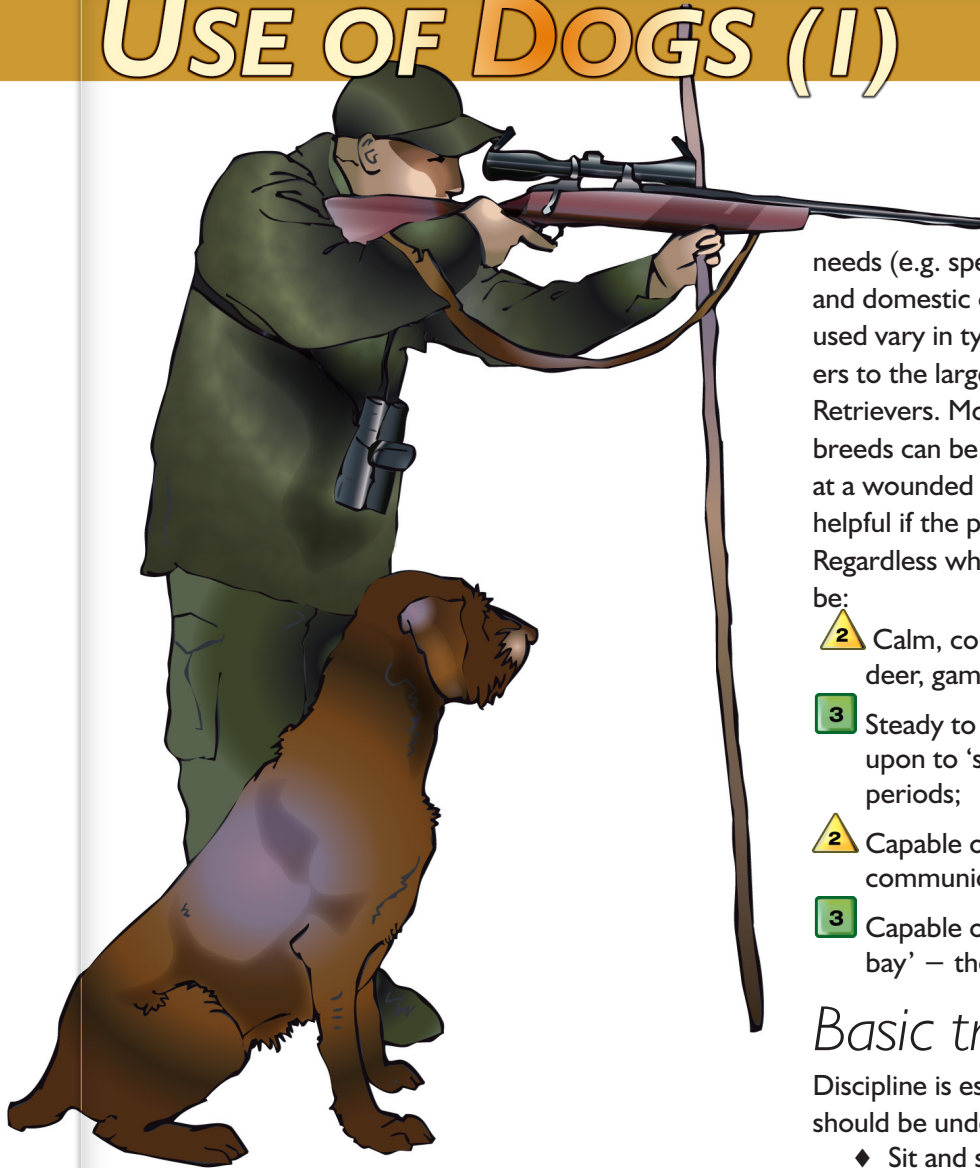




# USE OF DOGS (1)



## Aim

The aim of this guide is to provide information on how trained dogs can be used to aid deer management. The guide also seeks to identify various blood tracking training methods whilst identifying when and how dogs should be used.

## Why use a dog?

Dogs can be used in a number of ways to assist deer managers. They are most commonly used for finding dead deer or tracking wounded deer\* in concealing habitats such as woodlands. Dogs can also be used to indicate the presence of concealed live deer (point, mark or set) or for moving deer out of cover.

