

Dr. Schoen and Yin Chiao

When I started this blog I promised myself I was not going to write about veterinary medicine because I already have too much veterinary medicine in my mind but, there is always an exception to the rule!

The exception, today, is Dr. Allen M.Schoen, an amazing American holistic veterinary. The first veterinary acupuncture book I purchased was written by him. It might not be the best written book on the topic (I prefer Xie's Veterinary Acupuncture) but it is still a valuable textbook to refer to. Dr.Schoen, however, is much more than a mere acupuncturist and his books shall be read by pet owners, and by evterinarians, seriously interested in exploring the emotional and spiritual bond between animals and people.

"A winning book that will charm animal lovers everywhere. . . .
Schoen is a New Age Herriot or a Deepak Chopra for the four-legged set."
—Alix Madrigal, The San Francisco Chronicle



LOVE, MIRACLES, AND



ANIMAL HEALING



A heartwarming look at the spiritual bond
between animals and humans



ALLEN M. SCHOEN, D.V.
AND PAM PROCTOR



Yin Chiao Plus & Dr.Schoen book

Last year, while reading *Love, Miracles and Animal Healing*, I discovered Yin Chiao. Dr.Schoen introduces this Chinese herbal remedy explaining that, before using it on animals, he tried it on himself. I am doing the same and I must admit it seems to be working, together with liters of ginger infusions: the power of ancient Chinese wisdom! I am still sneezing, but fever has gone in less than two days and I am no longer voiceless. Schoen used Yin Chiao successfully on cats with upper respiratory airways infections: cats are very sensitive to drugs so it is nice to find something safe and efficacious. I would also consider Yin Chiao for dogs (kennel cough and more) and horses.

I clearly remember one of my first year veterinary school anatomy lessons: Prof. Lauria, who was quite a character, told us that "*the cow is built on rumen*" and "*the horse is built on lung*", an assumption meant to become crystal clear in the following years. The horse is indeed built on its lungs and many of its diseases are related to this organ, large intestine comes second. Traditional Chinese medicine states the same. According to the ancient Chinese doctors, every living being belongs to one of the five elements. The five elements are: wood, fire, earth, metal and water. They are related to the four seasons (in spite of being five), to different life periods and to much more. Each animal species has its own element: cows have earth which relates to gastrointestinal tract and horses have metal which relates to lung and large intestine, not a coincidence in my opinion. We must then remember that each animal, and each person as well, has its own element (usually people are a mixture of more than one) and this can easily be determined by any Chinese medicine expert, I am water element, my dog is axis water/ fire, hers is a combination often found in Arab horses.



Five Elements & Marketing :-)

Cats, another species which tends to suffer from respiratory diseases, have water as an element and kidney as weak organ (western medicine agrees on this) but the lung is believed to support the kidney, this could, according to Eastern medicine logic, explain everything. Going back to Yin Chiao, Schoen mentioned tablets, I could not find them and had to order drops from Holland, but it was worth. He also suggests being careful as some products bearing the same name contain aspirin and antihistamines, do not purchase them. Yin Chiao is believed to be safe for children, but it is not recommended for pregnant women. Google around to discover more, I hope I have provided some interesting hints.

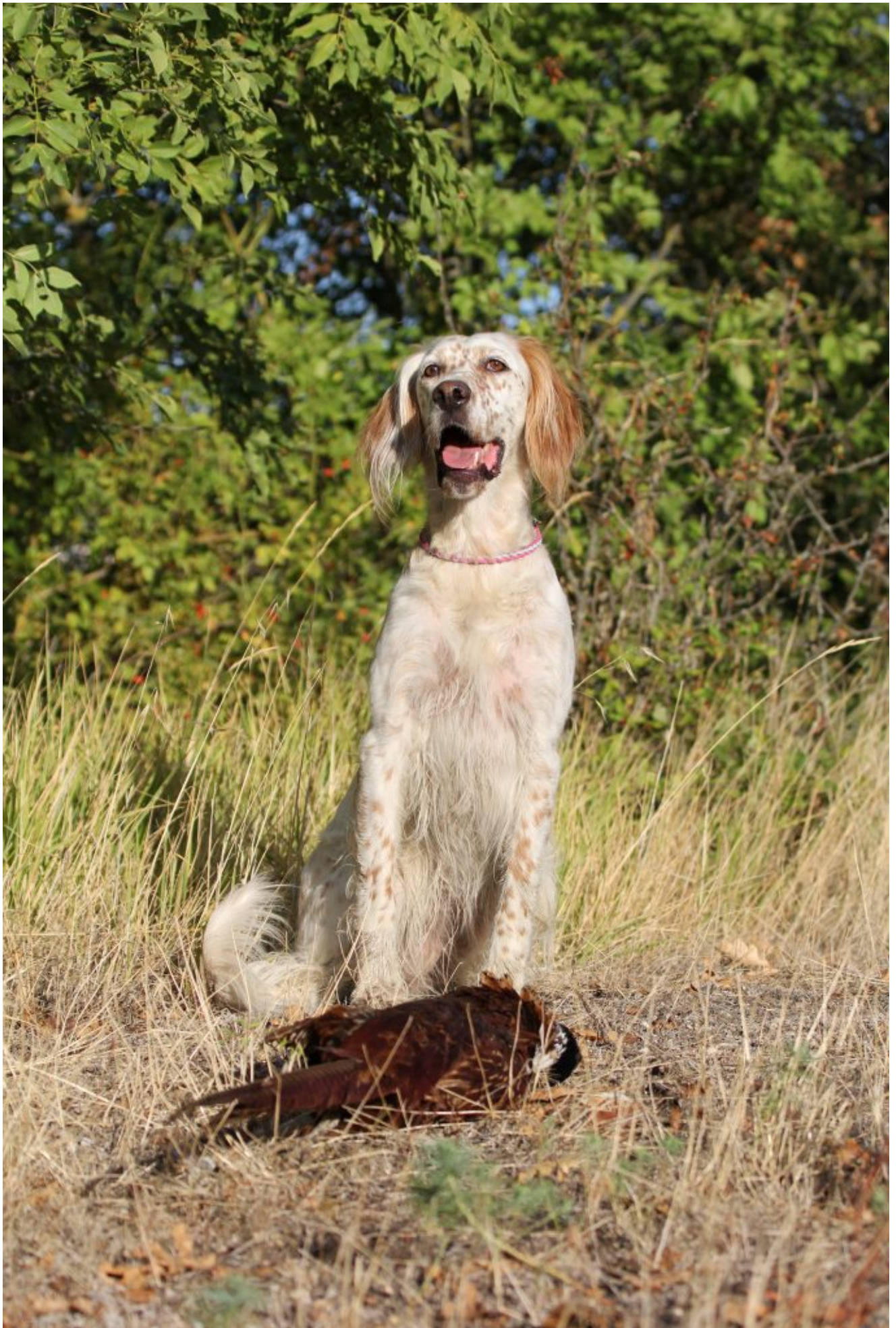
P.S. The books mentioned in the article are listed below.

Italian Shooters & British Style Handling

The shooting season here starts formally on September's third Sunday, aka today. I, however, did not want to "open", as at the moment I am incredibly busy having to take care of too many things simultaneously (writing calms me down). Being so busy and so absent minded, I have not noticed that my shooting license had expired in July. Without such a license, which is quite troublesome to renew, I cannot carry a shotgun, hence I cannot go shooting. Furthermore, the average Italian pointing dog has no formal training, which means I cannot run Briony with him/her, or I will waste all the training I did for trials, especially for British trials. So, basically, I wanted to stay home and finish working on some articles. My friends, however, were extremely good at tracking me and "retrieving" me to the traditional lunch they offer every year.

