

# We are Losing Legendary Methods (Fieldwork 3) – 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.](#)*

## **We are Losing Legendary Methods (Fieldwork 3) – By T. Mostert**

### **Planting Birds (... & backing)**

In hindsight, I should have been able to read Flake better when she was younger. I was so focused on getting her to do what I wanted that I neglected to see the little signs she gave of her natural ability to find birds. I took many photos of her as a pup and now, when I go through them, I find several photos that show she was pointing, or was interested in a bird. Never be so focused on what you want your dog to do, that you forget what the dog can already do. If I had just made the effort to get some help she would be much, much further than she is today, not that I am not happy with where she is today, she is a incredible little dog.

Feather training is one of those things you either believe in or you don't. It is no replacement for birds, but to teach a young dog to be steady and sit to the flush it does have its place. As said before, I made a mistake in teaching Flake to run a pattern simply for the sake of running, instead of giving her a reason to run a pattern. The very first field test I went to was a complete disaster, two days of running on fields and no one bird pointed and believe me she had the opportunity several times. I was basically stuck with a dog that would cut a field to shreds but did not know why she was doing it, running and hunting are not the same thing.



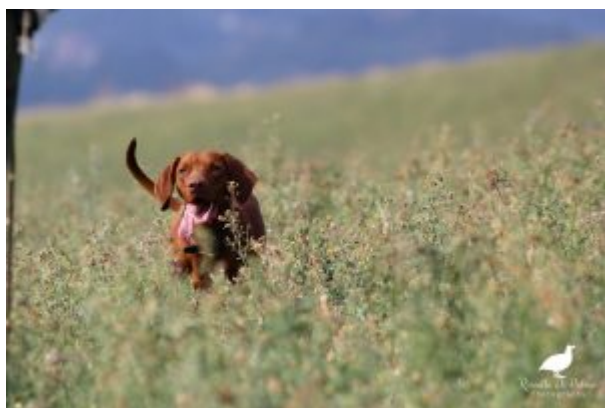
Tok & Flake

This is when I realized I needed some expert help and like we all should do, I looked for the best possible person to help me, a Legend. I also realized I needed my own birds and we built a enclosure and stocked it with some partridge. The first time I met Sten Rönnerling, he was out on a field, he was busy placing out partridge to train his dogs. I had heard of placing out birds, but I had never seen anyone do it. He was a friendly man and by his firm handshake I knew those where not the hands of a talker, he was a doer. Right off the bat he told me to tag along with Flake on a leash while his pointers were running in the field on placed birds. Sure enough his dog went into a solid point and Sten instructed me to bring Flake in, slowly behind the pointer so she could pick up the scent of the bird. I did not notice it, I could not read her yet, but Sten immediately said she has the scent when I was six meters from the pointer, he can read a dog! The pointer flushed on command and they made quick work of dropping the bird from the sky, I gave Flake the sit instruction the moment the bird lifted.

This is how we carried on for several more birds, at one stage we even leashed the pointer while on point to try and slip Flake into his place, the bird flushed by itself and made our plan unsuccessful.

We did this on several occasions, I started using a longer leash so we could slip her in tight to the pointer, it did not take more than 5-10 of these placed birds before Flake understood what was happening. This was the point where Sten decided that she had had enough and that we would or could

turn her into a point stealer if we would have continued slipping her on the pointer, that is experience. What we did now was to follow at a good distance and once the pointer took a solid point we would move on from maybe 150 meters and get Flake to see the side profile of the pointer while on point, the moment she would display backing or mirroring we would stop, some days this would be at even a 100 meters out from the pointer. I need to back-up a little here and make it clear, Flake had already pointed pheasants and grouse before I started with Sten, but this was infrequently and on some days she would simply run right over birds.



Back to Sten. It was the third time I went out to Sten when he decided it was time to place birds for Flake. We placed three partridge out on the field, they were spread pretty far apart, and we let her go. Sure enough, it did not take very long for her to go into a solid point on one of the birds. Here is where placed birds are extremely valuable. I walked up to her slowly and told her to be steady when I was a few meters away, I kept saying steady, steady until I could lay my hand on her and say good girl, girl. Now is the time to heap praise on them, right there and then is the best opportunity to reinforce that what they are doing is what you want them to do! I then took a few steps back and to the side, called her name once and gave her the flush command, while doing this I also moved briskly forward. The bird took to the air and I whistled the sit command. It all fell into place perfectly. She managed to do the same on the other two birds we had placed out.

