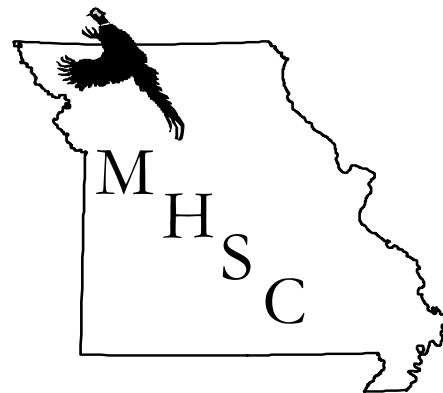


MISSOURI HUNTING SPANIEL CLUB

MAY 2007 NEWSLETTER



FROM DA PREZ

First of all, I would like to say THANK YOU for all those that attended our inaugural Missouri Hunting Spaniel Club hunt test weekend and as well to all those that pitched in and helped with running the event. As some of you know, I was feeling "under the weather" and was less active than I would have liked. We moved smoothly through the day and we had compliments on the timely finishing on Sunday so everyone could get on the road home. It was neat to see the excitement from handlers that got their first "Pass" and as well, those that finished titles.

As mentioned further in this Newsletter, we are planning our Hunt Test for this Fall. It seems that the first weekend in October has less conflicts and the potential of somewhat cooler weather than a date in September. With the hunting season starting up later in October, it is a balancing act trying to pick the weekend. The exact location is undetermined. The Missouri Conservation land that I had on the "short list" is unavailable that weekend. However, I am sure we can find a location that will work and provide good water and good land cover.

I am currently working on a consistent place to train so that more training opportunities will be available in the Springfield area. Soccer is winding down for my daughter but Sporting Clays is picking up for Taylor. We will continue to move forward in scheduling activities and events for the Club.

I would also like to encourage you all to look for opportunities to provide your assistance in conservation groups activities in your area. I will be helping out on Outdoor Day at a local conservation area in September. They will have all kinds of activities for families and kids to participate in and they will also get a chance to watch some dogs retrieving and doing some retrieving drills. We need to let people know that the spaniels can be a very

functional hunting dog and that there is a venue for field work for flushing spaniels. You never know who you might meet. You might find a great hunting partner with private land access in prime pheasant country or even a training partner to toss bumpers or gun for you while you train your dog. Also, assisting with events for Quail Forever, Pheasants Forever, Ducks Unlimited, Quail Unlimited or other local dog groups will also help get the word out about MHSC.

Our website, www.missourihuntingspanielclub.com is a long name but easy to find. There have been some people that have found MHSC through the web site. The website has become a good avenue to get information to people and I will continue to update with the Fall Hunt Test information as we progress through the summer. If any of you have training pictures or hunting pictures you would like to have posted on the site, feel free to forward those to me and I will get them posted. If you have a "photo folder" on one of the upload photo websites like photobucket, I can just add the link to the website and then people can go to your site and view the pictures.

With the temperatures climbing and ticks (and chiggers) crawling, spending time in the field might not be your idea of fun through the summer. There are some things you can do to still enjoy your dog without the inconveniences of some insects. In the next few weeks I will share some things I have done through the years to work in some "dog time" around family activities during the warm months. I will post them on the

website. If anyone else has some helpful tips, feel free to forward them to me and Chris.

We have come a long way and we will continue to grow and have fun with the spaniels. Remember, the goal should be to have a better hunting dog and to have fun with your dog.

Sincerely,

Tim Baker

WE DID IT!

Our first AKC licensed event is in the books. The Missouri Hunting Spaniel Club successfully hosted our inaugural hunt test at Whetstone Conservation Area on March 31st & April 1st, 2007. By all accounts and impressions, we did a great job. In perspective, we really have covered a lot of ground since our inception just a few years ago. From a club with newbie status to providing a polished event for spaniel enthusiasts to enjoy...what a ride!

Thanks to everyone who helped make this happen!

Judges: Pat Bramwell, Randy Capsel, Brad Mirth, and Bob Murdock

Bird Planters: Taylor Baker, Tim Baker, Tim Ripperger, Terry Pierce, and Lisa Zell

Marshall: Cheryl Clark

The Shaggers: We appreciate everyone who pitched in to shag birds for our event. Especially to young Mr. Wheeler who earned the golden shoulders award for most beats shagged!