I showed up late as my plan was to skip lunch and leave early, but, despite my very limited social skills, they nicely trapped me: offered me organic farm made salami and coppa (a ham made with the pig neck/back), stewed hare and more, I politely accepted something and planned to go home, right after lunch. I just wanted Briony to have a run on the hills, alone, on the way back home, just to make her happy, she deserves to be a happy dog. But... Unexpectedly, a friend asked me if he could shoot over Briony, as his dogs were tired. I told him it was ok for me, as far as he did not mind the fact I was going to handle her in "the British way" . I also warned him that at the moment, I've not undertaken any training related retrieves as I am focused on steadiness. Other people wanted to join us, but they wanted to bring their dogs (who are not steady!) and planned to shoot a hare. I told them that

NO, I was not going to run Briony in such conditions and they looked at me disappointed, not fully understanding my concerns.



Hello, my name is Briony and I am a happy dog :-)

To make everybody happy, me and my "client", left earlier and picked the highest, more rugged part of the hill as a shooting ground. When we left the car, it was incredibly hot and the thick vegetation (perfect for a spaniel) forced me to run her downwind. A few minutes later, however, she was already on point. She then nicely roaded and produced a female pheasant which the shooter missed (despite the fact I had placed him correctly). I then stopped the dog, she was over-heated, gave her water and forced her to rest. I l told him it was too hot, I was going to put her back in the car and end the day after that nice action. He agreed and we began circling around the wood to reach the car, which was well above us and... Briony pointed again, began to road and a pheasant flew, well ahead of her, too far to be shot, she remained steady. No... We do not have that many birds in Italy, game management of unkept grounds is extremely poor: you have birds at the beginning of the shooting season when they get released, the grounds we walked on today are unfortunately going to be desert soon.



Briony pointing three pheasants

I then located a dog spa, also known as mud puddle, and sent Briony there so that she could refresh and relax. When we moved again towards the car, I was trying to keep her “high”, as I was hearing dogs and bells below us. Keeping her “high” she ended up climbing the mountain, running on a very steep and rocky area. Up on the top she pointed; you could hardly see her, I could spot a tiny white head hidden in the bushes, my friend could not see her, but he trusted me enough to join me on my walk on the rocks. There she was, beautifully pointing something: I was right! Still she was not ready to move ahead and she was right: three female pheasants were sitting right in front of her with no intention to move. In the meantime, the bells’ sound was getting closer and I did not want any dogs to ruin my work. I yelled (this was very Italian!) to pick up their dogs, or at least to re-direct them somewhere else: no dogs came close so... I must have been very convincing. In the meantime, I was also taking care of the dog, of the birds (who kept walking in the bush changing their

direction) and of the “client”. I do not know how I could manage it and I am not sure I will be successful again dealing with such a task, but me and the dog succeeded in making the birds flying separately (one flew, dog steady, man shoot, dog roaded, second flew, dog steady...) and in a suitable direction to be shoot. Shooter got one and missed two, one of which went straight to the people downhill, below us. We asked them to come over and help with the retrieve and while they were climbing up, Briony pointed again, this time it was a handsome male pheasant which she roaded beautifully in the bushes, it was a long way, flushed it nicely, remained steady and the man eventually hit it and went to retrieve it by himself. I put the lead on and began walking downhill.



Meeting the watchers on the way down

To my surprise, the four men below us, had witnessed and watched carefully her work with the first three birds. Not only they were impressed by the manner she located and pointed them, any shooters would have agreed on that, but they were seriously surprised by the production and by the effect of

steadiness and training on the action's beauty and outcome. So... Well, I hope this little happening will inspire some more Italian shooters, I would be happy to have more well trained dogs around and to stop being told that "steadiness to flush is just for circus dogs"!

UNCAA – ST. Hubert Academy Field Trial

UNCAA – Accademia di S. Uberto Pointing Dogs Trial

Last June I was invited to a trial organized by the [UNCAA](#) (National Union of Appennines and Alps Hunters) – ST. Hubert Academy, but the trial was later cancelled and re-scheduled for September. The grounds and the birds changed as well, the trial was going to be held at the Ruino Estate, on the highest hills of Oltrepo' Pavese , and the dogs were going to be assessed on grey partridges, no longer on quails Those who know me, are well aware of how much I love Ruino as I spent about eight years regularly shooting and handling English Setters there. Ruino's grounds are perfect for pointing dogs, and they are wide and open enough to make any dogs belonging to a British pointing breed happy.



Ruino – Villa Alta

In the e-mail I received, there were only a few details on the trial. It was created specifically for those associated to the UNCAA-St. Hubert Academy, nevertheless it was open to everyone. As I did not know what was going to happen exactly, I forwarded the invitation only to a few people, next time I will be more generous!

By choosing to be there, I gathered more details. The trial was open to all the pointing dogs, and most of the competitors were HPRs, you will soon understand why. Dogs were requested to behave like in a ENCI/FCI official trial but, big difference, eliminating any dogs was not on the menu. Major or eliminating faults were going to be written down but, in some cases, especially if the dog was a young one, the judge could decide to let him continue his run, in order to assess his natural qualities. The trial's aim, indeed, was not to nominate a winner but to see, assess and describe each dog natural qualities. At the end of the trial, each dog was going

to receive a written evaluation (like it is done in any FCI trials) and a score. Scoring had German hunting trials as a model, this explains why we had so many German HPRs competing, some of which had already been tested at VJP, HZP. VGP, German Puppy Derby and Solms). As you might see looking at the evaluation form, natural qualities were considered very important(Ferma = Point; Cerca, impegno, passione, avidità, movimento e stile = Quartering, dedication, passion, avidity, movement and style; Correttezza del cane e collegamento con il conduttore = Obedience/training and connection/cooperation with the handler).



Perdix perdix (Grey Partridge)

Organizers were expecting 10-15 dogs to compete but 25 showed up: The dogs had different ages (many were around one year old) and very different backgrounds and training. There were some experienced dogs who regularly attend trials and dogs, without formal training, which are used for rough shooting exclusively. According to the judge Ivan Torchio (whose

mentor had been Giacomo Griziotti), all the dogs, including the best one, need to explore the ground with more "logic". He explained the difference between exploring the ground during a "quail" trial (dog should quarter very regularly (left/right), in a very geometric pattern and not miss any ground) and during a "wild bird" trial (the dog has more freedom but still....) and concluded saying that all the dogs he saw need to be refined under this aspect. Some dogs proved to be highly skilled and perfectly trained, they waited for the handler on point, roaded on command without being touched, remained steady, dropped and came back when asked to and so on...) others were wilder, some of them were very young and some others paid for their handler's lack of skills. Several humans, indeed, made awful mistakes: a man roaded and produced in behalf of his dog (then he-the man – literally ran after the bird...); another one insisted on making the bird fly by beating the ground; some kept yelling at the dog... A few handlers asked if they could keep a collar and a check cord on the dog for safety purposes, or if they could pick up the dog before the bird flushed: they were given permission to do so but, of course, this was taken into account in the final evaluation. Silent and "professional" handling, instead, though not compulsory, was appreciated. Two pups wanted to enter the trial as well and they were asked to find a planted quail while on a check cord. They both found it and the GWP was so careful and concentrated that she remained steady to wing, without having ever been trained for that.