Two weeks later Sten had a couple of clients from the north of Sweden who came down to work their dogs on birds. He had placed out several birds and there some wild birds in the area too. I was just going to tag along with Flake on a leash to gain more experience. After about a hour the guests' dogs had not found one bird and Sten told me to let Flake off leash and let her run. It took no more than two minutes before she just stopped and went into a solid point. I waited for the guests to get into a suitable shooting formation and once they were in place, I gave Flake the flush command. Up went the bird, whistle, down sat Flake and boom, bird dropped from the sky. Flake had marked the bird and I sent her to retrieve it, good retrieve delivered into my hand. That right there was one of the proudest moments of my entire life! She was finally on her way to becoming a bird dog!

[Continues here...](#)

---

## **We are Losing Legendary Methods (Fieldwork 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.](#)*

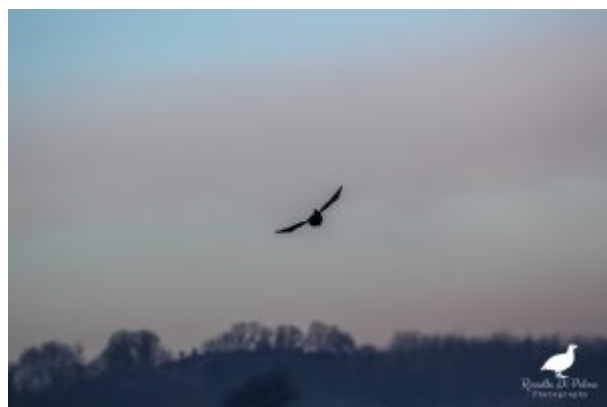
**We are Losing Legendary Methods (Fieldwork 2) – By T. Mostert**

### **Depth and Width**

There is nothing more gracious than a good dog gliding over a field at full speed, turning at the edges without cutting back

and working a good distance from you without losing contact. Some fields cannot be run edge to edge, it just does not make for a huntable situation, just like some areas do not allow a HPR to run at speed, this happens normally where you have thick cover.

What is acceptable depth and width for a dog to run? It depends on whom you ask and on what terrain you are hunting. I participated in a field test not too long ago during which a dog found and pointed a pheasant for over 4 minutes. The point was maybe 300 meters ahead of the judge and shooter. Judge refused to walk up to the dog and have the pheasant flushed and shot, he said the dog was not hunting for him, it was too far out. I have my own opinion on this particular scenario, and I am sure many others will have too. Point is that what is desired by one handler, is not what suits another.



A good dog will work as far as needed without losing contact with the handler completely, now that is another subjective phrase depending on whom you speak to. I do not mind losing contact with my dog for 2-3 minutes when she is working high

cover or thick cover, I know if she is gone longer she is probably on point. It is for the same reason I do not call her in when I cannot see her, I do not want to break off a possible opportunity. You cannot expect a dog to run the same way in a forest, as he would on a large open wheat stub field. If your dog is not steady on point and cannot stand without flushing the bird by himself, then you probably do not want him to go too deep or too wide, because chances are he will flush the birds before you get there anyway. Do not confuse this with birds that flush by themselves without the dog moving. In short, depth and width should create a huntable situation for the dog and handler. Some dogs will start shallow and short, until they figure out there are no birds close and then start going wider and deeper.

As said before, here and only here is the time to let off on the discipline and obedience a bit. Give the dog some "freedom" and let them work. The dog needs to gain experience and confidence so he can rely on himself. There is no problem with a young dog that sticks close, as his confidence grows he will increase his range. A young dog that runs wild is another issue, here hiding from the dog to force him to keep contact is a good idea.



Flake

I have been extremely fortunate to have a Legend by the name of Sten Rönnerling who has helped me with Flake's training on field. Sten has trained multiple field trials champions in multiple breeds. He had several double and triple champion dogs, a fist full of 10/10 field scores and dogs that have placed high in pointing dogs World Championships. This easily qualifies him as a Legend. He has single handedly helped me turn Flake into a proper field dog that understands what is expected from her. His methods have been tried tested and proven, again and again. At way over 70 years old, he still runs his dogs daily and can still drop a bird from the sky with little effort. When it comes to field training he has a few chosen pieces of advice, one of his first phrases was this:.

