

Dog Days of Summer

Summer arrived this past week with all of the heat, humidity and thunderstorms that we all know and loathe. Even though we have those nice long days that stay light until 8PM or so, the heat and humidity make field training tough for us and the dogs. That does not mean you can't get training done. This is a great time to either start the basics with your new pup or go back to the basics with your veteran.

You can do this fundamental work in your own backyard or the schoolyard around the corner. But if you want to lay down a solid foundation with the new recruit or iron out a wrinkle or two with the old hand, you could enroll in an obedience class at the nearest kennel club. Now, I know you could stop in at your local high volume pet supply store and work in a ring the size of your kitchen. However, what I am suggesting is training at a real dog training facility with trainers who very well compete in multiple venues such as agility or obedience and yes, some do field work too. You not only get the benefit of experienced trainers, but you also have a ring big enough to do real heeling, retrieving and recall work which is tough to do when you are wedged between two dog food aisles. Another benefit of the dog training facility for your pup is the vital socialization with other people and dogs.

At the kennel club, you will also meet other experienced dog people attending class with you who are doing the same thing you are, starting a new pup or working on a training issue. These people have wisdom of their own to pass along during breaks between sessions; a dog training network of sorts. Don't think for a second that the older lady starting out her third poodle in competitive obedience does not have experience you can benefit from. And, don't be surprised to run into someone else with their Lab or Shorthair getting them started on a hunting career just like you. You might have seen me in puppy obedience class this spring with my two pups.

So, how do you find one of these institutes of higher canine learning, this M.I.T for your MUTT? One way is by going to the AKC website, www.akc.org. On the homepage is a gray button bar with HOME on the left and near the right end a button labeled CLUBS. Clicking this CLUBS button takes you to a club information page. Either in the menu on the left or in the center of the page click on club search. Now a bulleted list of club types appears, I will refer to this page several more times. From the bulleted list, click on obedience clubs, you will get to search for these clubs by state. When I select Illinois, I get about 100 clubs. Some of these clubs do not offer classes, but many in the Chicago area do. Some have a website for you to click on to get more info. All have a name and address for a corresponding secretary.

You don't have time for snail mail though, you need a phone number. Not a sure thing but if they are listed in a phone book, you will find them using www.whitepages.com or the people search section of www.yahoo.com. If their club does not offer training, they are dog people and they might have a suggestion of who does.

Back on the AKC site, return to the bulleted list of clubs. On the bottom of the list is a link to Training Clubs. From here you will find your way to a map of the US. If you click on Illinois, you are presented a list of 22 AKC affiliated clubs that offer training, many of these in the Chicago area.

Another training resource for you is your local or regional breed club. Go back to that bulleted list again and click on Performance Clubs. From here you can select a club type such as hunt testing or field trial and state. Your breed club may offer summer yard work classes but if not, those folks have a lot of info and experience to pass along such as

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sources of training birds, training grounds and if needed a professional to take your dog to for working through a training issue.

You and Fido can accomplish a lot of essential training during the hot summer months either on your own or with the help of a kennel club. You both will be better prepared for the field work when the weather is cooler. Until next month, keep yourself and Rover well hydrated and keep it fun.

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