



PLATTE VALLEY HUNTING RETRIEVER CLUB NEWSLETTER

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“SIT!” “STAY!” “READ!”

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Calendar of Events

**Monthly Meeting
October 20, 2008
7 p.m.
Front Range
Community College in
Westminster**

**Annual Meeting-
January 2009
Date to be decided.**

Table of Contents:

**Message From the
President.....2**

**Letter from the Vice
President.....2**

**Pups: Thinking Finished
From The Very
Beginning-Part 2 by
Rich
Carpenter.....3-5**

Editor's Letter.....5

Thoughts from Our President

September & October 2008

The drooling waiting and sleepless nights are over now. No, not because your entire 401K disappeared on Wall Street, but because waterfowl season is open. Bluebird days aside, it probably felt good to get out opening day and at least get a shot at the local ducks. Of course I wouldn't know because come opening day I was stuck in a hotel room in Chicago because I couldn't get a flight home on Friday. With the weather this weekend maybe the northern ducks will arrive early this year. Hey a little unrealistic optimism never hurts. Do as I say not as I do. Get out and show the dog why you feed him every day.

I could not pass up the opportunity this month to mention how truly lucky PVHRC has been to have Rich Carpenter among our very own. If you read his article in the Hunting Retriever Magazine this month you will get a lump in your throat as he talks of old dogs fading and new pups arriving and all that that means to hunters. Not that there are not many other members of our little club that make our time together great, Rich just has a way of boiling it down to what makes a water fowler and his dogs tick. Thanks Rich, and let's hope Roux is not quite as ready to fade away as you make it sound in the article.

It is time to start thinking about next year and the PVHRC activities. WE will have the Annual General Membership Meeting in January. The exact date will be set at the Board meeting next week. At the Annual Meeting we will elect new officers and Board members as well as work on hunt test dates and training calendars. Please take some time to think about how you can step up and make your unique contribution. As in all

organizations the core leadership has to turn over occasionally and that has been happening over the last couple of years. There is no better time to seize the opportunity than now. If you are interested in having a bigger role in the club just mention it to me or any of the other officers and we will hook you up. The same goes if you have an idea that you think would make the club better. With new officers on board yours might just be the idea that opens up great new things.

Now Some Thoughts from the Vice President

It is an Election Year!!! YEEHAW!!!

Yeah, I know, you already know that....you have seen all the Obama and McCain ads helping you decide who is President of our fine country. BUT, it is also an election year for PVHRC too! Please plan to attend the Annual Meeting in January (date TBD), but in the meantime, please consider how **you** can get better involved. I believe the terms are complete for President, Vice President and Treasurer and we will be electing the members of the Board. Another thing that we will be recruiting is Hunt Chairman and Hunt Secretary for our next year's hunt tests as well as putting together the calendar of events for the year (we will need Training Coordinators).

Please, please, do step up and get involved. Not only is it a good way to meet the folks in the club, but it is a way to help those needing help to get help from those that can give it. Like they say, you get out of PVHRC what you are willing to put into it. Remember, this is an all volunteer organization so it needs you as a volunteer to give of your time and talents. You might say "But I don't know how to". Since when did

that matter!!! ☺ Everyone who first took a job did so without previous experience and there are many in the club with experience that will help you succeed. No doubt, you have witnessed or participated in tailgate discussions where someone said "What PVHRC ought to do is....." Well it is now your opportunity to help get whatever that was discussed at the tailgate accomplished or at least understood why it would not get done.

Again, please step up and "get some skin in the game". It is the right thing to do and the club could greatly benefit from your time and talent.

Thanks,
Mike Brockman

Helpful Hints on Training a Pup:

Pups: Thinking Finished From The Very Beginning –Part 2 by Rich Carpenter

Again, I asked Rich if he would do up a little article regarding his journey of training his new pup and he so graciously agreed. – Thanks Rich.

Puppy teaching is sort of like watching the hour hand on a watch. While you are watching it, there seems to be no movement at all. Yet, if you come back in a while it has moved considerably.

When you've been away from pups and working with a finished dog for 10 years, it's easy to forget that they lack even just the bare essentials. You really can't train, because the pup doesn't sit, it isn't steady, it won't come, and its attention span is essentially non-existent. You just have to very, very gradually pour stuff into that fuzzy little noggin, starting with little bitty pieces and working gradually up to more complex chunks. As the old saying goes: You can eat the whole hog, but you can't eat the hog whole. My preference is to get to

where we can train with what is probably more shaping behavior early than training, and while to start, the end results are not achieved, through a series of successive approximations we gradually get closer to the eventual goal.

At the Finished level far more failures stack up for issues related to lack of control at almost every hunt test series than ever result up from failure to mark. Breaking, creeping, controlled breaks, switching on diversions, getting eaten up by suction related to cover, terrain, scent, expected retrieve order and poison birds, etc. are all essentially control related problems. But often much of the control or lack thereof stems from how the early training is done and how sequential the exposure and practice has been on the skills that make dealing with the suction possible. Clearly, too, there is exposure, practice and generalization needed to get the final product. Control is not the answer when the young dog's question is "What am I supposed to do?"