*" The only time a dog should be standing still on a field is when he is pissing, pooing or pointing".*

Young dogs will, at some stage, start pointing rats, mice, rabbits, hare etc. Although this is not what we want them to

do, they are doing what comes naturally, finding game. Do not be too hard on the young dog if he does this, simply break the point as quickly as possible and send the dog in a different direction. Never, never assume it is not feathered game the dog is pointing, always presume it is feathered game until you learn how to read the dog and interpret the signals. Never, never praise the dog on point if you are not 100% sure it is in fact a bird they are pointing! This, as discussed before positively reinforces the dog, but if it is not a bird you are reinforcing him to stand for game and possibly a empty spot where a bird was before, but has long since left (more on that later).

Dogs that stand and route around in one spot are a no, no be patient with a young dog that does this, but get them to move as soon as possible.

Don't run two dogs that want to play with each other on the field, run a experienced dog with a young dog, or run him alone. Different breeds run different ways and look different, Flake ran and hunted her own way when she ran with other dogs, until I ran her with a setter, for some reason she shadowed the setter. I ran her a few times more with the setter and she let go, running her own lines again. Expose your dogs to different breeds on the field. If your dog shows any aggression towards any other dog on the field, pull your dog out, it is a completely unacceptable behaviour.

This is a broad brush I have used to describe field width and depth, there is much more detail that goes into making a dog run well, including external factors like weather, bird density, lack of birds etc.

Find a Legend like Sten to help you, it is incredible what difference it makes.

[The next part will cover how to work a dog on planted birds.](#)



---

# We are Losing Legendary Methods (Fieldwork 1) – 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.](#)*

## **We are Losing Legendary Methods (Fieldwork 1) – By T. Mostert**

This is the single most rewarding discipline for a HPR owner or trainer. Often called the Formula 1 of the dog world, our little “machines” flying over a field, head high and then that sudden dead stop into a rock solid point. A good advance into a sit and the bird gets dropped from the sky, dog marks perfectly, retrieve is brilliant and at the end of the day you get a first prize!! Yeah, I dream too, because getting to this point takes more time and patience than any other disciplines. Many dogs run well, many dogs find birds, many dogs are steady on point, many dogs have a good advance and many still a good retrieve. Putting it all together in ONE DOG is where it gets very, very complicated! Field trials rules, criteria and regulations are different for HPR's in Scandinavia, Europe and the USA, but we all want our dogs to find birds, point them and be steady. I cannot speak for other test methods, I train for our field test and our criteria. Some of what I say will not be applicable to you and it will not make sense in why we do it the way we do it. I don't like ‘kicking up birds” myself and I believe it is easier to have your dog stand still when you ” kick up” birds than to stop a dog after sending him to put the bird on the wing, it does not mean I am right and others are wrong, to each his own. Train within your



framework.



Flake

There are those that believe you give a young dog birds and when he shows potential you teach him to run a proper pattern. I did not do it that way, as said before I was new to this two years ago and I taught Flake to run a pattern long before I got her onto birds on a regular basis. The single biggest problem with my method with the result that Flake ran, she did not hunt, not her mistake, but mine. She was doing what I told her to do and taught her to do. In hindsight I will use a combination of birds and teaching a dog to run a pattern at the same time. A dog that gets “fed” to many birds too early will not run as hard as he should, he will think it is easy hitting birds, more on that later.

To make it more structured, I will start with how to teach a dog to run a pattern and how to correct and steer the dog. I do not start a dog on field training that is too young, joints, ligaments and so on can be permanently damaged! Do not run a too young dog with another young dog, start your dog alone.

Exhaustion is a real danger, low blood sugar (hypoglycemia) and dehydration will kill your dog, learn the signs and keep a close watch. Young dogs rely on their owners to take care of them. Do not train field if you cannot stop or recall your dog, those who are saying “screw you” right now have not seen a dog run over. If you do run them without a stop or recall in place, run them in a fenced area or a area that has no cars or

trains for 5 kms. Finished preaching let's get to patterns.



If someone helps you...

To teach a dog to run a pattern is fairly easy, to teach a dog to run the desired pattern is harder, a dog that can adjust his pattern depending on terrain and prevalent weather conditions is a very smart dog.

