

Workinggundogs, Leicestershire, Rutland, Northamptonshire, Cambridge Structured training for a balanced dog

Summer Gun Dog Training ~ the Dangers of Heat Stroke.

By Stewart North <http://workinggundogs.co.uk>



First, a few facts: Heat stroke kills gun dogs. And it kills fast. If you don't believe me, speak to the RSPCA who have firsthand experience with the casualties. The new Animal Welfare Act which is currently being drafted will include a code, for the welfare of Dogs, and my only hope is that it is sensible to the various needs of the people who work and travel with dogs all the time.

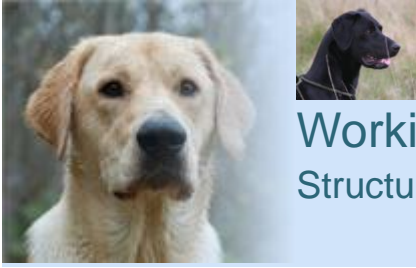
None of this is ever far from my mind as I prepare my dogs for the shooting season.

Here in Leicestershire, temperatures have been as high as 30 degrees in July. Your professional trainer should be telling you that a proper balance between conditioning and training a gundog for the grouse or partridge season is essential.

Here are a few tips:

Train Early and Late: I often train before 10am work when the temperatures are mild and there is dew on the grass (which helps with cooling). In the evenings, I wait until dusk to get a session in and often mix in water retrieves. I still need my gundogs to be conditioned for the heat, just in case it's a sunny day during a working test, field trial or just a normal shooting day when temperatures can still be very high, so whenever possible I work on obedience skills at midday—always with a watchful eye.

Don't Go Long: Use common sense when working in the heat. Keep retrieves short and opt for an area with shade.



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Water, Water, Water: Whenever you train, always have water and a bowl, you can also buy the collapsible bowl as a space saver, Occasionally, I'll douse a gundog during a training session to cool it off. Don't skimp. Always bring plenty of water.

Give them a trim: For long-haired hunting dogs, a trim can cut down on the effects of heat.

Watch for the Early Signs: One of the first signs you'll notice as heat stress occurs in your dog is rapid, heavy panting. As the condition progresses, the pup may have excess saliva and her gums may turn dark red. Under any circumstance, do not take these indicators lightly. If a dog with any of these symptoms lies down and won't get up, do *not* mistake this for lack of desire! Cool the dog down.

If the Worst Happens: If your dog starts stumbling like a punch-drunk fighter or seems dazed and confused, death could be near. You must immediately take steps to cool her off. Bring her to the shade and spray her with water, making sure to wet her underbelly. (An ice bath will constrict blood vessels, mitigating the effects of the cold water.) If you're near a vehicle, use the AC and get the dog in cool air.

Try to get her to drink water (or even a sports drink), and head to the vet's office.

Even a dog that has seemingly recovered should be examined. Some effects of heatstroke, involving the dog's vital organs, won't show themselves until the day after an incident. Also, once a dog has had a heat episode, there's a likely chance it will happen again, even under lesser conditions.

Always remember that as a trainer you must think like a dog—and, most importantly, for your dog. You make the decisions. Be sure to make the right one when it comes to training in the heat of summer.



For assistance in Gun Dog Training throughout Leicestershire, Rutland, and Northamptonshire & Cambridge Contact Stewart North at:

<http://workinggundogs.co.uk>