Guns: Bryan West, Joe Smith, Tim Baker, and Chris Zell

HT Chairperson: Lisa Zell

HT Secretary: Jackie O'Guin

HT Photographer: Ray Takmajian

Check out our website for all the great photos taken by Ray Takmajian!
www.missourihuntingspanielclub.com

CLUB ACTIVITIES

What do you want to do between our official field events? What direction would you like to see the club take? We want to hear from everyone. In addition to hunt tests we could plan:

- club training days
- sporting clays/gunning events
- judging seminar
- training seminar; or
- fun trial

If you have any ideas please let us know!

WHISTLES

By Terry Pierce

Whistling is a basic means of communication for many inhabitants of our planet. Grunts and guttural sounds probably predated this sound. Modulating a constant breath of air with the tongue, lips and teeth produces whistling. Later, it was discovered that by combining the fingers or a blade of grass (as all delighted children know) we could change or enhance the sound, pitch or volume.

I suspect we communicated by grunts and whistling a very long time before we developed words. There is something basic and primitive about whistling that bridges that communication gap and is easily understood by both dog and man.

I don't suppose we told the first camp dogs to "hup" or "hunt 'em up". I can only muse that it may have been a grunt, a growl or a sharp "ahhh" followed by a facial expression and eye contact to signal intent. Body language surely played a greater part in human communication than today. The canine friend still knows exactly what we signal by our posture, especially if he or she has lost our good graces.

I can imagine our early ancestors sucking the marrow from a small turkey bone and making a startling and surprising sound. It probably scared the "scat" out of him. While showing off his new tool and talent to the other tribe members he must have noticed a visible effect on the camp dogs. This might even have elevated his status and encouraged him to go on to invent the penny whistle, flute, and clarinet and then of course the saxophone, which I find too awkward for the field. The invention of the pan flute, as played by Georghe Zamfir and often spoofed by Johnny Carson, may have overstepped its evolutionary usefulness.

Some people can do all the whistling they need with their lungs and lips. In the 1944 movie "To Have and Have Not", Lauren Bacall told Humphrey Bogart, "You know how to whistle, don't you Steve? You just put your lips together and blow." Followed by a "wolf whistle" from Bogart. Most of us mortals need more help than that.

Today whistles come in many shapes, sizes and decibels. At our last hunt test I followed the gallery and over-heard a judge telling the handler to get a quieter whistle, as he offended the judge's ears. He was using a "Police" style that is very popular for certain breeds.

Turkey bones and animal horns have been used to create these signaling devices for centuries. Metal, plastic, resin and many polymers are used to produce some of our current whistles. I have no doubt that in some future dimension we will be fitted with an imbedded 'chip' that will allow us to produce all kinds of natural and unnatural sounds. I could have used a "turkey call chip" to help me during this past spring hunting season.

My personal preference for my spaniels is the Acme English black plastic #210 ½. It produces a clear crisp tone audible over many distracting noises. For a backup, I like a buffalo horn whistle. It produces a louder, longer carry sound, especially necessary

when our dog decides to chase a rabbit across the county.

My nephew, Ray, who taught me all I know about whistles and dog training, says the whistle is the last piece of gear he puts on when preparing for the hunt. It signifies to him and the dog "It's show time, so let's rock and roll". The whistle provides him with a tool that signals his intentions in a very simple, direct and understandable way. Ray, asked his guru, Ben Martin, a well-known professional trainer from Ohio, why his dog missed the last command, Ben replied with a question. "Did you have your whistle in your mouth?" When Ray replied "No.", Ben said, "It sounds like operator error."

The whistle is possibly the most personal instrument in the hunting / dog training arsenal because you carry the whistle in your mouth. Like a toothbrush or a comb you tend not to share or borrow these.

The next time you put your whistle to you lips give homage to that hairy, fowl eating, marrow sucking, club carrying caveman ancestor who gave us this fine instrument and remember, its so easy to use, even a dog handler can do it.

FALL HUNT TEST

We're considering two to three locations in southwest Missouri to hold our Fall Hunt test. We haven't settled in on a date for sure, but the first weekend in October is our current choice.

What we do know is that we're going to need a few extra hands for our fall event. **Here Ye, Here Ye, Calling all Interested Members!** We're hoping that we can get about three members to become more involved in keeping MHSC on the path. Looks like we're going to need a Marshall, HT committee members, one gunner, and an assistant bird planter. Please contact Tim, Chris, or Lisa for more information.

CONDITIONING DOGS

By George K. Hobson

Keeping our dogs healthy and well exercised is a concern to all owners, whether the dog is a house pet or a working dog. Exercise is necessary for a physically healthy dog, and a mentally healthy one as well. While some of the behavioral issues I see in dogs that are pets are connected to the lack of proper physical exercise, in hunting dogs that lack of exercise can be life threatening.

