

One year on

It's almost a year since Emrys's puppy feet pattered into Lez Graham's life! This month, she takes stock of how far he has come in order to plan for their future training goals

As Emrys approaches his first birthday, I decided it was time to take stock and really make sure that the foundations are well and truly in place in preparation for starting distance handling next month.

So I took a bit of time out to evaluate his progress, and work out what I need to do a bit more training on in terms of finesse, complexity and distance.

LEZ'S TOP TIP

Do a regular 'stock take' – especially if you haven't been training for a little while or are preparing to up the ante with your dog.

Get a little notebook and keep some notes or use something like Google Keep, which is a free app that you can access on your phone, tablet or computer and syncs them together – this means it doesn't matter where you are, you can have access to your notes. You can also add photos and videos, so it's really handy to use as a training journal – plus it's great to look back at how far you've come!

Steadiness

I've spent a fair bit of time working on steadiness and I'm really happy that Emrys will stay sitting when I walk around him and throw dummies, either to the front or out to the side, which I've been working on lately in preparation for introducing directional control.

Hold

I've found training the hold so interesting with Emrys. He's got a great hold when bringing back the dummy or sitting holding it, but he has got into the habit of rolling the dummy in his mouth just before he presents it so it goes over to one side. No doubt he did it once or twice, and looked so funny that I laughed, which would have encouraged the behaviour to be repeated. This training is a work in progress and I think it's time to get out the Lez Graham Retrieving Roll...

Walking to heel

I've been pretty happy with Emrys's walking to heel, either off lead or on a loose lead... up until this month funnily enough. Over the last couple of

weeks, his maleness has once again made its presence felt and every so often he wants to duck out for a quick sniff and a scent mark, although as yet there's been no sign of a leg-cock.

Whistle Sit

Emrys's Whistle Sit is something that I'm very pleased with. Whether it's Whistle Sit when stopping, Whistle Sit on the move or a Whistle Sit at distance, I think we've got this one nailed. I train it as a game, and when Emrys sits he gets to fetch his toy; the quicker he sits the quicker he gets to fetch. I teach this alongside the cone exercise (or the Send Away as it's known in other dog training disciplines) so that our dogs become confident stopping at distance. We covered the cone in the December 2021 issue if you'd like to train it.

Marked retrieve

Emrys is really starting to develop his eye and I'm thrilled with his marking ability, especially in a dog so young. He's heading pretty much straight into the area of fall regardless of whether the mark is 'seen' or 'unseen'.

Emrys has been working on his steadiness to the fall and Lez is very happy with his progress

Missed the start of Emrys's diary? Head to magsdirect.co.uk for previous issues of Sporting Shooter.



PICTURES: LEZ GRAHAM

ABOUT LEZ GRAHAM

Lez Graham is author of The Pet Gundog series and a canine behaviourist and gundog trainer. Focused on training the next generation, she runs the Accredited Pet Gundog Instructor programme which is now in its 6th year.

Contact her via lez@thepetgundog.co.uk or visit www.thepetgundog.co.uk



Emrys performs a successful memory retrieve in cover

Memory retrieve

I've been really mindful training memory retrieves with Emrys. One of my old dogs, Ziggy, was really clued up and incredibly fast, so I tended to do long-distance memory retrieves as we both absolutely loved doing them. Then one day I put down a memory of only 50 feet or so and Zig went out so fast he ran straight over it without realising it was there... So I learned from it, as you do, and now make a point of doing different distances of memory retrieves. Sometimes I'll make a point of walking out with them and other times I'll drop them whilst walking and send Emrys back the way we came.

Split/novice retrieve

Emrys's split retrieve is great and I'm really putting some distance now between us when I walk out to throw the dummies, which has been excellent for developing his marking ability and I mix it up between sending him for the first dummy down, the last dummy down or whether he only gets to retrieve one and I pick up the other.

Hunting on command

Last month we trained the Find It command using digestive biscuits and a ball on a rope.

Adding a bit more

As Emrys is confident doing long marked and memories as well as split retrieves, so this month I added throwing a mark as a distraction. I have been leaving a dummy down at one end of the

OVER THE LITTLE BROOK



Leaving Emrys in a Sit/Stay, Lez throws the dummy over the brook by a field she uses for training.



Lez returns to the dog and sends him over for a marked retrieve with the Get On command.



Emrys confidently leaps into the long grass on the other side of the brook.



Lez encourages the dog straight back to her, praising him as he performs the perfect delivery to hand.

field, walking halfway up the field and throwing a dummy to each side before continuing on, so leaving a dummy at 12 o'clock, throwing a dummy to 3 o'clock and 9 o'clock before continuing on to 6 o'clock and sending Emrys for the 12 o'clock memory retrieve.

We have quite a narrow stream at the bottom of one of the local fields, so I've been combining steadiness, hunting and marking, leaving Emrys in a Sit/Stay, walking to the stream and throwing a mark over it into the white grass, before returning to his side and sending him with a Get On. ■

'We have quite a narrow stream at the bottom of one of the fields, so I've been able to combine steadiness, hunting and marking in one exercise'