

We are Losing Legendary Methods (Retrieves 2)– by T. Mostert

Tok Mostert, a Professional Hunter from South Africa, now living in Sweden, is sharing his writings on dog training with us. [You can start reading them from Part 1 here.](#)

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A few more things I learned from Jeppe and Arne on training a dog to retrieve before I moved on to training for water work. Some dogs will try and move around you once they have retrieved the game (or the dummy), almost as if they want to circle around you, do not allow this. You can stop the dog from doing this by training against a fence, or with a natural barrier behind you, a corner fence works best for this. If you do not have a fence available, wait for the dog to come to you and once he is 2-3 meters away from you, coming towards, take a quick side step in the direction the dog is drifting and give the sit command. You have to be quick and precise, otherwise he will keep drifting and still circle you. The same goes for a hard charging dog that likes to pass you and then turns back. The dog should come in to your left, sit and present the dummy or game. Lots of folks do not mind if the dog sits or stands with the delivery, I want my dog to be planted and steady. I also want to be able to stop my dog on the way in without her dropping the dummy or game, she should sit and wait for me to give her the come command, same goes for sending her out. Stop, sit and then I can send her left, right, back, or over a obstacle.



Flake and the fox

On a side note, I want my dog to present the dummy or game with his head up, with the dog looking at me and not at the ground! Some game will be too heavy for the dog to do this, but even ducks can be presented this way. Bo Nilsson (great retriever trainer) gave me this little tip. Once the dog is on the way back to you, bend down in a kneeling position, arms open and call the dog in, be friendly! As the dog reaches the 2-3 metres mark stand up quickly. This will not only make the dog lift his head, but also help him to sit.

Do not ever lean over a young dog, or tower over a young dog when you start training retrieving or holds! Doing so, you are applying pressure on the dog mentally, they hate it and it is one of the main reasons dogs drop dummies or game at their handlers feet, or just out of reach! Coming in should always, always, be a positive experience for the dog! have seen countless people scream and repeat the command for the dog to pick up a dummy or game they have dropped at the handlers feet, it is utterly useless and creates even more pressure and negative connection to retrieving. If Flake drops a dummy(or game) on the way in, or at my feet, she already knows she is wrong, I do not need to say anything, or repeat a command, what I do is take a step or three away from the dropped object and from her, immediately relieving the pressure on her. 100% of the time she will pick it up again and deliver it as it should be.

Keep in mind this is only training, hunting is a whole

different thing where the excitement and pressure is multiplied 2000 folds. If you have never seen a dog simply coming apart on a duck hunt because there is 100's of shots going off and ducks raining down on and around the dog, you have not exposed the dog enough. More on that another time.

Points to ponder

1. *Casting dummies in the beginning is a NO NO, sit the dog down, walk away place the dummy, walk back to the dog, give it a line and if you are sure it has the line give the retrieve command.*
2. *Never start a young dog on a retrieve if they have not taken the line (= understood they are being casted in a straightforward line), start short, 5 meters.*
3. *Do use a long lead when you start your young dog retrieving.*
4. *Use clear and short commands. I have different ones for a simple pick-up and a long retrieve, I use the same command for back as for out.*
5. *Always be positive when the dog is getting it right, to the point that you excite the dog! As you progress, tone it down. Dogs learn by positively reinforcing their behaviour!*
6. *Retrieving only on sight will become a problem if you do not challenge the dog to use its nose.*
7. *Bird dogs drift more than pure retrieving breeds, give them a bit more freedom.*
8. *Break every training session down, from the sit to the delivery, work on them as separate exercises.*
9. *Your dog will try and break and fetch the dummy without a command, if you are not fast enough to stop it, keep your mouth shut. Never stop a young dog going on to a retrieve unless you are 100% sure you can. Do praise the dog if it delivers the fetch correctly!*
10. *You will laugh and you will cry, suck it up.*

HPR breeds are not for everyone,



Flake and English Pointers

multiple disciplines, with contradictory commands and outcomes, phase many owners. I do not expect my dog to compete against a pure retriever when it comes to retrieving, but I train her with pure retrievers and she will be on par with any average pure retriever any day I do not expect her to run like a English Pointer, but I run her with English Pointers and she may not go as wide and as deep, but she goes just as hard. HPR dogs are not the best at everything, but they are the best choice for everything. I cannot say this enough, you are investing time and effort into training a dog, make the wise choice and get a Old School Legend to help you!

