



RJ Pass Along

Field Notes: Spring Training and Thoughts

By Vickie Lamb

With spring on the horizon, opportunities to train begin to amplify. No matter the climate you inhabit, pleasant weather enhances desire and commitment to new training schedules. This article will examine ways to ease into spring while looking at overall training philosophy as well.

If you've only trained your dog intermittently throughout the winter, it's helpful to resume a more extensive training routine by first revisiting various concepts that your dog knows. This type of confidence work will not only build your dog's stamina, it will also focus his attitude positively toward work.

Any type of water work should be kept minimal until ponds and lakes truly begin to get warm, as advanced water concepts tend to promote more stress than comparable activity on land. Help your dog as he builds physical strength and regains his "thinking cap" toward marks and blinds, particularly with extended water work. For example, keep entries straightforward at the beginning – without angles and long distances – until your dog is in the groove. Build a good water attitude.



Since many land concepts can be transferred seamlessly to water, it's often helpful to do various tests on land that can be applied similarly in the water with success for your dog. You can work on corners of cover on land, for instance, and then go to corners of water for the same overall concept. Various changes in terrain on land can translate into navigating channels of water with in and out changes en route to birds.

Try to avoid the pitfall of pushing too hard and too fast as you resume training, as these human tendencies can seriously hamper the progress of your dog's overall year ahead. This can be harnessed by applying "balance" in training at all times, which is particularly important when a training program resumes after any slack time. Monitor your dog's confidence level, his success ratio, and his mental prowess.

With accelerated training, spring is as good a time as any to clean house with regard to your program and your philosophy toward training. How much show and tell you use can directly

affect your dog's ability to learn and retain lessons. 



Coming Soon: April / May 2012

"Spring Training and Thoughts" by Vickie Lamb appears in the upcoming April/ May 2012 issue of *The Retriever Journal*. Visit our [Coming Soon page](#) for a full Table of Contents and more excerpts!

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