I have seen many dogs on trails that are released, run straight ahead of the handler for 200 or 300 meters, then make a left or right turn head out 100-200 meters, turn left or right and head straight back to the handler before they start running a haywire pattern. I have seen dogs run the boundaries of a field only, educated dogs whose handlers trained too hard on the boundaries and not enough on the fields. There is nothing more funny for a young dog to go out and run freely, use that energy by training the dog to run a pattern. One method of doing this is by going to a field that is 50 meters wide and maybe 200 meters long. You can use larger fields, but your dog will run less pattern and you are trying to teach him to run a pattern. It works best with two people or, if you can run and keep running, you can try by yourself, I did a lot of that!

Let's say you have the 50×100 field and you have two people. Always start training with the wind in the dogs face. Start both people and the dog in the centre of the field, release the dog and both people move in opposite directions, each to one side of the field, right at the edge on each side. I like to take a few steps back after I reach my end and then I call

the dog in, this teaches the dog to cover every edge, do not expect a young dog to do this every time by itself. Then I start walking forward on the edge of the field, the other person should be able to see when the dog reaches me after I called him in. They now call the dog to them, remember to keep walking forward! The person that does the call in should not call in too soon or too late, timing is everything. Continue calling in the dog from one person to the other while walking at a steady pace towards the end of the field, the dog will eventually turn by itself. Do not let the dog turn short on either side! Once they start getting tired, they tend to turn short, the person that has the dog closest to them when he turns short should call the dog back! Please, please do not forget to heap praise on the dog when he gets to your side! He is doing what you want him to do! Do not do this for more than 10 minutes with a young dog, take a 30 minute break or longer if you intend repeating the exercise. Do not push the dog too hard in the beginning of its training on field!



Doing the same exercise alone is possible, but harder, I ran from one side to the other with the Flake, she would beat me to the other side every time, I could turn short! I had one advantage with Flake when I started pattern training, she could

already take directions with hand signals (arms) and with the whistle. A judge once told me that a dog cannot read arm signals, he is wrong. Some dogs take to the pattern easy, some dogs take a little more time and some dogs just don't get taught right. A dog that enjoys your company will follow you, no matter how hard he runs, he will keep an eye on you every now and then, a young dog even more so. Use this, when the dog reaches a point where you are happy for him to turn, turn and walk in the opposite direction (always forward), make sure your back is to the dog, do not walk backwards! You do not need to be as fast as the dog, if he passes you keep walking

in the same direction until the dog reaches your chosen turning point, turn and walk in the opposite direction.

[To be continued with depth and width.](#)

---

# **We are Losing Legendary Methods (Waterwork)– 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.](#)*

## **We are Losing Legendary Methods (Waterwork)– by T. Mostert**

There are a few issues with water retrieves that you do not have with land retrieves. Some dogs enter water easily, others need a little encouragement and then some need a push. When to push will depend on where the dog is mentally, too soon and you may install a permanent fear of water in the dog. As stated before, the dog should enjoy training and you should make it a fun but structured experience. I want my dog steady and sitting by my side when I start him out, he should be as calm as possible. Arne always said it is a bad idea to cast and control the dog when you start, get a friend or your spouse, to do the casting. Make sure the dog can see the dummy or bird being cast and has a clear line of sight to the dummy or bird. The person making the cast should make bird or duck sounds before the cast to get the dog's attention. The handler should focus on the dog only, make very sure the dog does not even lift during the cast, he should stay still.

Check that the dog follows the and cast, marks the dummy. Arne

always started with a shallow cast, the dog would not need to swim more than 10 meters. This does not mean the dog only has to go 10 meters in the water, from the edge of the water the bottom should slope gently until the dog needs to swim the last 10 meters. If possible it works very well with a passage through reeds to get the dog straight out and straight in, always use the terrain to the dogs advantage to make the succeed. Arne taught me that once the dog is a meter away from the dummy, or bird, and it is clear that they will take it, give a quick yes, yes command, it works and I stick to it. Give the dog lots of encouragement on the way in to you, use the same bent at the knees method I described for land retrieves.

As the dog improves, increase the distance he has to swim, train in rivers with current and lakes where the dog cannot see the other side, expose the dog to multiple areas and entries.



Use a friend or your spouse...

