



Short and Sweet

Working Dog's Diet

A hunting dog is an athlete and should be fed as an athlete. We feed a 30-percent protein and 20-percent fat Purina Pro Plan Performance diet to all of our dogs over six months of age. The amount of food varies from dog to dog, as the metabolism is not identical for each animal. We feed adult dogs once a day at the same time each day. We mix the food with water to make it soupy wet – a dog cannot be over-hydrated!

The amount of food will also vary from feeding to feeding as the workload and the temperature changes. A good rule of thumb is that the dog needs seven-percent more calories for every 10-degree drop in temperature to which he is exposed.

It is unhealthy to feed any sooner than two hours pre-exercise or within one hour post-exercise. A dog should not be fed a He-Man's breakfast before going to the field. This practice will lead to dehydration, overheating, and intestinal stress.

Structure

Dogs thrive on structure and routine. Training sessions should not be long, but they should be frequent. Set up an area in the backyard, basement, or garage where you can train. Place a kennel, a barrel, and some raised platforms in the area. Devise a drill and routine where the dog stands on the barrel. Walk the dog on the raised platforms without your breaking stride, and command, "Whoa." Our initial boards are raised approximately 12 inches. I believe it is easier for the dog to identify the board as where to stop if the board is raised.

Throw a few "kennel" commands into the routine. Three or four such five-minute routines each day will pay huge dividends in the dog's attitude and willingness to be a team player.

Over time we will have incorporated prong collars, pinch collars, the e-collar, and clicker training into the routine. The dog knows the routine, knows what to expect, and as long as the trainer remains upbeat, the dog should respond with enthusiastic compliance and style. Remember: short and sweet sessions – not long bouts of drudgery – is the prescription.

Conditioning

Harness pulling from a four-wheeler is a great way to get a dog into shape – providing he was not obese to start. However, if you do not have access to an ATV and are afraid to ask your spouse for permission to buy one, a welder's cable will do a great job. A six-foot, 10-pound cable can be purchased from any welding supply shop.

Attach the cable to a roading harness at the "O" rings on the side of the harness – not to the neck collar – and take the pup for a run. A six-week program of two days on followed by a day of rest will condition and develop his muscles.

Show the Pup

Make sure your dog understands what you are asking of him before

you correct. Your dog is not a mind reader, so be patient and show your dog the way before disciplining him. Remember: A trainer should never correct for a mistake. Correction is reserved for a lack of effort at something that has already been taught.

Yard and Field

If the dog does not respond to commands at home, it is unrealistic to hope the dog will do the same in the field. Teach compliance in the yard first, and introduce the dog to low-level stimulation in the yard before using the e-collar in the field. ●

Check out George's video training series, available from *The Pointing Dog Journal's* Video Library. The series covers everything you need to know to take your pointing dog from a pup to a finished hunter. For more information on The George Hickox School of Dog Training for Owners and their Dogs, and Stonecreek English setters, pointers, and Labrador retrievers, check out www.georgehickox.com.