ATTESTATO DI PARTECIPAZIONE

Prova su selvaggina liberata senza sparo

Data: 11/9/016 Partecipante Sig. DIPALMA ROSSILLA

Nome del cane: BRIONY Razza: SETTER Età: _____

Turno: _____ Ora: _____

Punteggio:

Ferma (da 1 a 10) 10

Cerca, impegno, passione, avidità, movimento, stile (da 1 a 8): 8

Correttezza del cane e collegamento con il conduttore (da 1 a 5): 5

TOTALE PUNTEGGIO: 23

Relazione:

PRESTAZIONE AL MASSIMO LIVELLO COME PRESA D'INTERNO E UTILIZZO RAGIONATO DEL VENTO INTELLIGENZA NELLA CERCA MA NON SOSTENUTA DA UTILIZZO LOGICO DEL TERRAENO BASE DELLA PREPARAZIONE MA NON UBBIDIENZA AUTOMATICA NECESSARIA NELLA PREPARAZIONE PIU' URGENTE - QUALITA' GUSTISSIMA

Briony

The grounds were those typical of the High Appennines, alfalfa

fields, furrow fields, bushes and so on. It was very hot, late in the morning we reached temperatures above 30 degrees, wind was weak and kept changing its direction making the dogs' job very difficult. Each dog was given ample opportunities to find birds, but a few failed and some, given the difficult conditions, eventually bumped into birds. The organizers plan to have this trial again next summer as it is a very nice way to keep an eye on the most experienced dogs, and to introduce shooters and pet owners to trials.

Briony did very well. She found a grey partridge and a quail. Produced nicely and remained steady. She got the highest possible score and the judge wrote that her run was at the highest levels for quartering, speed and use of the ground/wind... He would have liked more refined castings (left and right) and that obedience could be more automatic (indeed it was me telling him that she dropped the second time I whistled, not the first!). He concluded saying that she is an extremely high quality dog.

Handlers Opinions:

Sara Orlandi (GSP): This was the second trial organized by the Accademia di St. Uberto that I attended. The previous one was the 24 hours deer tracking trial (FCI recognized) organized in Cecima, this time we are in Ruino... another wonderful place! It was great to see my dog working with such a determination and then receive such a positive written critique by "The Professor" Ivan Torchio! We later had a very tasty lunch with much game and we share opinions on dogs while eating all together. I am likely to show up again at the next trial!

Daniele Malacalza (Spinone Italiano): I felt at ease, people were nice, friendly and funny. Ivan proved to be extremely skilled, more than I expected. Dogs were evaluated differently than they use to be during ordinary trials.

Note: St.Hubert Academy does not take its name after St.Hubert

type trials (as some misunderstood). It is school (hence the name academy) which organizes classes on shooting (including woodcock counting), stalking, deer tracking, hound handling, wildlife management and game keeping through Italy. Classes are open to everybody wishing to gain expertise in these fields, some of the classes offer certification which are officially recognized by the Italian government and by several EU countries.

Prova UNCAA – Accademia S. Uberto

In giugno ero stata invitata alla prova estiva organizzata [dall'UNCAA](#) (Unione Nazionale Cacciatori Appennini e Alpi)-Accademia S. Uberto, ma la prova è poi stata annullata e rimandata a settembre. Sono cambiati anche i terreni e i selvatici: la località questa volta era l'Azienda Agrituristic Venatoria Ruino, in Alto Oltrepo' Pavese e i selvatici previsti non più quaglie bensì starne. Conosco molto bene la riserva di Ruino, ci ho cacciato regolarmente per anni e so che offre terreni adatti alla cinofilia, anche alle razze inglesi. Nella e-mail di invito venivano specificati pochi dettagli sulla prova che, sebbene pensata per i soci dell'UNCAA e dell'Accademia, era aperta a tutti. Non sapendo come si sarebbero svolte le cose ho diffuso l'invito in maniera "sobria", l'anno prossimo lo diffonderò meglio!



Dopo aver partecipato sono in grado di fornirvi maggiori dettagli. La prova era aperta a tutte le razze da ferma ma la maggior parte degli iscritti erano cani da ferma continentali, capirete presto il motivo. Nella prova era richiesto ai cani di fare quello che normalmente si fa in una prova ENCI/FCI ma, a differenza delle normali prove ENCI, non era “prevista” una formale eliminazione. Se il cane commetteva un errore da eliminazione questo veniva “annotato” ma in molti casi, specie con cani giovani, a discrezione del giudice, al cane veniva concessa la possibilità di continuare il lavoro per poterne visionare le qualità naturali. L’obiettivo non era infatti “eliminare” o “premiare”, bensì valutare le qualità naturali del cani e redigere un giudizio. Sono stati usati dei punteggi, su modello delle prove tedesche – da qui l’abbondante presenza di continentali tedeschi (alcuni di loro con alle spalle risultati in VJP, HZP. VGP, Derby tedesco e Solms). Come potete notare dalla scheda, ampio spazio è stato riservato alla valutazione delle qualità naturali.




Rossella Di Palma
Photography

Erano previsti circa 10-15 cani ma, inaspettatamente, si sono raggiunti 25 soggetti, di tutte le età (molti i cani giovani di circa un anno) e livelli di preparazione. Stando al giudice Ivan Torchio (allievo diretto di Giacomo Griziotti), anche i migliori soggetti – continentali e inglesi- devono migliorare il percorso: sebbene si trattasse di una “selvaggina naturale” e non di una prova “a quaglie”, avrebbe voluto lacets più regolari per una più attenta e raffinata esplorazione del terreno. Ci sono stati soggetti molto ben preparati (attesa del conduttore in ferma, guidata a comando, fermo al frullo, obbedienza...) e altri più anarchici, vuoi per età o vuoi per inesperienza dei conduttori, che erano semplici cacciatori e non cinofili garisti. Diversi “umani” hanno commesso errori come voler guidare e alzare il selvatico al posto del cane, qualcuno ha chiesto di lasciare corde e collari “per sicurezza”: il permesso è stato accordato – pur tenendone conto nel giudizio finale. Si è tenuto conto anche della conduzione, più o meno “rumorosa” e più o meno professionale.



ATTESTATO DI PARTECIPAZIONE

Prova su selvaggina liberata senza sparo

Data: 11/9/016 Partecipante Sig. [redacted]

Nome del cane: [redacted] Razza: Kurzhaar Età: 2

Turno: _____ Ora: _____

Punteggio:

Ferma (da 1 a 10) 7

Cerca, impegno, passione, avidità, movimento, stile (da 1 a 8): 7

Correttezza del cane e collegamento con il conduttore (da 1 a 5): 3

TOTALE PUNTEGGIO: 17

Relazione:

NON PARTE CON ARDORE DI RAZZA MA CON PROBABILE ADEGUA-
MENTO ALLE CONDIZIONI OSTILI DELLA GIORNATA OTTIMA IMPRESSI-
ONE NELLO SFRUTTAMENTO DELL'ARRO CARBACCIOSA - PIACIUTA -

Chi voleva poteva legare il cane per fermarlo al frullo e un paio di cuccioli hanno chiesto di "partecipare", ovvero di

incontrare una quaglia trattenuti da una corda. La drahthaarina si è talmente stupita all'involto da rimanere ferma al frullo, senza che nessuno glielo avesse mai insegnato. I terreni erano i tipici terreni dell'Alto Appennino: medica, arato, qualche arbusto e molto caldo! Le condizioni climatiche erano ben lontane dall'ideale: vento debole che continuava a cambiare direzione e caldo, molto caldo hanno messo in difficoltà anche soggetti esperti. Si è cercato di mettere ogni cane in condizione di incontrare ma qualcuno non è riuscito a trovare il selvatico o è stato tratto in inganno e ha sfrullato. La prova verrà riorganizzata la prossima estate: è un modo efficace e semplice per tenere d'occhio i soggetti migliori e per avvicinare cacciatori e proprietari di "pet" alla cinofilia venatoria.



