



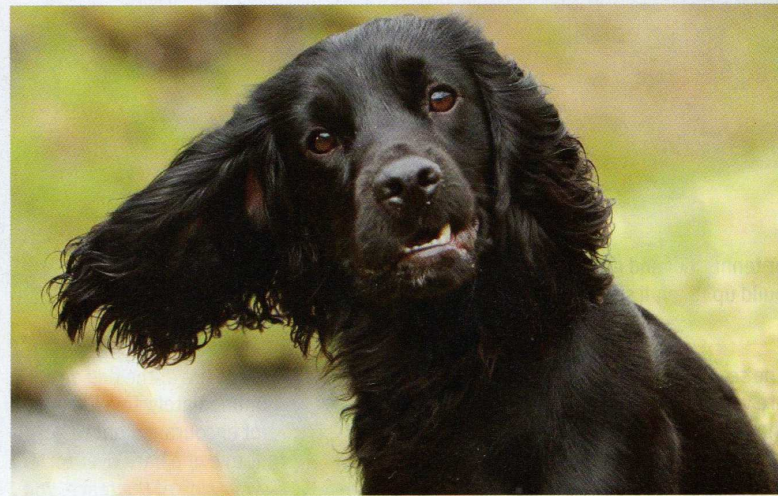
# MID SEASON CLINIC - PART 2

Last month we looked at working with dogs that dropped their quarry at your feet, this month we're looking at steadiness, says Lez Graham

**D**ogs will at some point be totally in their nose and pretty much oblivious to everything else. To a degree that's what we want while our dogs are working, but only to a degree. While hunting we want our dogs focussed on the job in hand and also with an ear turned to us. We start having problems with our dogs "going off the whistle" when this ear is not on us. Prevention is always better than cure and luckily, in this instance, both of them are the same.

## Whistle at home

If you don't already, start wearing your whistle around the home. Whenever you go to let your dog out, whistle pip for a sit and only let him out when he's sitting. When he's out and about in the garden, use the whistle to bring him in. When you're walking practice whistle sits, and lots of them; lamp posts and fence posts are great to use as markers for practicing your training. If your dog is a bit slow to sit then sharpen it up by either throwing a ball or giving a treat when their backside hits the ground; you



can then hold back the physical reward until they're sitting, thereby making them want to sit faster.

To train your dog to sit at distance, starting quite close to you, pretend to throw a treat or a ball. Once your dog leaves your side, use the hand with the reward in as part of the sit signal as you pip on the whistle. As soon as your dog sits throw the reward.

By incorporating the sit whistle and the recall whistle as part of your day-to-day activities, your dog is learning that it doesn't matter what he's doing, that pip on the whistle means get your backside on the ground.

## Pulling out when hunting

If your dog is getting away from you when hunting, covering more ground than you want when quartering, or veers off to follow a scent line, then your dog is "pulling out when hunting". When this happens it really is a case of going back to basics with a bit of tight hunting training.

I found that working my cocker in the tank tracks on Salisbury Plain is fantastic for teaching him to hunt tight. While you might not have tank tracks close, you may have narrow lanes or tracks on a field to use. As you're

walking, encourage your dog across you with the opposite hand with your hunting command. Once he's there and in the area then head across to the other side of the track repeating the "game". Do this a couple of times toggling back and forwards across the track and then, without your dog seeing, drop a ball and put him on it. As you turn him you can add a whistle (mine is a quiet double pip) or a finger click to help keep him with you.

If you find he's getting too far away then I would recommend popping him on a longline and letting him drag that, making sure that you're able to stand on it or pick it up the second he looks as if he's getting away from you.



At some point gundogs will be totally in their nose and oblivious to anything else



Use the hand with the reward in it as part of the sit signal as you pip on the whistle



"While hunting we want our dogs focussed on the job in hand with an ear turned to us"

Running in is probably the trickiest of all to correct, but it can also be the easiest

## Running-in

This is probably the trickiest of all to correct, but it can also be the easiest.

Why is it tricky? Because some dogs only run in while on a shoot.

Why is it the easiest? Because to stop it happening all you need is to put a lead on. However, that in itself can lead to issues, depending on when, where and why you're having an issue.

I find this quick and easy way works a treat (no pun intended) with dogs in the habit of running in on the training field.

Start with your hungry dog on two loose leads, one held in your hand and the other under your foot. Hold a treat in your hand, reasonably close to your dog's nose and throw a dummy with the other hand - your dog should look at the dummy but stay put.

With your dog still sitting, make a fuss of removing the lead that you're holding and give him the treat. Quietly remove your foot from the lead and send him for the dummy, dragging the second lead. Your dog is learning that if he sits nicely until you tell him then a reward will be forthcoming. However, if he goes before you tell him to, then he will get

a self-inflicted lead correction.

In relation to dogs running-in on shoots, I would always recommend that the dog is put on lead until you're ready to send him. The issue it can create is the dog squeaking with excitement.

Make sure that your lead is loose at all times and if there is any kind of squeaking you can either quietly walk the dog around or do some training. Running through a routine of "sit", "stand", "down" can be quite effective as it will help to calm the adrenaline levels. A sit-stay on-lead a couple of feet away from you can help bring down the excitement levels, especially if it's because the dog is "feeding" from your stress.

If you find this doesn't help then I would recommend popping a Gencon (www.gencon-allin1.co.uk) on between drives as the nose strap can have a calming effect on some dogs. However I would not twist a slip lead into a figure of eight and wrap it around a dog's muzzle due to the material and bulkiness of a slip lead.

As with any training, but especially with rehabilitating or retraining, only train one dog at a time. **SG**



If a dog is running in all you need to do is put it on a lead



A nose strap can have a calming effect on some dogs who squeak with excitement

Lez Graham works full-time as a gundog trainer and behaviour practitioner and is the author of the Pet Gundog series of books. For details of her training days, visit [www.trainedforlife.co.uk](http://www.trainedforlife.co.uk).

**Got a question for Lez?**  
Contact her by emailing [sportinggundog@timeinc.com](mailto:sportinggundog@timeinc.com)