I recently went on an opening day dove hunt, and did not take a dog. It was ninety degrees and no shade was available: a combination that was perilous to even a well-conditioned dog. The combination of high temperatures, humidity, and lack of frequent opportunity to cool down is a dangerous condition for working dogs, and a situation that should be considered by all owners.

A year-round conditioning program should be a part of every dog's life. Especially for the working dog, that means both exercise and acclimatization. Many owners of hunting dogs keep them in-house, and I'm one who has done so in the past. Regardless of the reason for keeping an indoor dog, the effects on the dog's ability to handle the change to outside conditions must be recognized. In my discussions with veterinarians, there has been a consensus that as few as three hours a day in an air-conditioned home can adversely affect a dog's ability to deal with as little as a ten degree higher outside temperature. While this varies with breeds, and other aspects such as cloud cover, wind, and humidity, it has been my rule-of-thumb for a number of years.

Physical exercise programs must be orientated to the expected work. For upland dogs the daily ground to be covered is roughly at least four times that covered by the hunter. During most hunting the dog's line of travel will more difficult than the hunters, and with some breeds the ground covered will be much more than four times

the amount. It's not unusual to have the dogs working in cover that is more difficult than the hunter is experiencing, and thus more physically strenuous. I certainly have sent my dogs up the sides of steep hills and down into (and back out of) valleys while I took the easier path. Their four-wheel drive made it look easy, but it nonetheless was an increased level of physical stress during any give hunt. The weekend hikers that may jog for fitness with their canine companion during the week, need to consider similar aspects for their dog as well.

I use an ATV to accomplish some of the conditioning for dogs in my kennel. It's a good way to get a check on an individual dog's physical status as well as have a standard for evaluating a dog's level of conditioning. There are commercial rigs available for ATV conditioning of dogs, and I often see them advertised with a mount behind the driver. Having both a front and rear rig is most convenient in kennels with many dogs to condition, but I only run a front set up because I want to watch each dog as an individual.

The conditioning of a working dog's feet are just as important as other aspects of good health, and deserve special attention. Dogs that are exercised on soft ground may not develop the toughness of pad that is required for long periods on new ground that is rocky, or even a different soil type. Concrete floors in kennels, and homes with extensive hard-surface floors, are places where the dogs feet tend to result in wider spaces between the toes, and smooth pad surfaces. Since I tend to take a dog with me everywhere I go, I'm also concerned about requiring the dog to walk on hot surfaces in the summer. An asphalt parking lot on a ninety-degree day will have a surface temperature well above that, and it's a situation I either minimize or avoid. Recognition of the impact of the type of surface for kennel, home, and exercise will contribute to the development of a tight foot and a pad with a toughened exterior, and less chance of injury.

How effective is walking or jogging in exercising a dog? There is no single, clear answer for all dogs, but it is plain that all exercise is beneficial. What is adequate for a Boston Terrier is not equal to the needs of a Greyhound for even moderate physical exertion. The real question is, what is the exercise goal? That should be answered in specific terms of duration of work and type of terrain to be covered. An hour and one-half hunting over flat farm land for quail does not equal the same time in the canyons of Montana after Sharptail.

As with any athlete, or even would-be athletes, a through physical exam is a prudent prerequisite to a conditioning program. Our canine companions are subject to many of the same ailments of genetics and age as humans. Heart murmurs, arthritis, muscle and tendon injuries, and just plain being tired can all lead to exercise related health problems that can be avoided. Owners should have an exercise goal expressed in terms of their dog's health, and then discuss how to achieve it with a veterinarian knowledgeable about athletic and working dogs. Discussing an anticipated exercise program can alert the owner to potential injuries, and a through wellness exam can identify unknown problems that dictate health considerations.

The following are a few of the considerations for all exercise programs. Young dogs should not participate in jumping exercises until their joints are able to withstand the stress of take off and landing. Previously unexercised older dogs need a gradual introduction to even long walks, much less accompanying their master who is on a bike or jogging. Putting a dog into a harness or engaging in pulling work places strain on joints and ligaments that requires special attention to warm-up and conditioning work. Our canine companions will give their all to please us. We need to consider their ability to do so, and ensure their safety and good health with a sound exercise program.

NEWSLETTER CONTRIBUTIONS

Have an idea for an article? Send it our way! we're always looking for a tasty recipe, hunting tales, or shared experiences.