ATTESTATO DI PARTECIPAZIONE

Prova su selvaggina liberata senza sparo

Data: 11/9/2016 Partecipante Sig. [redacted]

Nome del cane: [redacted] Razza: Bilto Età: 15 mesi

Turno: _____ Ora: _____

Punteggio:

Ferma (da 1 a 10) _____

Cerca, impegno, passione, avidità, movimento, stile (da 1 a 8): 8

Correttezza del cane e collegamento con il conduttore (da 1 a 5): 5

TOTALE PUNTEGGIO: 13

Relazione:

AD UN CADE DA FERMA NON INGLESE NON SI PUO' CHIEDERE DI PIU'
MALGRADO NON ABBIA BATUTO BENE IL TARGO STROLLO SU
DIFICOLTA' DI UGITO - CORRETTO

Briony ha fatto bene, due ferme, due guidate corrette e due fermi al frullo perfetti. Il percorso è da raffinare, così

come l'ubbidienza: ha sempre ubbidito prontamente ai comandi ma per un "terra" sono stati necessari due fischi e non solo uno!



ATTESTATO DI PARTECIPAZIONE

Prova su selvaggina liberata senza sparo

Data: 11/9/06 Partecipante Sig. DIPALMA ROSSILLA

Nome del cane: BRIONY Razza: SETTER Età: _____

Turno: _____ Ora: _____

Punteggio:

Ferma (da 1 a 10) 10

Cerca, impegno, passione, avidità, movimento, stile (da 1 a 8): 8

Correttezza del cane e collegamento con il conduttore (da 1 a 5): 5

TOTALE PUNTEGGIO: 23

Relazione:

PRESTAZIONE AL MASSIMO LIVELLO COME PRESA D'INTERNO E UTILIZZO RAGIONATO DEL VENTO INTELLIGENTE NELLA CERCA MA NON SUPPORTATA DA UTILIZZO LOGICO DEL TERRENO BASE DELLA PREPARAZIONE MA NON UBBIDIENZA AUTOMATICA NECESSARIA NELLA PREPARAZIONE PIU' URGENTE - QUALITA' ECCELSISSIMA

***Opinioni dei partecipanti:

- **Sara Orlandi (Kurzhaar):** Questa per me è stata la seconda prova con il gruppo cinofilo S.Uberto, la prima su traccia artificiale nella meravigliosa località di Cecima ed appunto questa estiva per cani da piuma nel favolosa riserva di Ruino. È stata una grande emozione vedere il mio cane lavorare con determinazione e ricevere un positivissimo giudizio dal grande maestro Ivan Torchio. Per concludere la piacevolissima giornata ci siamo riuniti tutti in un ottimo pranzo a base di selvaggina da tutti molto gradito parlando dei nostri amati cani, di caccia e cinofilia a 360° Non mancherò al prossimo evento!
 - **Daniele Malacalza (Spinone Italiano):** Bellissimo ambiente amichevole e goliardico, Ivan competente al livello della sua fama. Forse di più. Criteri di valutazione molto diversi dalle solite prove.
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L'Universo parla

Il mio amico Vittorio, qualche giorno fa, si è stizzito perché, stando a lui, non avevo dato conferme in merito alla “cena del maialino” (cinghialino). Cercando un chiarimento è emerso che suddetto maialino era stato menzionato via messaggio telefonico il 15 agosto scorso.

Dove ero io quel giorno? In un sacco a pelo da qualche parte sulle Alpi svizzere, priva di connessioni telefoniche di alcun tipo, wifi e 3G incluso. Per capire bisogna fare un passo indietro. Spesso mi perdo in un mondo parallelo, un mondo in cui non riesco ad aprire I cancelli e spesso nemmeno li vedo (Linda!). So di essere un po' peculiare ma, del resto credo sia la regola se si è appassionati di animali, di omeopatia e di agopuntura. Ogni tanto, in questa realtà parallela in cui

vago arriva un messaggio da parte dell'Universo. Non è che l'universo mi parli direttamente, nemmeno posso dire che mi invii dei messaggi scritti, direi, piuttosto che l'Universo comunica facendo succedere cose. Da un annetto a questa parte c'è una conversazione costante, sullo stesso argomento, ovviamente l'universo pensa di avere ragione. Il tema caldo sono i miei viaggi di ritorno dal Regno Unito all'Italia: evidentemente lui non vuole che io torni e fa succedere un sacco di cose.

Luglio 2015

Aeroporto di Newcastle Airport: Rossella viene mandata al gate sbagliato e rischia di perdere il volo per Parigi...

Parigi Aeroporto Charles de Gaulle: Rossella atterra e si presenta ai controlli di sicurezza per poter raggiungere il volo Alitalia diretto a Milano. La sicurezza ferma Rossella accusandola di portare con sé esplosivi. Il bagaglio a mano viene svuotato completamente e Rossella è passata al setaccio con un naso elettronico, non viene trovato nulla. Gli operatori della sicurezza si scusano ma hanno di fatto causato un grave ritardo. Quando Rossella raggiunge il suo volo gli imbarchi stanno per chiudersi, gli italiani la lasciano salire ma la premiano con un uno strepitoso posto a sedere accanto alla toilette (cesso!). Per lei è difficoltoso anche trovare un posto per il bagaglio a mano, gli scompartimenti dedicati sono tutti pieni poiché i suoi connazionali viaggiano con "stile", ovvero sono stracarichi di valige.



Agosto 2016

Rossella, da qui in poi conosciuta come “me”, sta viaggiando in auto e, pertanto, si aspetta che tutto si svolga più tranquillamente.

Lauder (Scottish Borders), 11 agosto, prossima destinazione Harrogate (North Yorkshire) – Il manico della valigia si rompe, strano, è durato anni e mi ha sempre servito egregiamente. Disfo un guinzaglio di quelli che intreccio a mano e confeziono una nuova maniglia in paracord, dopodiché parto verso sud.

Harrogate (North Yorkshire), 12 agosto, prossima destinazione Lower Halstow (Kent) – Sulla carta era un viaggio di quattro ore, in concreto ne ho impiegate circa otto e no, non perché mi sia fermata a far pipì contro ogni angolo. Più semplicemente sono rimasta imbottigliata nel traffico e ho potuto muovermi verso sud a velocità ridotta. Nel frattempo la corsia accanto alla mia, quella fatta per portare le auto verso “Il Nord”, era deserta. Il 12 agosto è il Glorious Twelve, la giornata in cui si apre la caccia alle grouse, eppure tutti vanno verso sud, fatico a comprendere...