While success is so strongly related to control, and I want excellent control over my retriever, I'll be damned if I'll own or run a pig. So, I'm not interested in an extremely heavy-handed collar or physical correction approach. So I must find a reasonable approach that gives me excellent control yet a dog that trains happy and runs stylishly. Others may get the same results in a completely different fashion, and probably more commonly do.

So, I worry and think a lot about that and do a lot of things to gently herd young Din in the right direction. Little pieces begin to fit together. Responses become more reliable. Little behaviors taught one place are generalized to others. Behaviors that at first are choreographed in an order that just happens without the pup choosing to perform the behavior, gradually become behaviors that are chained and associations are forged that will last and be built upon.

I'll wrap up this month by being a little more specific to try to show what some

of these thoughts mean in practice. As I indicated last month, I belong to the school that doesn't believe in letting puppies break for marks, starting as soon as they show they have any retrieving instinct. I don't force true steadiness. It is just that we are playing a game and it's about chasing the rolled up sock, paint roller or puppy dummy, regular dummy or bird WHEN I RELEASE the pup. It's not chase it as it sails through the air. Clearly at the beginning it is purely physical and the pup hasn't even a clue about "sit." Over time, a little more pause is built in with the physical restraint. By then, through treat teaching, "sit" is entering the pups vocabulary and begins to be part of getting ready to go retrieve something. At first it's just to sit, not needing to remain seated. Later encouragement to sit until released is added. Then verbal "sit" is added as the dummy is tossed and if that is successful, "stay" and then the release cue. Years ago field trial dogs were both released for marks and sent for blinds with "Back." I think today it's almost as universal that fully trained retrievers are sent on blinds with the "Back" command and released for a mark on their call name or another selected cue word. I don't use the call name, as I've never seen that not at least once result in what is essentially a retrieve at the wrong time. But specific words are not important. What is important is that the dog recognizes that it is being RELEASED on a mark, and COMMANDED to go, under the control of the handler, on a blind. Most will cue the dog to a blind retrieve coming with a verbal cue such as "dead bird" or "blind retrieve," etc. But this will come later, and I'll mix "back" and his "Sky" release some soon to help give the pup the idea to go retrieve on that command as lining is started later.

Anyway, it's a gradual, gentle exercise in shaping the young pup's behavior by successive approximations toward the goal.

Din is 4 months and a week old. He will usually sit with no restraint from the check cord when the dummy is thrown, and

usually sits with no restraint as Roux is sent on "Chaf" and he waits for a throw that releases him with "Sky." Day before yesterday, we went out in the open area north of our house and I had him sit for a little mark. But this time instead of throwing it standing beside him, I moved in front of him several paces, quietly repeated "stay" and threw the dummy over my shoulder behind me. He sat and I sent him with "Sky" release cue. I was pleasantly surprised. So we did it three more times and gradually increased to where I was about 30 feet out front. Had he broken, I'd have hoped to intercept him before he got the dummy, since he was dragging a light cord. But, had he escaped, one slip up will generally not make a criminal. Why do this? Well, it's just part of becoming accustomed to waiting to be sent. The other benefit is that he will reach the age where I'll want to stretch him on marks further than I can throw, and his being steady for a remote throw opens up "poor man marks" so even if I have no one to train with, he gets a wide variety of distances and doesn't begin to expect every mark at the distance I can throw a dummy.

Is he reliably steady, either throwing from his side or remote? Of course not, but he's getting there and, in the process, never had a hand laid on him or jerked around on the lead. He just gradually "found himself doing it." We'll get this taught better and generalized through repetition in different locations. Then in the 2nd Action of the particular collar-conditioning program we use, we'll build in even more reliable steady, which we'll further cement with the 3rd Action of the conditioning. Then we'll uniformly insist on a high standard from that time on. But you can bet your butt I'll still have him on lead when he runs his first Started test next spring! Remember, this isn't the only way, and many successful trainers feel as strongly about not steadying the young dog to soon as I feel about doing it from the beginning. Similarly most collar

programs do not start as young as this one. You need to choose.

This is getting long, so we'll end it here. Next month I'll give some specifics of play teaching on a table being used to gradually get a pup to where at 4 months old it shows it understands left and right combined verbal/arm casting well enough to be steady and be cast to the memory treat rather than the last treat down. Again, it is not the only way to introduce casting, just one way and one that works for me.



Letter from the Editor:

There was no meeting in September, so no meeting minutes are enclosed in this newsletter.

Again, if you have anything you would like to see in this year's newsletters, please let me know. If you have any helpful tips about working with your dog(s) you would like to share, please send them to me. If you have hunting equipment for sale that you would like to post in the newsletter, send me the information. My e-mail is vanderpooltom@msn.com.

Last year's hunting season. I hope this year's season is a successful one for everyone.