- 2 Ensure that a suitably trained dog is available for woodland stalking and night shooting.\*\*

## Suitable breeds of dog

Many breeds of dog are used in deer stalking in Scotland. The breed selected often reflects the stalker's

needs (e.g. species of deer stalked or type of terrain) and domestic circumstances. Consequently, dogs used vary in type and size ranging from small terriers to the larger gundog breeds such as HPRs and Retrievers. Most of the working gun and hunting dog breeds can be trained to follow a blood trail and bay at a wounded deer. If selecting a puppy, it is often helpful if the parents have worked well with deer. Regardless which breed is used, a 'suitable' dog must be:

- 2 Calm, confident and obedient in the presence of deer, game and livestock;
- 3 Steady to the sound of rifle fire and to be relied upon to 'stay' at a specific point for extended periods;
- 2 Capable of tracking a shot or injured deer and communicating its presence at the end of a track;
- 3 Capable of securing – either physically or 'at bay' – the species of deer stalked.

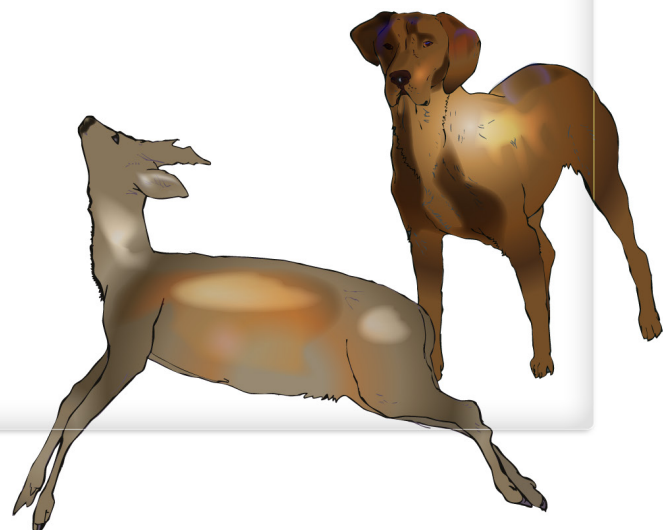
## Basic training

Discipline is essential in a competent deer dog. Dogs should be under the handler's control and able to:

- ◆ Sit and stay for protracted periods at distance from the handler;
- ◆ Walk to heel;
- ◆ Be steady to deer, game and livestock.

## Training dogs for blood tracking

Tracking dogs should be encouraged to use their noses and follow blood trails from an early age, starting simply with a dragged heart/lung or deer skin, pro-





gressing through time to an artificial blood trail. Blood trails are laid using a dispenser which leaves a fine spray. Laboratory spray bottles (25 cl capacity plastic bottles with spout) make excellent dispensers. Blood can be obtained by either collecting it from shot deer and freezing it or by using cow blood. Use a blender on clotted blood then filter it to make sure it goes through the spout on the bottle. Initial training is normally done on a long (10 m) line.

Gradually increase the length, complexity and time-lapse of the trail until the dog is competent. Always remember to praise and reward the dog at the end of the track where a dried deer skin is used to represent the dead animal.

A good basic standard for a 1-2 yr old dog would be a 400 m track with at least three 90 degree bends made with 25 cl of blood 3 hours old.

Assuming the dog has had its basic obedience training, it can accompany the handler on stalking outings and gain experience in finding shot deer as and when opportunities arise.

## Reporting

'**Reporting**' is the term used for how a dog, having found a deer, communicates this to the handler. It is possible to continue working the dog on a long line as in training, but this would only be suitable in relatively open habitats. Alternative methods which can be trained include:

'**Free Reporting**'. The normal method used by most people – the dog finds the deer then returns to the handler who 'reads' his dog for signs that the dog has found the deer (i.e. blood or hair around the mouth), then returns to the deer following the dog. Seems straightforward, but not always in practice. If the deer is a long way away there may be little or no sign on the dog. There is also little incentive for the

dog to return to the deer. Rewarding the dog with a kidney or spleen from the dead deer can help in this respect.

'**Torveller**'. Baying at the dead deer. Sounds easy but has its drawbacks, difficult to train, can result in a noisy dog and alerts other deer in forest of your whereabouts. However, it could have a lot of merit if used by a good dog combined with telemetry. Particularly useful for dogs of hound ancestry and the larger species of deer.

'**Bringsel**'. The dog brings back a leather thong attached to its collar after it finds the deer. This is a surrogate for actually retrieving the deer. The dog then leads the handler back to the deer at the handler's pace where the handler 'swaps' the dog a piece of gralloch (typically the spleen) in return for the bringsel. However, for this to work consistently the dog must be 100% proficient at retrieving. It also demands a degree of persistence in training on the part of the handler.

*continued in Use of Dogs(2)*



\* See BPG Reaction to Shot and Follow-Up \*\* See DCSG Night Shooting: Code of Practice