Lower Halstow (Kent), 13 agosto, prossima destinazione Folkstone (Kent) – Riorganizzando i bagagli mi sono accorta che la scheda sim della Tim era scomparsa. L'avevo messa in un posto sicuro, ricordo persino dove. Ho controllato... Era scomparsa, non ho idea di dove si trovi, le auguro di essere da qualche parte su un moor. Quindi, ecco, ho avuto un discreto attacco di panico: non avevo più un numero di telefono italiano da usare durante il viaggio di ritorno e una volta arrivata a casa.

Lower Halstow (Kent), 14 agosto, prossima destinazione Folkestone (Kent) – Sono le otto e qualcosa del mattino e gli amici locali (britannici) notano qualcosa di strano sulla mia macchina. La guarnizione del parabrezza giace sul tetto. Non ho idea di come sia finita lì ma riusciamo a metterla a posto, o almeno crediamo che le cose stiano così.

Folkestone (Kent), 14 agosto, prossima destinazione Schwarzenberg (Svizzera) – 10 del mattino – Il mio treno per l'Eurotunnel è stato "riprogrammato", ed è in ritardo...

Da qualche parte nel Nord Pas de Calais (Francia) 14 agosto – 1 PM – Sto guidando sereneamente su un'autostrada deserta quando sento qualcosa di strano a cui segue la vista di qualcosa di strano. Un serpente nero salta sul parabrezza e non ci sono posti in cui possa fermarmi. Mi sposto sulla corsia di destra fino a che non trovo un'area di sosta: la guarnizione del parabrezza si è staccata di nuovo, la tolgo del tutto., fine della storia...

Da qualche parte in Alsazia (Francia), 15 agosto– 5 del pomeriggio – Va tutto bene, mi sono fermata in Champagne per rifocillare l'auto e mi hanno lasciato entrare con Briony nella stazione di servizio. C'erano 29 gradi e così ho chiesto:

"Est ce-que le chien peut enter?" (Può entrare il cane?)

"Est il petit?" (E' piccolo?)

"Moyenne" (Medio)...

Ero contenta di essere di nuovo nella Francia cinofila fino a che... Wow, un altro rumore, questa volta proveniente dal lato destro della macchina. Ohhhhhhh lo specchietto! Ok, questa è una storia lunga, mettetevi seduti. In luglio stavo guidando su una stradina STRETTA dello Yorkshire quando un furgone ha impattato contro il mio specchietto. Il guidatore si chiamava Adam, era giovane e nemmeno malaccio, ma aveva rotto il mio specchietto e sosteneva che io stessi guidando in mezzo alla strada. Era mattina molto presto, quindi poteva essere di tutto ma... guidavo a passo di lumaca e il furgone mi è volato addosso a piena velocità. Quindi, non sono certa di essere il colpevole, era difficile da appurare. Lo specchietto era distrutto ma per me era impossibile ordinare un pezzo di ricambio dal momento che mi spostavo in continuazione. Un meccanico l'ha rattoppato, una donna meccanico bionda per l'esattezza, e il suo lavoro ha resistito bene fino a che non ho cercato di tornare in Italia. Uno specchietto che saltava era pericoloso (se avesse deciso di staccarsi avrebbe potuto uccidere qualche guidatore). Di nuovo, ho iniziato a cercare un posto in cui fermarmi, dopo chilometri a velocità lenta ho trovato una stazione di servizio ma non c'erano meccanici. Quindi, ritenendomi "furba" ho avvolto lo specchietto in un sacco nero della spazzatura che ho poi bloccato grazie al finestrino. Non appena sono ripartita, è entrata dell'aria nel sacchetto trasformandolo in una specie di cuscino.

Problema risolto ma l'universo non aveva ancora finito.



Schwarzenberg, Alpi Svizzere

Schwarzenberg (Svizzera), 14 agosto, prossima destinazione casa (Italia) 9 PM– Non appena fermo l'auto, dopo 12 ore passate alla guida e dopo aver colloquiato in quattro lingue nelle ultime ore, un'adorabile "signora" svizzera mi vola addosso urlando che quello era il suo parcheggio privato Voleva chiamare la polizia... Non credo mi avrebbero rimandato in Gran Bretagna però! Fortunatamente un paio di svizzeri dall'aria vikinga sono arrivati a salvare la micro-italiana.. Grazie, M.&F. Gran salvataggio!

Svizzera & Italia, 15 agosto – L'Universo sembra volersi arrendere, la tangenziale di Milano è vuota (adoro il Ferragosto!), anche l'autostrada è deserta ma non ho ancora trovato la mia sim di Tim. Il mio dolore "cronico" alla spalla (mai manifestatosi in UK), ricompare all'ultima rotonda prima di casa.

Italia, 16 agosto 2016–Dopo due ore passate in quattro diversi negozi per riavere una sima l'ho ottenut e ho così detto addio (o solo arrivederci?) al mio numero inglese.. L'Universo mi ha però provato di un buon 70% di numeri telefonici italiani!



Waiting for the Italian phone number....

When dog training meets pragmatism

There are instances in which you need someone reliable and pragmatic by your side. It is not only soldiers on battlefields who need mates full of practical sense and decisiveness, dog people need them as well. Some dog people, especially those with red hair who get lost in training philosophies and follow shamans, need these people more than others.

After religiously following [White Feather](#) for more than six months, Briony decided that it was time for a change, she wanted less discipline and more freedom, I could hardly find the balance. WF training grounds, furthermore, were no longer available as the alfalfa and other crops were growing quickly. No other suitable training ground was available: spring was coming with its crops which were going to make impossible to run a dog anywhere. My only option was to go to some private areas, called Zone B or Zone C, in which dogs are allowed to run all year round, there I went. My first training sessions were short, I wanted to play on the safe side, until one morning, C. showed up accusing me to train at a "snail speed".

I first met C. in **1999**, I just had to say goodbye to Massachusetts for good, my former dog had died and I decided it was time to treat myself with an English Setter. After all I had wanted one since I was a 10 years old child. Given my unhealthy tendency to save the world and rescue those in need, I had absolutely no interest in a puppy: I wanted a rescue and

I got one. I fell for a sweet and gentle orange belton male who reciprocated my feelings immediately and with too much enthusiasm: after eight hours in my house he had already developed a severe form of separation anxiety. I knew he had been poorly socialized, kept kenneled for three years and then trained (aka abused) by a professional trainer. I knew he had all the reasons to behave like he did but...living with him was hell! I follow the manual: undertook a behavioral therapy; enrolled him in an obedience class; started him as a search & rescue dog and even gave him antidepressants, improvements, however, were small and slow. His breeder, happy to know the dog had been safely re-homed, gave me his pedigree and I realized Socks was meant to be a working dog, he even had a great ancestry. He was my first "gundog" but, my previous experience with other breeds told me that, MAYBE, letting him do the job he was born for, could have helped him to overcome all his fears.



Socks at 13 years old retrieving a pheasant

At the time, however, I had no idea of how an English Setter

was supposed to work; of how I should have handled him and of what I needed to teach him. I read books, which is what I do when I need to learn something, but I wanted to meet someone who could provide a face-to-face support. Given Socks' behavioural problems, I could not board him at a professional trainer's kennel and... professional trainers boarding their pupils seemed to be the only people training English Setters. I tried to ask some shooters for advice, but none seemed to take seriously a young and inexperienced woman with a rescued ES. Women with English Setters in Italy are still very rare in 2016, imagine how the situation could have been in 1999: it was, and still is, a male dominated and male oriented world! Opportunities, however, often show up when you least expect them and, Monica, a woman training GWP's in sunny Tuscany, phoned to tell me she had the "men" for me, and that they were located just a few miles away from my house. To make the long story short, Monica contacted [two famous drahthaar](#) (GWP's) handlers and trainers and convinced them to help me. One of them could not offer any support at the time (he did later), while the other one was brave enough to accept to work with us.



