

Why Field Trials and Hunting Tests?

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"Why shouldn't I just buy a cheap bird dog pup from the first litter I can find?"

It's not a matter of buying a "cheap" pup. On the great scale of things in bird dog land, the cost of any pup is the most inexpensive part of what it takes to develop a bird dog that is even just decent.

We invest a lot of time, money and effort in developing a young bird dog. What many folks don't take into account is that when it comes to bird dog performance, at least 90% what it takes to make a good dog has to be in the dog from the start. You can't put it there, you can't train it.

In the U.S., there is a wide latitude in the amount of talent and drive that members of the various pointing breeds can possess. To be sure, there are great dogs of all the pointing breeds, but just as assuredly, there are dogs that are born duds every day that poor schmucks like you and I end up buying and suffering with for the life of the dog for want of sufficient talent and drive. The good news is that the good pups don't cost much more than the duds.

The stock that raises to the top in the various field trial and testing programs is the breeding foundation that we should be looking for even if we are out to purchase nothing more than a "huntin' dawg".

These specimens are the animals that have proven over and over again that they possess and can pass on the elements of talent, drive and desire that will care our hunting partner from weekend to weekend throughout the years of his life.

Formule 1

I like to compare the field trial programs in particular, to Formule 1 racing. It is the Formule 1 that over the years that has brought technological improvements to passenger cars through competition. The tires, brakes, cooling systems, fuel injection systems and the myriad of computerized improvements our cars now carry is a direct result of Formule 1 racing teams coming up with what "whatever it takes" to win. We want that high level of performance and reliability in our new cars and so it is with our dogs.

Dogs that can't hang and can't find a lot of birds with style and flair will not win and will not have long careers as field trial campaigners. Look to those lines of dogs that repeatedly and consistently finish titles, win national championships and produce dogs that do the same.

We are not looking for a dog that merely participates in field trials, we are looking to those lines of dogs that routinely succeed at field trials.

How to apply the tools is up to you

Don't be duped by those that say "I've seen field trial dogs and I don't want one that hunts like that!" Fair enough. You don't want to drive 200 mph to work every day either. But again, you do want the tools, talent and desire that field trialing distills out and brings to the respective breeds in improvement in that performance and talent. It's 90% in the dog, and only 90%. The other 10% of performance is up to you. How your dog applies those tools in hunting for you is up to YOU.

To paraphrase an old field trialing axiom that applies to bird dog performance:

"It's always better to be the one that has IT, rather than the one that has to go get IT"

Good Hunting!