



LEZ GRAHAM'S RETRIEVING ROLL CAN BE WRAPPED AROUND A CONVENTIONAL DUMMY

# Training innovations

Training a gundog? Author Lez Graham has designed new aids to help, writes David Tomlinson

There's a long row of gundog-training books on my shelf, the great majority written by men and all aimed at producing the perfect working gundog. Almost all assume that the gundog, be it spaniel, pointer or retriever, is going to be a proper worker, not a part-timer that for the majority of its life is destined to be the family pet. Lez Graham recognised the fact that most gundogs fill a dual role as both pet and worker, and this inspired her to write her first book, titled *The Pet Gundog*, in 2010.

It was a great success, and is still arguably the best guide for anyone who wants to make their companion dog a responsive and willing worker. Gundogs were bred originally to work to the gun, and even those with little in the way of genuine working blood in their

veins still relish the opportunity to hunt, retrieve and go shooting. I've no doubt that Lez's book has been responsible for introducing many owners and their pet dogs to the world of shooting.

Such was the success of *The Pet Gundog* that *The Advanced Pet Gundog* followed, with *The Pet Gundog Puppy* not far behind that. All three are minor classics, and there's a strong case for them being bound together in one volume and called, perhaps, *The Complete Pet Gundog*. Though this hasn't happened yet, a DVD, attached to the back cover, now accompanies each of the books.

The DVDs, filmed by leading dog photographer and *Shooting Times* contributor Nick Ridley, add a valuable extra element to the books. You can read how to do it, then watch a demonstration on your television or computer screen.

The DVDs make a pleasing and worthwhile complement to the books.

Lez has brought a welcome breath of fresh air to the gundog-training world. However, she's a genuine hands-on trainer, not just a writer of books, which explains her latest offerings.

## On a Roll

Not all dogs retrieve with the enthusiasm we might want them to, so Lez has come up with an innovative new product called the Retrieving Roll. It's simply a piece of tough, waterproof canvas fitted with Velcro that allows it to be rolled up tightly and there's a neat treat pouch at one end. The idea is to ensure that the reluctant retriever sees the treat being put in the pouch before it is rolled up and secured by the Velcro. The roll can then be thrown as if it was a normal dummy and the dog sent to retrieve it.

According to Lez's instructions: "Encourage your dog back to you in an enthusiastic manner. When your dog brings back the Retrieving Roll, let him see you take the treat out of the pouch and give him the treat with lots of quiet praise. Build up to your dog putting the retrieving roll in your hand before he gets the treat.

"When he's coming back confidently, then you can start to wrap the retrieving roll around dummies, dumbbells and cold game to ease the transition in his training from novice to advanced."



TRAINER AND AUTHOR LEZ GRAHAM HAS INTRODUCED SEVERAL PRODUCTS TO HELP WITH GUNDOG TRAINING

Does it work? I'm sure it does, as dogs do respond to treats, despite the fact that many serious trainers eschew such things. I lack a puppy to try such a device on, but my senior spaniels certainly approved of the idea.

Many dogs go out for a retrieve at a gallop, but come back at a trot. The Retrieving Roll might just give them the incentive to come back as fast as they go out, something to be encouraged if you enter retrieving tests against the clock.

## Puppy training

The Retrieving Roll is just one of several new training aids offered by Lez and made for her by a British company, Gencon, based in Cornwall. The Slip & Clip Lead is ideal for puppy training — it's a 2m lead that can be switched instantly from clip lead to slip lead. There's a double-stop for the slip lead, so there's no problem with it over-tightening around the puppy's neck. It's a simple concept, but 100 per cent functional. So, too, is the Brace Lead, a double-ended and fixable slip

lead designed for walking two dogs at a time. Lastly, there's the Headcollar, which comes in three versions.

The Gencon All-in-One is a headcollar and lead combined. The action of the lead comes from behind the dog's ear, so when the dog pulls, both loops tighten, restricting the whole head. The dog backs off and there's no need to jerk the lead.

The Gencon Headcollar works on the same concept, though without the lead, but has an attachment for any clip lead to be attached. Lastly, there's the Gencon All-in-One with Clip to Collar. This is basically the same as the All-in-One, but with an extra clip at the end of the lead that can be attached to the dog's

collar for extra security.

I've tried all these products, and can vouch for the fact that they are well made, simple and functional. ■

For further details, visit Lez's website, [www.trainedforlife.co.uk](http://www.trainedforlife.co.uk). To buy the Gencon products, visit [www.gencon-allin1.co.uk](http://www.gencon-allin1.co.uk).



THE SLIP & CLIP LEAD IS IDEAL FOR PUPPY TRAINING

## Spring maintenance

Now is the time to trim your dog's coat, ears and feet



DAVID TOMLINSON

You can laugh if you want, but my spaniel Rowan now goes off to the groomer twice a year to be stripped. Her sire was a show spaniel, which probably explains why she grows a lot of feather. She came back from her spring clip looking much like a small black-and-white pointer — the short fur emphasises her spots.

The groomer told me that she is now stripping an increasing number of working spaniels, as more owners appreciate that both springers and cockers are much happier in the summer with less coat. She also pointed out that spaniels often get dried mud matted into the fur between their pads, so it's important to trim the fur around the pads carefully. The mud tends to push the pads apart, giving the unfortunate dog sore feet.

Another common problem with spaniels, she told me, was matting of the fur on the underside of the ears. It's not a concern if the dog is regularly brushed or combed, but most spaniel owners tend to neglect such grooming. I'm pleased to say that Rowan didn't have

"Both springer and cocker spaniels are happier in the summer with less coat"

matted ears or mud in her pads, but that's probably because she is groomed frequently.

Her mother Fleur has never been to the professional groomer, but we recently gave her a spring trim. This involved trimming her fur with thinning shears, paying particular attention to her underside, legs and feet. Fleur has ticklish feet, so hates having them trimmed. It requires one person to hold her in position, on her back, while the other trims, with ordinary hairdressing scissors. Sharp scissors are essential: don't be tempted to use the kitchen ones.

Fleur also received some serious brushing with a shedding brush that removes dead hair. After the session she looked much smarter, with a shine restored to her fur. Even shorter-haired breeds such as Labradors benefit from a regular encounter with a shedding brush: use one weekly and you will be amazed at how much fur comes out.

If your dog doesn't do much roadwork, it will probably need its toenails trimmed occasionally, too. It's not a difficult job to do yourself, though you will need a proper nail clipper (about £5). There are numerous videos on the Internet to show you how to do it. ■

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