For about two months, I trained at least twice a week with C., who was already a quite successful trainer and handler in Italy and in Germany. We worked mainly on recall, but he taught me some very basic things I would have never imagined at the time, such as how to use the whistle and how to keep the dog focused on me by changing directions. Socks improved, and I later continued to work him by myself and for himself: I knew he was not going to become a great shooting dog, I simply wanted him to enjoy life and become more sure of himself. I think I last trained him with C. on quails in 2004, I then moved to work with other setters on the hills and we never had other chances to train together, We always kept in touch though and in the years, I sent him some “clients” who, together with other dogs he worked with, gave him the opportunity to become one of the most successful HPRs trainers I know.

C. is now a well known “pro”, specialized in training GWPs for German Hunting Tests (VJP/HZP/VGP) and personal rough shooting dogs, I was not surprised to meet him on the training ground

dealing with a GSP who used to eat and swallow quails. I watched his pupil running, and saw she retrieving the quail correctly after the shoot, so I asked the gamekeeper if C. had already solved the problem. “

“No... The dog never eats the quail in his presence, just with the owner. It should be a matter of body language and stance, look at him... But he needs the dog to make the mistake to correct her... He is the best trainer working on my ground”.

I kept watching and nothing happened on that day, until it came my turn to run the dog. *“Let her go”* – yelled someone behind my back *“- but when you whistle be firm, and yell at her if needed. The key to freedom is control”*, easier said than done! That was just the preface.



Let her go...

When C. Found out I was training Briony for grouse trials, he started to behave as if he wanted to be part of the project. We kept meeting on the training ground by chance but, each

time we met, he had some good advice for me. He never tried to train Briony in my place, nor to ditch the [Shaman](#) methods, he simply intervened, firmly and pragmatically, to speed up my training and to teach me to be more sure of myself and of my training. I think he somehow trained me: he was the person who forced me to remove the check cord and the same one who encouraged me to forget quails and start testing steadiness using partridges and pheasants. He also encouraged me to trust the dog more and to run her on other grounds to see how she would react to different birds in different places. He watched all my moves and all my handling, corrected my mistakes and created new, more advanced (that was smart!), settings in which to test Briony. He minimized my concerns on rabbits and even lent me an expensive bird launcher. Well to be honest he lent that but... recommended me several times to switch it off after each use and... not to loose it (as if it were small!). So, well, thank you C. for being one of those experienced and helpful people who made grouse trials possible for me and Briony.

Guidare in Inghilterra: verso nord

Gli italiani che programmano un viaggio in auto nel Regno Unito hanno una grande preoccupazione, quella di dover guidare sull' "altro" lato. Io avevo un piano: avrei seguito la macchina davanti a me (il che non ha sempre senso, lo ammetto) e mi sarei ricordata che il mio corpo avrebbe sempre dovuto viaggiare sul lato della strada, accanto al marciapiede. Il discorso destra-sinistra mi toccava poco, lasciate che vi racconti un segreto: non riesco a distinguere bene la destra dalla sinistra! Sono destromane ma il mio occhio dominante è

il sinistro, l'ho scoperto praticando il tiro a volo. La dominanza crociata rende molto più complicata qualsiasi disciplina sportiva che preveda tiri di precisione ma, soprattutto, rende difficile differenziare la destra dalla sinistra. Alla fine, ragionandoci, capisco dove stanno l'una e l'altra nello spazio, ma non è immediato. Il problema della destra e della sinistra ricompare anche ogni volta che devo sganciare il cane indirizzandolo su un determinato lato o, peggio ancora, quando l'addestratore che mi segue mi urla, stando alle mie spalle (o peggio di fronte – devo ri-ragionare la destra e la sinistra spazialmente) in che direzione inviare il cane.



Sebbene induca spesso confusione e incomprensioni, la mia relazione complicata con i lati, è diventata un punto di forza quando mi sono ritrovata a guidare sul lato “sbagliato” (nel testo il lato britannico verrà indicato come “l'altro lato” o il “lato sbagliato” perché, come ho spiegato poco sopra, fatico a distinguere i due lati). Raggiunta [Folkestone](#), mi sono limitata a seguire l'auto che mi procedeva, sentendomi

subito a mio agio. C'era molto traffico, ma un tipo di traffico che definirei educato, placido e mansueto anche quando incolonnato per il Dartford Crossing. Il Dartford Crossing è qualcosa di peculiare: all'andata, verso nord, era un tunnel; al ritorno, verso sud era un ponte. Ancor più strano è però il fatto che i titolari del Dartford Crossing pretendano del denaro per l'attraversamento, ma non diano agli automobilisti la possibilità di pagare. Mi era stato detto che avrei dovuto sborsare alcune sterline, ma nessun Dartford-Elfo è venuto a chiedermelo, né ho incontrato barriere e caselli in cui versare le mie monetine. Quindi... ho attraversato senza pagare, non perché volessi fare la furba ma perché semplicemente non c'era alcun modo per pagare! Mi è stato detto che verranno a stanarmi in Italia, minacciando multe, vengano pure, racconterò quel che è successo: nessuno mi aveva detto che avrei potuto pagare in anticipo con la carta di credito o, al limite, pagare online entro la mezzanotte del giorno dell'attraversamento. Probabilmente, prima che la Brexit diventi veramente la Brexit, qualche europeo porterà la questione in qualche sede giudiziaria europea: come è possibile pretendere dai clienti un pagamento e non offrire loro la possibilità di pagare? Tutto ciò mi ricorda il viaggio di Alice nel Paese delle Meraviglie.

Comunque, andiamo versi nord. Quello che si incontra dopo è Londra, o meglio, un'autostrada che gira attorno a Londra. L'idea di affrontare il traffico londinese può spaventare molti stranieri, ma non coloro che sono avvezzi a guidare sulla tangenziale di Milano. Chi sopravvive abitualmente al traffico milanese nelle ore di punta è pronto a tutto. Prendiamo la A, un'autostrada che conosco bene e che collega Genova a Milano. Attorno sette del mattino, giunti in prossimità di Milano, succede di tutto: per esempio una è normale venire superati sulla destra (ricordo che in Italia è proibito superare sulla destra) da qualcuno lanciato a 160 km orari. Il milanese deve arrivare in ufficio puntuale, a Milano si va veloci, punto e basta, tutti devono correre, anche se

non ne hanno motivo. Altrettanto normali sono i milanesi imbruttiti che, in prossimità della barriera autostradale di Milano, anziché rallentare accelerano! I londinesi, seppur numerosi e indaffarati, non guidano come il milanese medio: guidare attorno a Londra è stato incredibilmente semplice.

In prossimità di Stanstead, ho avvertito la necessità di reperire un benzinaio così, seguendo le scritte "stazione di servizio", sono finita in un grazioso villaggio, con un grazioso country club e nessun benzinaio in vista. Girando attorno alla rotonda per una ventina di volte, ho poi notato un centro commerciale provvisto di benzinaio. Non ho nulla contro i centri commerciali ma, normalmente, in Italia i benzinai e gli Autogrill si trovano SULL'autostrada, non sono necessarie cacce al tesoro.



