

What to do with your Bird Dog During off season?

Well, we all are extremely disappointed when our Upland bird season ends and I know if our bird dogs could talk they would tell the same thing. This does not have to be the case, off season training can be a fun and exciting time to help fill those long months off. Whether you go at this like a professional trainer or just a guy with his dog, off season training is an important and fun part of the upland hunting experience. Whichever direction you chose please just choose one, because Imagine you have been sitting around all spring and summer watching all your favorite hunting shows then one day your called to run a marathon. How do you thing you would fair. Probably for most of us a call to 911 would imminent. Well, the same rings true for your favorite hunting buddy

Plan out and execute a good training program for you and your buddy and your next hunting season will be a much more enjoyable and productive season plus you and your buddy will live a healthier, happy life

So do we start immediately after hunting season well, that's up to you but I would recommend a little down time to let you and your buddy recover from your season. Now this also depends on how hard you hunt during the season. I usually start late March into April and continue through the summer. Again giving a short rest to prepare for the fall season. Just like every other athlete the rest period is as equally important as the training

Here are a few tips to help you with your off season training

1. Run Your Dog

Of course this is obvious. This is what your dog loves to do. Plus running them builds up endurance and stamina and keeps your dog psychologically healthy. Beside the internal health benefits, running your dog will increase their pad strength and resistance to various surfaces and conditions. Please be careful during the hot simmer months, this can be a real health hazard to your dog. Take them to the lake and let them swim. They love it and the health benefits are unparalleled

2. Strength Training.

Sign them up for a gold gym membership! Nah just kidding. Rooding is a training exercise which will increase their physical strength and aerobic capacity. Have them pull you around on your bike, sled, skateboard, use your imagination. But please use a Rooding Harness which places the load on the dogs chest rather than on their neck. This allows them to apply more force against resistance and keeps them safe

3. Adjust Their Food Intake.

Probably the single most overlooked factor in dog maintenance and care. Of course during the season when your dog is working and bring calories rapidly we can feed them a high protein/ calorie diet. Come the offseason that same diet will lead to obesity and eventually major health problems.

4. Perfect Your Obedience Training

Obedience training should be a given and your dog should be clear about your commands and responsive. Even the most experienced dogs can always benefit from a review and reinforcement of your basic obedience commands. Use the basics who or hold, come, kennel

and sit. Remember you are your dogs leader and this simple link established will ensure obedience

5. Socialize

Everyone has the belief that socialization is trap o that is taught and emphasized during the puppy years. And is is but socialization is a lifelong learning aspect for the normal development of your hunting partner. The last thing you want or need is to have your dog turn aggressive to people or other dogs. Socialization will also enhance your dogs confidence for all situations they may encounter throughout their lifetime

6. Gear Inspection

Just like your fly fishing or golf gear, the last thing you need is to have a equipment failure while you are hunting. There is no worse feeling than losing your dog because your e collar/gps is not working properly. Each year I inspect all my gear whether its my fly reels or my dogs equipment, even replenish your first aid kit for you and your buddy. Take the time, you will be glad you did!

7. Keep Your Dogs Best Instrument Finely Tuned

Your dogs nose is his greatest asset and long periods of no scent can dull his senses. So what do we do to keep his nose sharp? Try shed hunting. This fun spring activity will keep their olfactory organ sharp and keep them happy! You can also train with live birds such as pigeons. The use of live birds is always a plus that keeps the excitement level up in your bird dog

8. Visit The Vet

Please make sure you visit your vet before any training. Just like yourself , you want to make sure there are no health issues before you start any exercise program. This is also a good time to update any vaccinations , especially the lyme disease treatment. With the increase in tick activity especially here on the East coast this could be a life saver. Check with your vet for any vaccinations that might be of concern

9. Introduce New Products

Off season is the perfect time to introduce any new gear, techniques and products to your hunting buddy such as harnesses, winter boots, dog kennels, ramps. Introducing these products during the off season will allow your biddy to become acquainted with hem slowly

10. One For The Hunter

Work on your connection with your dog, whether it be just some simple commands and how you relay them or just spending time enjoying a long walk or maybe a frisbee or ball toss. The more you are in tuned with each other, the more fun, exciting and productive your next hunting season will be

Most importantly get outside, get into a routine and have fun with your #1 hunting partner