No clickers, no treats just respect, discipline and loyalty.

[Click here if you want to read about waterwork.](#)

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Part 2: We are Losing Legendary Methods (Retrieves) – by T. Mostert

Arne played a major role in training Flake for water retrieves, but before a dog can retrieve in water, he has to be able to do this perfectly on land! So, let's take a step back. Too many folks have opinions on which method is the best, *force fetch* or the *natural fetch* training method. Dogs react to movement: you throw a ball and the dog wants to chase, or catch, or fetch it (that's why hare and rabbit are so hard to proof against), movement is a trigger, it is a natural thing for them. To me it breaks down to what works for a particular dog and I use a hybrid system between natural retrieve and a forced fetch.

Both, or a mix of the systems, however, are useless if you cannot have your dog off leash sitting by your side without moving to a cast, or a false cast (I use false casts to steady a dog). One thing to keep in mind is that with a force fetch the dog will retrieve everything you tell him to retrieve, whereas a natural retriever will, at some point, refuse to take a retrieve, especially to pick up predatory animals.



Casting Flake

Flake would sit on command and I would start with a wooden dummy wrapped in a towel in front of her, sometimes getting her a bit excited, or worked up. Some dogs need encouragement, others need to be held firm. On command I would give her the

dummy in her mouth and tell her to stand steady. To release the dummy, I would simply say thank you and take it. Sounds pretty easy doesn't it? Well, it's not, I just skipped over hours of frustration and swearing (silent swearing). Make up your own mind on what works for you and stick to it. Once she takes the dummy there is no chewing or playing, this is not an option. A lot of praise (95% praise -5% correction rule) and stroking her under the chin while she holds the dummy. Some folks say never pat the head, as it encourages them to bite into the dummy, hard mouth dogs do not need any encouragement, but I can't say yes or no, because I have not had a hard mouth dog.

Start slow, 3-4 seconds is a good hold for a young dog and work your way up to a time that suites you, I get bored after a minute. If Flake helds for a minute, I would start walking her on leash with the dummy in her mouth, only a few steps at first, then stop, sit and *thank you*. I did not let her drop the dummy into my hand, they tend to do that when your hand goes to the dummy. Only after I say *thank you*, she must release. I also took time to falsely take the dummy away without a *thank you*, to make sure she understood the whole process.

A few reminders:

1. *Have fun training, if it is work for you or the dog, you are doing it wrong.*
2. *Never end a training session with a failure, go back a step until the dog gets it right and finish there.*
3. *A dogs mind gets tired before the body does, keep sessions short but focused.*
4. *Dogs do not speak human language, but "fuck you" is "fuck you" even in dog language, do not ever let a dog say fuck you and leave it there, you will fail again and again.*
5. *Sometimes you need to take a step back to go forward.*
6. *If you get it right all the time, you are not doing*

it right.

7. Even a bad trainer can teach you something, even if it is only the difference between good and bad. Take what you need from a training session and leave what you do not appreciate.

8. A good dog will make a bad trainer look good, a good trainer will make a bad dog look good.

9. It is never about the quantity of time, it is about the quality of the time.

10. Protect your dog from dogs that have no discipline, it builds trust.

Final few words, a HPR dog does play games that are not some form of training. I smoke, and every time I went out of the house to light up Flake would follow.



Thanking Flake

I would send her out in the garden tell her to sit and throw a tennis ball at her to catch, simple innocent game? Wrong! The next time I sent her out in the field to search for a retrieve she sat down and waited for me to cast that bloody ball! Took me three weeks to break that habit I created.

Think, think, think, structure everything and plan it, then stand in front of the mirror and repeat it, if it still makes sense teach the dog. This brings me back to Legends like Arne, get help we are all blind to our own mistakes, even if we see mistakes done by other handlers or dogs!

[To read the second part of the article click here.](#)