

## Antler Shed Basics

To safely prepare antlers for canine shed hunting, you must clean them thoroughly to remove dirt, germs, and decaying organic matter. After cleaning, odorize the antlers with a commercial scent to make them enticing for your dog.

### How to clean shed antlers- NOT FOR USE WITH YOUR DOG

- **Rinse and scrub:** Using water and a soft-bristled brush to remove any loose dirt, mud, or burrs. For tougher grime, you can use a bit of mild dish soap and warm water.
- **Sanitize with a vinegar solution:** After scrubbing, you can briefly soak or spray the antlers with a solution of equal parts white vinegar and water to kill bacteria. Do not use harsh chemicals like bleach, which can be toxic to dogs and damage the antlers.
- **Dry completely:** Pat the antlers dry with a towel, then let them air-dry completely in a well-ventilated area for at least 24 hours. Do not dry them in the sun for an extended period, as this can cause them to become brittle.

### How to store and prep antlers for training- FOR USE WITH YOUR DOG

When your dog is in the early stages of antler shed training, removing your odor from the antlers is not really necessary. As your dog progresses and you are doing real-world search drills, you will need to clean your scent off a set of antlers to help your dog truly hone in on the antler smell alone.

Cleaning can be done with cleaners manufactured for that purpose (Rack Wash) or you can use any brand of hunters no-scent spray on them and allow them to air dry. After they are dry you can then store them in an airtight container, I recommend a food safe bucket (available on Amazon or restaurant supply company) as this type of plastic is made with no harmful plastics and gives off less of a plastic odor. After cleaning, you will need to apply a training scent and choose a suitable storage location to preserve the antlers' natural condition.

- **Keep them dry and cool:** Store the antlers indoors in a cool, dry place, away from direct sunlight, which can cause them to become chalky and crack.
- **Avoid moisture:** Do not store antlers in a humid or damp area, as this can encourage mold growth and weaken the bone. THIS CHANGES THE ODOR PROFILE!
- **Use a storage container:** A cardboard box or drawer works well to protect the antlers from dust and curious pets. Ensure the container is clean and dry before storing. **REMEMBER EVERYTHING HAS ODOR, WE JUST HAVE TO PICK THE LEAST ODOUROUS METHOD.**

### Apply training scent- for the early stages of training and after you have cleaned your antlers for field searches

- **Use commercial scent wax:** Purchase a commercial shed scent, such as "Rack Wax" or "Bone Clone," which comes in a stick similar to chapstick.
- **Rub the base and tips:** Rub the scent wax on the burr (the attachment point) and the tips of the antlers. You can also apply it to the shaft for more coverage.
- **Rewax as needed:** The scent will fade over time, especially with exposure to the elements during training. Reapply the scent regularly to keep the antlers attractive to your dog.

### Safety considerations for dogs

- **Supervise your dog:** Always supervise your dog when introducing them to a new antler. Some dogs are aggressive chewers and may splinter the antler.
- **Inspect for damage:** Before and after each training session, inspect the antlers for any small, loose, or sharp pieces. Replace or sand them down as needed to prevent choking or injury.
- **Avoid using as a chew toy:** The antlers you use for training should be separate from those you provide as a chew toy. Training antlers can be harder than store-bought chews and are often covered in strong scent, which is for hunting, not for consumption.
- **Consult a vet:** If your dog has a history of dental problems, consult your veterinarian before using antlers for any purpose.