Risolto il problema benzina, ho continuato a guidare verso "The North", come scritto sui cartelli, familiarizzando con i lati oscuri dell'A1. L'A1, che in certi tratti viene chiamata M1, dovrebbe essere un'autostrada ma il suo status è un po' vago: a tratti lo è a tratti non lo è, spiegano i britannici, ma la cosa resta di difficile comprensione per uno straniero. In qualche maniera sembra un'autostrada, certo non delle migliori, ma pur sempre un'autostrada. Aspettate un attimo: cosa fa quel deficiente-c@gli@ne, imbecille – è impazzito e taglia di traverso l'autostrada? Ero sinceramente scioccata: nel mio imperfettissimo paese, in cui nessuno va in galera,

per una cosa simile rischi di andarci. Ma... Oddio, eccone un altro fare lo stesso pochi chilometri più in là, è un'abitudine che lascia sgomenti. Prestando attenzione, ho in seguito notato cartelli e "punti letali" specificamente pensati per consentire questi comportamenti. Non riesco ancora a credere che fare inversioni a U e attraversare le autostrade sia legale, così come fatico ad accettare la possibilità che i pedoni attraversino (Attenzione, attraversamento pedoni! Dicono certi cartelli) o che un trattore o peggio, un carretto trainato da un cavallo, appaiano di punto in bianco. Il *Farm*



cartelli esiste, e si materializza nei peggiori punti e incalza nei momenti meno opportuni. In alcuni tratti dell'A1 ci sono lavori in corso che obbligano a procedure con lentezza ma questa strada, come tutte le strade britanniche, è gratuita. I guidatori lassù non pagano pedaggi ma, usando la loro rete viaria, si capisce il perché. Le nostre autostrade sono costose, eccessivamente costose, solo alcuni tratti della famigerata [A3 Salerno-Reggio Calabria](#), dato lo squallore, sono gratuiti. Non mi resta che provarla e confrontare!

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Comunque, alla fine, sono arrivata a [Woodland](#).

Accommodations, hosts and guests

To plan my trip to the UK I used two instruments: Booking.com and Google Maps. Booking.com showed me where I could stay, mostly hotels and pubs, but I wrongly believed to be a Bed & Breakfast person. Whereas in the UK everybody runs a B&B, or at least have a friend who does, these accommodations are quite unusual in Italy. I thought (wrongly – again) that B&B were sort of “friendlier” and cheaper than pubs. Hotels sounded more expensive and houses, despite being extremely attractive, looked a bit too much for a tiny single human being and her dog. Each time I read stuff like “sleeps 6”, I imagined myself surrounded by empty bedrooms and silent sitting rooms.

Thinking of being a B&B person, I started my quest for the perfect the B&Bs. I was fascinated by the fact that, usually, B&Bs accommodate one or few guests only so, given the fact I was going to travel alone, I thought my hosts would have noticed if something had happened to me. Let’s pretend my skin had turned green overnight, I was firmly convinced the B&B lady would have noticed that. Once again, I was wrong: during my stay I also experienced a “ghostly” B&B: the place had owners, but I could hardly see them, breakfast would appear magically in the morning and no human beings would ever show up.



Briony likes pubs

Before my trip, in some ways, I would have felt safer in a house with a few people than in a larger hotel. After one month spent mostly in B&Bs , I have to admit that sometimes I did not feel safe at all in a B&B, and that the perceived advantages of the B&Bs come with a full list of real disadvantages. I came to the conclusion that, if you get along with the B&B owners, you can have a great stay, but if you don't... heaven becomes hell! The "roommate" you cannot stand – or viceversa – has the power, it is his or her house and some territorial aggression dynamics (the same ones we see in dogs) can take place. These dynamics usually develop slowly, and manifest themselves after you have invaded their territory for a reasonable amount of time: two or three days in a B&B are usually safe, maybe four if you are brave, if you stay more It is at your own risk. You perfectly know that you are a paying guest, and your host does as well, but some instincts are just very primitive. Another problem with the B&Bs can be the lack of privacy: some B&Bs owners are professional stalkers and arrange their house and furniture in order to support their hobby.

People choosing to live in pubs are for sure smarter than me.

I sort of avoided booking in pubs because I thought it would have been noisy. Pubs might be noisy indeed but, I was told, later, that they must close at 11 PM so, well I can cope with that. To live in a pub, however, you have to be one of those joyful beings enjoying a good meal and a good drink. If you keep counting calories and you do not drink alcohol, you are basically stealing a pub's room to someone who deserve it much more than you! My very limited experience as a pub inhabitant and eater, however, taught me that pub owners are usually laidback, open and willing to do their best to satisfy their customers. Pubs, moreover are extremely dog friendly and food is good, not necessarily light, but good. After all, when you had spent a whole day in the rain, all you want is something warm on your table. Pub owners tend to be professional, respect the client's privacy and be very pragmatic: once, a lady told me that no, they did not have any single rooms, just double rooms, too expensive for one people but, according to her I would have easily found someone with whom to share the room, and yes she was serious!

Riders, walkers
and dogs are
welcome, but

Please remove muddy
footwear before
entering the bar;

Dogs must be kept
on a lead at all
times

Pubs are friendly... and dog friendly

The third form of accommodation I am going to discuss are houses, more commonly known as cottages. I tend to classify myself as an awful housewife who could possibly set someone's else house on fire by mistake but, after witnessing the British housekeeping standards, I came to the conclusions that I am "average", and that Italian's expectations about housekeeping are simply too high. After one month without a kitchen, I wanted a kitchen more than anything else. I know I always claim I do not cook and that I can't cook but In reality, on the rare instances I decide to cook, I cook well, especially If I miss healthy food. I wanted a kitchen simply to assembly a decent salad or, even better fruit salad, or just to relax. I love studying and writing in the kitchen, kitchens are cozy and you have everything at hand. I do not snore, do not smoke and do not drink (which means I can drive drunk people around!) and I am quiet and clean albeit not perfectly tidy (I forget and lose things regularly) so maybe in the future someone will brave enough to share a house and a kitchen with me.

According to my standards, three, maybe four (if include hotels) types of accommodations exists but... field trailers are tough people, I underestimated their strength and adaptability. I discovered that some people were living in caravans, sometimes they were even sharing those tiny spaces with a bunch of dogs. I, indeed, had a chance to go and have a venison & French cheese based dinner in a caravan and it was good, but I did not change my mind. I like the idea you can travel with your own "house", but, I honestly, could not survive without a real bathroom with its real shower (or bathtub). Caravan people say the caravans have showers or that the caravan parks provide these services, yet I remain skeptical.

ROSELEA
HOUSE



Rosalea House could easily become Rossella's House

Given my doubts and concerns about caravans, you should be now easily imagine how astonished I was when, I discovered that some field trailers, despite the cold nights, the wind and the rain, were living in tents and they were doing incredibly well! Hats off to them! Still curious about British trials? Check the section A Month on the Moor or [click here](#).

On steadiness (... and obedience!)

As soon as Briony became steady to flush I, full of pride, posted some videos on Facebook. The road that brought us to steadiness was a long one, I was extremely happy to have reached what, months early, seemed to be unattainable. Briony was originally purchased to be my personal shooting dog and indeed she became a good one. She knew how to locate birds, point, be steady on point and retrieve the killed ones but, like all the Italian shooters, I did not even think to make her steady to wing and shot. I simply did not care and she spent years "chasing" after the bird was produced, until I realized she was good enough to run in field trials.