Blind retrieves require a dog with skill and ability. It also requires a handler and a trainer that know what they are doing. The dog needs to have unwavering trust in what you are telling them to do, you cannot make a mistake, the dog will lose trust in you! There is no stop signal in water, the dog's eyes cannot be on you all the time, so you better be sure when you give a verbal, whistle or physical command that the dog understands what you want. Do not start blind retrieves if you cannot get the dog to do the following, I say again do not start unless:

1. Your dog is comfortable spending time in the water and is confident in the water.
2. Your dog can cross multiple types of surfaces under the water. Some areas will require a dog to wade from deep water to shallow water and back to deep water, mud and vegetation present problems for some dogs.
3. Your dog can take a straight line out into the water and keep it.
4. Your dog understands directional change commands and the out or back command.
5. Your dog understands the search command.
6. Your dog will not try and switch dummies or birds when there are multiple ones.

As Arne would tell me a hundred times, break it down. Entry, out, direction, search and delivery.

I have had judges stunned when Flake comes back with a completely dry bird, she is just comfortable in the water and does not panic when she has to stay out there. A few things to keep in mind.

#### **Entrance into the water:**

1. It is a careless dog that charges into the water, flying entries look great, but a dog that has never entered a body of water or is working virgin water and flies in is going to get hurt sometimes.
2. It is a careless owner that does not check the point of entry before he sends the dog out.
3. The dog should always, always take your line and go straight out. Do not let the dog look for another entry once you gave the out command. They lose the line and mark if they do, which makes it harder on them and you to adjust their new line to the old one.

#### **Out:**

1. Give the dog some indication that they are heading in the right direction.
2. Current will make the dog drift, keep it in mind.



**Direction:**

1. *Your timing has to be perfect, especially if the dog has to go over an obstacle, cross a island and re-enter the water on the other side.*
2. *Remember the dog is not watching you, give the direction change command and once the dog looks back follow it up with a physical signal, you can even move your whole body in the direction you want the dog to go.*
3. *Use the wind, if you change direction with the bird lying upwind chances are greater for the dog to find it.*

**Search:**

1. *Once the dog is in or close to the reeds, grass, rocks etc where the bird is placed, I give the search command. Close to me is within 3-5 meters.*
2. *Give the dog time to locate the bird, resist the urge to direct the dog.*

**Delivery:**

I do not want Flake to shake herself dry before delivery, neither do I want her to drop the bird.

Stand as close to the water edge as the judge would allow, Stay calm and positive, do not reach or grab for the bird, but be fast enough so the dog can shake itself dry if it wants to after delivery.



Tok & Flake

I have left out certain crucial bits of advice, like how to



get a dog into the water, teaching it to swim and be calm and also the way to train a dog to take a straight entry on the blind retrieve.

It is simply because I believe you need a trainer to assist you here, so find a Legend and get going.

This concludes what I wish to share on retrieving. Before I start what is considered by many the Elite section of HPR's I want to take a step back to obedience and discipline, because there is a correlation between obedience and field that needs to be clarified.

[To read about obedience and discipline click here.](#)

---

## **We are Losing Legendary Methods 1 – by T. Mostert**

*Brief intro: here at Dogs & Country we are often looking to publish good articles, articles dog people can benefit from. I (Rossella) was therefore very happy when Tok Mostert, from Sweden, accepted to share his writings with us and our readers. At the moment, unfortunately, I do not have time to translate them in Italian, but if anyone wants to help out with the translation, I'd be happy to share that as well ☐*

### **Part 1: We are losing legendary methods**

Two years ago I came into the hunting dogs world, I knew nothing, I could not make a dog sit or stay, much less retrieve, track or hunt birds. Sure I tried and watched videos and read as much as I could, but it is not the same. I saw a man handle a dog in the field one day, and I understood that I needed help. Needed may be the wrong word, craved is more in

line with what I felt.



Flake in Sweden...

You ask opinions on trainers and you get maybe 10 different opinions on every trainer, good, bad, asshole you name it, for everyone that had a good thing to say, there was 10 others with bad things to say. Screw it, I thought, I will find the right help by simply looking at whose dog I see doing what I want my dog to do and ask who help to train him or her. I did not ask for opinions anymore, I set a goal and found a trainer that suited this goal. When I wanted my dog to have discipline, I went to a man called Jeppe Stridh. Almost two years later, I still go to him, because a dog is never finished, you evolve, the dog evolves, you want to test the limits and see how far the dog will go, and most of the time it is the handler that holds the dog back by not challenging him more. This and reinforcing the old commands again and again is a never ending journey, get use to it and enjoy it.

