feet moving after the command. If they move, handler is going to pick the dog up and gently set them on the table in the spot prior to movement.
- b. Dog is able to stand on whoa while handler walks all the way around the puppy (you can use a coffee table, place board, whoa table...be creative in finding a place where dog is off the ground and knows the boundary where he can't step off of as you move around)

## Down

- c. Put puppy on a down/stay for 30 minutes 3 times per week minimum (daily if possible). This can be done while relaxing in the evening while watching TV. Work this on the floor with a foot on their leash and correct them every time they attempt to stand or sit. This exercise will help you work on controlling your puppy's emotions and discipline to remain relaxed until another command is given. Be sure to give release command and lots of praise at the end of your 30 minutes even if you had to battle your puppy the whole time.

## Sit/stay

- a. Place dog in "sit", walk out of room for few seconds, return and release. Repeat, gradually increasing time handler is out of dog's sight.
- b. Introduce distractions.

## Place

- a. Continue extending the distance the dog walks to place without assistance from the handler until they are going to place the entire distance of the check cord.
- b. Start extending the time the dog stays on place before releasing. All 4 feet need to stay on place until you release the dog.
- c. Walk around the dog while they are on place.
- d. Move the place board to a new location. Go back to earlier steps and repeat progression. This is going to help the dog's understanding of the command regardless of its surroundings.

## Beginning of trained retrieve: hold and carry; release (on table)

- a. Dog will accept gloved hand in mouth. Start working on step A of hold...dog will allow a wooden dowel or toy (not bumpers!!!) in their mouth and will hold without chewing or mouthing until handler commands out
- b. Lengthen time of holding and make the heeling more challenging, such as turns, moving faster up and down the table, jumping on and off the side of the table, etc

Drags for Natural Ability Puppies – This is an important first step in teaching mental stability for Puppies. Drags allow for the handler to lay a scent trail that is consistent and the handler knows exactly where the trail is.

- a. Keep the puppy calm and moving slowly in a forward progression towards the bird on a check cord. We don't want puppies to be searching for the bird but slowly working ground scent to find the bird.
- b. Practice 1-2 drags/tracks per week with a dead bird, wing, pheasant scent, hot dog, beef or chicken broth, or anything that has strong scent to get puppy focused on the track you leave. Continue to evaluate dog's performance to track and not search and only lengthen the track as the puppy shows the ability to stay on task for longer periods of time

Drags for Utility Dogs - (Only for dogs that are reliably retrieving to hand – WAIT on this exercise until your dog is retrieving well). Only work a few drags 1-2 times/week – quit if dog appears bored with the work. Most dogs progress on this work very quickly.

- a. Dog should follow short (25-foot) drag to bird at start of this exercise... if not, shorten drag until dog is successful in locating bird.
- b. Gradually lengthen drag till 100 feet – can reuse drag track location if necessary.
- c. Repeat until dog is successful 3-4 times in a row.
- d. Place 1 bend in drag track, shorten drag to 50 feet... repeat until dog is successful 3-4 times in a row.
- e. Gradually lengthen track, adding a slight obstacle (such as through a brush line, into dense grass. Do NOT try to overcomplicate track at this point (circles or tight U's in track) as this can be counterproductive – dog may begin to rely on a search with eyes/air scent instead of tracking with nose

Remain by blind

- a. Set up blind to place dog nearby, with a berm, tree, or other object nearby to shield handler if needed. This can be used to progressively work on remain by blind (which is nothing more than a sit/stay). Initial efforts with a dog should be to heel dog up to the blind, position dog in a (sit/stay, whoa, or down) and back away...correct dog as soon as it moves; praise for remaining in place until handler returns to dog's side. This is repeated with incremental increases in the distance the handler moves away from dog (have each handler do about 3 repetitions, then move on to next handler in turn).
- b. If handler and dog have experience and confidence in the dog staying for a basic walk-away, and want to introduce gunfire, repeat the above with handler holding a shotgun with blanks. Have handler move about 30 feet away from dog, then fire one shot. If dog stays, handler returns to dog and praises; if not, correct dog (helpers are important here and may be needed for timely correction of dog); repeat 2-3 times/dog.
- c. Dogs that have been through the remain by blind may be ready for the sequence of handler leaving dog at blind and moving behind an object that obscures the dog's sight, then firing a shot. Correct/praise depending on dog's performance. Repeat, with an increase in number of shots before handler returns to dog's side. Have handler count to 10 between shots to draw out sequence.

Steadiness on birds

- a. Tether a chukar or pigeon with a 10-foot string and long pole. Heel dog up onto a training table; whoa dog in middle of table. Swing bird onto end of training table – dog is expected to stay steady. Move/twitch bird; tease dog by lifting bird away from table top, then returning it. Correct dog for any movement of feet; praise for steadiness.
- b. The above scenario will only be conducted for a few minutes/dog. Dogs that are steady under this drill should be moved to the ground; place bird upwind and allow dog to point it. Sweep bird skyward, allowing it to fly to end of string and then land. Correct any movement of dog's feet; praise for steadiness. Repeat this process several times, but keep the drill short (5 minutes or less/dog).