The videos uploaded slowly but, minutes after they became visible to the public, I began receiving several private messages. Those messages, in the weeks and months ahead, became questions asked face to face. People wanted to know if I used an e-collar, or if I shoot her in the butt, a very popular method suggested by many (in)famous trainers. My answer was that steadiness derived from obedience, an answer puzzled most of the listeners. They could not believe that the

tools I used were a lead, a check cord and a whistle, and the few humans who did believe me asked me to make miracles: a woman sort of wanted me to make is HPR steady overnight using the internet!



I do not have superpowers, but maybe my mentor does, as a matter of fact he is widely known as the “Shaman”, or as “White Feather”. White Feather (from here on WF) has been knowing me for a very long time: I was one of his students at the three months class (!!!) to become a certificate stalker (deer, roe buck, fallow deer, boar...) and he taught me during the course I attended to become a certified biometric data collector (we measure and establish the age of stalked and hunted game). He saw me and interacted with me several times during trials, gatherings, conferences and so... yet, before accepting to “train” me, he wanted to meet me again and look at me under a different light. Our first formal meeting happened over a cup of espresso, we were seated at table by the street, Briony was on lead and a cat passed by: I prevented any possible reactions and he appreciated that, a

training session was scheduled for the following day.

I have to admit I was a little worried, the man was Elena Villa's (that woman won all she could win with GSPs, in Italy and abroad) mentor, he was a well known retired gamekeeper and he had owned, trained, judged and handled hundreds of dogs and shoot over them, in Italy, Germany, Austria and several Eastern European countries. But, most of all, he, himself, probably had the most amazing mentor Italy gave birth to. Born at the end of 1800, Giacomo Griziotti (in my city there are a street and a college dorm in his name) is still deemed to be one of the best judges, handlers, trainers and writers involved with pointing breeds. His first and only book, despite being expensive and hard to find, is still regarded as the Bible, no wonder I was both excited and worried! WF wanted to test me and Briony, if we had passed the test he would have trained us for free, but we had to be perceived to be a good cause.



After another espresso (we both like coffee), we moved to the

training ground and I had my first shocking lesson on the meaning of “obedience”. I opened the car and Briony’s cage to let her out. WF quickly made us clear that she could not leave the cage, nor the car without his permission. During the following months, his permission became “my permission”; she had to learn to sit and stay if I had to cross a ditch and then come later, if and when called. While all my friends were enjoying their shooting season, me and Briony were practicing sit/stay/come/drop to whistle daily, whatever the weather and the place. We trained in the countryside, in the city, in the shops, with or without stimuli. It was hard and even depressing: I spent months studying fish inspection for my veterinary degree and practicing sit/stay/drop!



But then it came the day. Not only Briony was dropping to whistle, she was also steady to game and she had become an obedient and reliable dog (and I passed my fish inspection exam as well). Trials came next and all the hard and boring work brought to fruition, but this is another story. At the

moment I am still incredulous and proud to be part to such a long standing gundog training tradition.

On driving in the UK, to the North

When people plan to drive in the UK they are usually very worried because they will have to drive on the “other” side. My plan was to follow the car ahead of me, and to remember that my body had to remain close to the sidewalks. Left and right did not concern me that much, for the very simple reason that, I will tell you a secret, I am not good at differentiating them. I have a right hand dominance and a left eye dominance, a thing that makes any kind of shooting a bit more complicated and that makes hard to differentiate the left from the right. In the end, I can always solve the puzzle, but I have to think first. The left & right thing resurfaces each time I have to cast the dog or, even worse, when one of my trainers, yells out loud the direction I should send the dog.

Confusing as it is, my complicated relationship with the sides becomes an advantage when I had to start driving on the “wrong side” (the British side will be referred as the “other side” or as “the wrong side” throughout the text, as I cannot say if you drive on the left on the right, for the reasons I explained above).

When I arrived in [Folkestone](#) I simply followed the flow and immediately felt at ease. There was much traffic but it was a polite traffic even when we were stuck in queue for the Dartford Crossing. The Dartford Crossing is peculiar thing: I went through a tunnel on my way to Northern England and on a

bridge when driving Southwards but, most of all, the Dartford people want you to pay for the crossing but do not give you any chances to pay. I knew I was supposed to give them a few pounds, but no Dartford elves showed up to collect my money, nor the Dartforders placed any barriers to stop me and force me to give them my coins. So? Well, I did not pay, I think they will try to track me and I will simply answer that there was no way I could pay them, as none told me I had to do it in advance (or by the subsequent midnight) with a credit card. I think, that soon or later, before Brexit will be Brexit, some continental driver will rightly bring up the issue at the UE Law Court: how can you ask people to pay and, at the same time, don't allow them to pay? This reminds me of Alice's travels In the wonderlands.

But anyway, let's move northwards, what you meet next is London or, rather, a motorway that goes around London. This step would probably scare the average foreigners but not anyone used to drive on the Milan bypass. If you survive driving around Milan in the rush hour of the morning, you can survive anything. Let's take the A7, for example, the motorways that goes from Genova to Milan: at 7 in the morning is absolutely common to be passed by someone on your right (which for us is the wrong side to pass a car) speeding at 160 kms/hour. The Milanese needs to reach the office on time and you are not allowed to be slow in Milan, no matter what, everybody must run. Equally normal are the Milanesi imbruttiti (the ugly Milanese) who, facing the motorway's last barrier towards Milan, speed up against it instead of the decelerating. The Londoners might be many and might be busy, but none of them drives like the average Milanese driver so passing London was incredibly easy.

When I reached Stanstead I realized I needed a service station and, following the signs, I ended up in a small village, with a nice country club right in front of my car, and no service station in sight. I then went around a roundabout for about

twenty times and I finally realized that the service station was a shopping centre close to the village. I have nothing against shopping centres, I was simply expecting something different: in Italy the Autogrill (which are usually nice service stations) are ON the motorways, you do not have to go hunting for them!



Past the service station, I continued driving to "the North", as written on the signs, and began to get to know the [A1](#) darkest sides. I thought the A1 (called also M1) was a motorway but the Brits say it is not. To me it looks, indeed, like a motorway, maybe not an excellent motorway, but still a motorway hence I was driving as it was. Wait a minute, how comes that "dumb" individual crosses the motorway with his car? Is he crazy or what? I was sincerely shocked: in Italy you would be jailed if you dared to do that on a motorway but...wow, someone else is doing the same, again????!!!! Paying more attention, I noticed signs and "points" (aka deadly gap

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ing drivers to do so. I am still amazed by the fact that this is LEGAL! As it is legal that a pedestrian crosses the A1, or that a tractor or a horse appear on it, signs warn drivers about "Farm Traffic", a traffic which constantly materializes in the worst moments and locations. Some parts of the A1 are undergoing a restyling and you can also be forced to drive for miles at a very slow speed due to some "works in progress". The A1, as all the other British motorways, is free: drivers do not pay a pound to use them and I sort of understand why. Curiously, even though the Italian motorways are expensive, the worst trait of the [A3 Salerno-Reggio Calabria](#) in Southern Italy (known as the motorway none wants to be on!) is free: I really have to try it and then compare it to the British A1!

Nevertheless, I arrived in [Woodland](#).