**A few things I remember, sure I forgot many:**

- 1. Train the owner to train the dog, much harder than it sounds.*
- 2. Learn how to read your dog.*
- 3. 95% Praise, 5% Correction, always time the correction perfectly.*
- 4. Make sure you understand the commands before you try teaching the dog, otherwise keep your mouth shut.*
- 5. A collar and a leash are restraints, they can only control a dog by your side. Respect and trust are what*

*makes an invisible leash that stretches as far as your voice, or whistle, carries.*

- 6. Do not train with a attitude, dogs do not respond well to assholes (yeah, I heard that a lot).*
- 7. If your dog keeps making the same mistake you are doing something wrong, not the dog.*
- 8. If you are always doing something wrong, get help.*
- 9. Different dogs need different touches while training.*
- 10. No matter how good is the trainer you are working with, if you do not put in the effort yourself, you are wasting your time and a good dog!*

I can write a hundred more points to ponder, but that's not the point.



Flake goes to school

Men like Jeppe are few and far in between and we are not taking the opportunities to listen and learn from them. They are the here and now Legends of the dog world that we need to learn from, so all that knowledge will not disappear one day. Not to make us better, but to keep future generations at the top of the game. Yes, dog training evolves and people keep reinventing the wheel, but in the end its results that count and he is one of the Legends who's methodology always works if applied right.

Books, DvD's and video clips are great, but they lack the essential personal touch that a true Legend brings to training a dog. One Legend's method may not fit you or your dog, but there is always one who's method will.

The most common comments I hear from judges these days is that dogs lack discipline. This is where I started with Flake and thus Part 1, Part 2 will cover retrieving and [tracking](#) with a Legend that flies under the radar.

---

## Who we are

*Who we are*

**Rossella Di Palma**

Grows up among books, dogs, horses and other animals, never imagining that, one day, she would have been on the other side of the fence. After graduating (master level degree) in English Language and Literature and after a fellowship at Mount Holyoke College (USA), she started writing (and taking pics!) for dogs and shooting magazines. She became a professional journalist, published two books and took care of some other editorial projects and later graduated in veterinary medicine Rossella is an English Setter enthusiast and pointing dogs are her favourites but, being terribly curious, she is always happy to watch and enjoy dogs belonging to any breeds. She thinks that interacting with dogs and "living" them is the best way to get to know these animals. Here on Dogs and Country, trying to be bi-lingual, she rules



on the sections [Dogs & Country](#) and [A Month on The Moor](#).

Where you can find Rossella on paper: Sentieri di Caccia, Beccacce che Passione e Cinghiale che Passione. In passato: Gli speciali di Sentieri di Caccia; Gli Speciali di Cani; Cinghiale

International; Ti Presento il Cane; Parma Economica; South African Wingshooters; Fieldsports, Il libro dei Setter; Il Pastore Tedesco.

## **Emanuele Nava**

Emanuele Nava was born about 30 years ago in Brianza, near Milan, but he later migrated to the hills of Valcerrina (Monferrato, Piedmont). He took this decision in order to satisfy his passion for hounds, hare hunting and the countryside. Hunting hare with hounds is his lifestyle. Emanuele writes for some hunting/shooting magazines and actively trains his hounds and hunts with his pack. He also travels all around Italy to meet more hounds and hound people, in the hope to improve his knowledge. Together with Francesca Asunis, he owns the kennel affix Vicamar under which they breed Beagles and Italian Hounds. He rules on [Cavilli & Segugi](#) (Quibbles and Hounds, a name coming from Horses (in Italian cavalli) and Hounds. His writings, unfortunately, are available only in Italian.

Where to find Emanuele on paper: Sentieri di Caccia.

## **Guests:**

**Tok Mostert**

Tok is a South African Professional Hunter (PH) now living in Sweden. He has hunted over thousands of hoofed and dangerous animals in his own country and in Europe but he claims his best hunts have been those done together with his German Shortaired Pointer Flake. We are very happy to host his articles on pointing dogs training. They can be found in the section [Training](#). His articles are available only in English.



## **Flavia Bullo**

Studies Veterinary Medicine at the University of Milan and, being dog less at the moment, relazes herself through baking. Her recipes (cakes and desserts) can be found under the category [Sweet Dreams](#).