HUNTING TIP:

FINDING A CRIPPLE

By Chris Zell

Ok. You've winged a rooster into a thick patch of little bluestem bordered by a slough and shelterbelt. The initial search by your four-legged sniffer has drawn blanks. What to do? Well, I've been there...more than once.

A wounded wild rooster is a worthy competitor. I have seen them swim into the middle of large lake, dive underwater, and crawl down badger holes to avoid capture. I once watched a rooster sprint clump to clump in a dried-out cattail slough closely followed by three well seasoned pheasant dogs...never to be found. Yes they get away, and the wild rooster is no comparison to their pen raised counterpart.

Over the years I have sorta kept track of the cripples I have found and those I haven't. Those that I have found have a few common characteristics:

- I haven't spent a lot of time looking for the bird...cluttering the area of the fall with human foot scent.
- I have trusted and followed the initial tracking effort by the dog...even if it lead me from cover to an open area.
- Time is money when it comes to finding a wing-tipped rooster. The sooner the dog is to the area of fall, the sooner it can be tracked. It is not uncommon for a lightly hit rooster to run 200 yds down a corn row. Get there quickly.

That said, here is what I do.

- On the initial line to the retrieve I watch closely (and note) for any indication by the dog that we might have a cripple.
- If the dog comes up empty I stay where I'm at, place my hat on a nearby twig or cattail and mark the line from me to the area of the fall (AOF).
- I slowly proceed on this line towards the AOF while the dog hopefully finds the bird on their second, third effort etc.
- Once I arrive near the AOF, I essentially limit my search to a 180 degree semi-circle of ground that is opposite the direction I came from. Although it happens, I find that a wounded runner does not generally run toward the direction I came from.
- I then work a dog within the semicircle into the wind focusing on any obvious hiding places, but at all times trusting any indication by the dog regardless of the direction. Cover the ground and don't be surprised where your dog takes you.

This sounds somewhat contrived and methodical...but it has worked for me. The odds are challenging if the first effort comes up short but this approach has helped me find a tough bird or two.

FROM THE BAG TO THE TABLE

ITALIAN PHEASANT

By Chris Zell

Place 6 pheasant breasts into a crockpot, add a little water and a dry package of Italian seasoning. Cook on low until the pheasant has become tender enough to shred with a fork. Add 1-2 cups of Italian dressing and a 1/4 cup sweet and sour sauce when you're done shredding. Continue to cook on low for another hour or so, adding additional Italian dressing as needed to maintain moisture.

Goes great in a hamburger bun with some potato salad. Enjoy!

PICKING A PUPPY

By Lisa Zell

Picking a puppy is one of the most important adventures we in the dog game have. Without picking the right pup, we will never accomplish our goals, whether a favorite hunting companion or the next NFC. First is to find an appropriate litter. It is ideal if you can watch the parents work. If their style and responsiveness is pleasing to you, you will be more likely to enjoy the pup. Barring that, titles can help steer you in the right direction. Talking to other knowledgeable dog folks can give you some insight into dogs that you may never meet. Health clearances appropriate for your breed are also important.

After you find the right litter, its time to choose a pup. You probably have a preference for boys vs girls. Don't look at the pups of the opposite gender, it just adds to the confusion. I like to take a pigeon with me to see how the pups react. I will accept a bit of initial nervousness about the strange flapping creature, as long as that soon gives way to hot pursuit. Picking up the bird is not necessary as long as there is avid interest in stopping/catching it. A wing from a pheasant or duck will do in a pinch. Jerk it back and forth on the ground, then give it a 2-3 foot toss AWAY from the pups. I want to see active chasing, and the quicker they try to grab it, the better. I also like a pup that makes eye contact and likes to be near people. All of these things together make for a pup that is eager and willing to learn. Be wary of the shy, retiring pup who seems scared of its own shadow. This pup will often require intense work to make it comfortable with situations away from home.

LAST LAUGH

A burglar is sneaking through this house one night, when out of the darkness comes a voice, "I can see you, and so can Jesus".

The burglar freezes in his tracks and is too frightened to move. After ten minutes, nothing has happened so he moves forward. Again from the darkness comes the voice, "I can see you, and so can Jesus". The burglar is petrified and too frightened to move a muscle.

After thirty minutes, he decides to do something. He backs very slowly and tentatively to the wall and feels around for a light switch. He switches on the light and there in front of him, sits a cocker on the couch, who says, "I can see you, and so can Jesus".

Greatly relieved, the burglar sighs, "It's just a cocker". The cocker looks at the burglar and says, "I might be just a cocker but Jesus is a big German Shepherd".