

Whelp to 8 Weeks

Holding and petting is about all you can do until the pups can hear and see.

After that (about 3 weeks old) any kind of noise stimulation is good. Start fairly quiet and increase volume over time. Examples are banging pots and pans, running the vacuum, radio, TV, and gun fire at a distance.

Toys that squeak or are soft and fuzzy can also be given. Make sure mom is not possessive of the toys.

Bird wings or real birds can also be thrown for the pups at about 6 weeks old. For young/small pups dove's, pigeons, or teal are great.

At 7-8 weeks live birds can be used.

Always praise pup when it has something in its mouth, stop praising when he drops it or you take it away.

Let pups explore in the house and outside.

If the weather permits pups should be introduced to water. Air temp of at least 70 and water at least 60 degrees is best.

Puppies should go to new homes no sooner than 8 weeks. Any earlier and the pups do not get the needed dog on dog social learning they need.

8 weeks to 6 Months

At this age range I like to try to keep everything fun and positive. The only exception is if you are having trouble with the pup jumping on people or running away. These 2 things can injure people or the pup and may need to be worked on before 6 months old.

As earlier, praising when pup retrieves anything. Praise when object is in mouth, stop praising when pup drops/releases object.

Using treats to teach Obedience commands and casting work very well at this age.

Introduce and socialize pup to as many different people, places, and things as possible.

Wait for warm weather to introduce pup to water. Water 60 degrees or warmer is preferred.

Introduce pup to a collar, you may not want to leave it on when unattended.

Introduce pup to a lead, start by letting the pup just drag it.

6 Months and up (age is less of a concern than experience)

Begin using negative reinforcement.

Wait for warm weather to work young dogs in water. A water temp of 60 degrees is preferred.

Always teach before expecting compliance, especially when correcting with the electric collar.

Do NOT use the electric collar to teach, only to reinforce known commands.

Use the least amount of negative reinforcement as possible to get compliance, but do not nag either.

Use real birds for retrieving as often as possible, fliers especially.

Be consistent in your expectations.

Train in multiple places, at least 3.

Wagon Wheel and Walking Baseball drills should be done on a regular basis for the dog's entire competitive life.

When hunting over water in sub-freezing weather a neoprene vest is great. It is a good idea even for the most cold tolerant dog.

Competitive Hunt Test and Field Trial dogs can easily be hunted as long as standards are kept to the same level as in training.

A balance of positive and negative reinforcement needs to be found, for each dog, to get the best results in training.

Every dog is an individual. You need to train the dog you are training. (Evan Graham)

Pick 1 training program and follow it.

Pups 1st hunt should be "for the dog". If the dog starts to have problems or issues it is best to quit and try again another day, after more training to correct the issues.

Vary the distances for marks and blinds from 0 to as far out as you want to have control.

Vary the terrain that you train on. Hills, flat, across trails, high cover, low cover, etc.....

Keep a log!!!!!!

Try not to compare the dog you are training to other dogs. Every dog is an individual.

Advice from people who do not know your dog, usually is not the best.

Be honest about what you have taught the dog, do not expect too much.

Obedience training continues throughout the dog's career.

