



Week 5: Generalizing The Search & Continuing to Build Confidence

By this class you should be starting to see changes in your dog as they search, and these changes should be telling you where your dog is in proximity to the source.

- Importance of allowing the dog to drive the search and respond to their COBs
- Handler's observation skills, and ability to read their dog's COBs
- Blind hides (you and your dog will be searching without knowledge of the sources location)

Round 1 Box Work

Set up the first "blind" hide in clean boxes. The blind hide is not like a competition hide because no alert is required, but the location of the hide is unknown to the handler. The dog will still be self-rewarding so there is a built-in safety net. Let the dog lead the search! If you have a helper available, have them set up the search and not tell you where the hide is.

- Run simple box search on leash with 6-10 open boxes; hide pre-set; handler follows dog

Round 2 Box Work

Repeat again in new location either indoors or outdoors (weather allowing)

- Simple box search; blind to handler

Round 3 Box Work and more (not blind)

Add barriers, or create maze to get to the hides

- Place open boxes in the search area. Load difficult to access boxes behind a barrier, or create a maze-like situation for the dog to have to access the hide.

Round 4 Box Work

Repeat barriers, or create maze to get to the hides; no boxes

- Place hide behind a barrier, or create a maze like situation for the dog to have to access the hide with no boxes in search area

Homework

Train in new areas. Searches should include hides in the boxes, outside the boxes, and without boxes (once the context for searching has been established). Elevation should still be no higher than nose level. Be prepared to discuss the searches you set up this week.

Also this week please work in your platform drills and start some reverse pairing with your dog during sessions that you are not using boxes.

Platform Drill for Scent Work

In the video I am using a very young (7 months) spaniel who has severe separation anxiety. She requires a lot of close contact and direction and does not like to be too far outside my bubble. She will forgo food to be next to a human.

This drill is designed to get your dog out working away from you with a game that does not put too much pressure on them. This is a nice drill for dogs of all skill levels, and it is a nice one to pull out on rainy days just to maintain skills.

To set up the drill, you'll need your target odor, tin to contain it, tape, treats, and a bucket or stool to put the tin on. I like to tape the tin to the platform object so the dog does not knock it off or try to pick it up. If you have someone who can help you

by placing food on the tin for you that really streamlines the exercise, however if you don't you can use a leash, crate, or baby gate to reset.

The dog will likely not know exactly what to do with this game, but food is a good motivator and should lead them to the tin. If your dog looks around or to you for help, have your helper go and tap the top of the tin to get the dog's attention. If you are working alone, taking a step toward the platform while you cue your search word will help the dog move towards the tin.

I've found that dogs that struggle with confidence, are clingy, or very suspicious of new items are likely to need help getting them familiar with the game. If the platform itself is scary to the dog you can change it out to something like a bucket or overturned box/basket, and simply sit next to it and drop treats on it for the dog to eat, no tin is used at this point. Then when they are comfortable with the platform you can add the tin back in.

Gradually you can increase the distance between you and the platform so the dog is traveling farther and coming back to you. Bonus- this is also a great recall building exercise to play with your dog!

Give your dog time to problem solve in the early stages, wait them out rather than jump in and help them right away. Dogs with strong obedience and focus backgrounds will focus more on the handler initially than the platform. Let them work it out if they can, and once they see you placing the treat on the tin they will be more apt to go to it quicker with each repetition.

