



The Hunt, Point & Retrieve Breeds As Pets

We have had a lot of calls from new Hunt/Point/Retrieve (HPR) owners who need help with their new addition and as everyone who knows me reasonably well will tell you, I am passionate about HPRs especially our dogs. My husband and I have German Pointers (one of the several HPR breeds that are bred to multitask out in the shooting field) and a working Cocker Spaniel.

I adore the HPRs; they are such bright, intelligent and driven dogs and very eager to please, but can be very overwhelming to a first time dog owner. In this country the HPR breeds are gaining ever more popularity and even the Bracco Italiano and the Slovakian Rough Haired pointer - which are currently on the import register - are becoming more popular.

A number of these types of dog are worked in the shooting field doing what they were bred to do, which is to hunt the game, point it and hold the point until given the command to flush. Once the game is shot, they then retrieve it, hence the name 'HPR'. This may be on the grouse moors in Scotland or a bit of rough shooting in shooting counties, whilst some of these types of dogs are used for a bit of beating/brushing or picking up on local shoots, so the dogs get the opportunity to work. Not everyone lives in Scotland and not everyone has an interest in this type of pastime.



A number of people enter working tests and/or field trials whereby the dog and handler get the opportunity to show off their dogs' skills - or lack of them! Then you have those who show their dogs at the various breed shows up and down the country and abroad and who never work their dogs, whilst some do both; work and show.

However, the majority of HPR breeds are family pets and the owners have no desire to do any of the above activities with their canine companion and simply want to enjoy them, but sadly are finding them a handful and at their wits end as the dog pulls on the lead (they are very strong), jumps up, steals food off the kitchen work surface or dining table, or any number of other behaviours which the owner finds unacceptable. But don't worry, other breeds do these things too.

This is where at 'On the Scent' we feel we are able to help. We want HPR owners who have them as family pets to be able to manage them and have fun with them. We can make suggestions on how to keep a dog of this type stimulated both mentally and physically and how to have fun with your dog.

The HPRs are able to do more than working in the field. We encourage owners to do obedience at competition level or just for fun; heel work to music; agility when the dog is over a year old; fun companion shows; working trials; and being a PAT dog; along with teaching tricks and new tasks like emptying the washing machine. I've found that like with a number of dogs they respond well to the 'clicker' style of training and play training.

When we first had the German Shorthaired Pointers (GSPs), we were told that they MUST be worked. We were also told by several people that to stop the dog doing undesirable behaviours we would 'have to knock it out of them'. There are horses for courses but this is not my way.



So as you can see there are a number of activities you can try with your dog that doesn't involve shooting and even if you never want to shoot over your dog you can still have a lot of fun teaching them gundog training as another discipline so when you're out on your walk you can get them to find a dummy or toy you have hidden.

So wherever you live, if you own a HPR breed and you don't wish to do field trials etc and are feeling out of your depth then find a trainer in your area who understands your breed and will help you keep your dog stimulated.

I should say that a number of these types of dogs in my humble experience do not enjoy training indoors in small spaces, therefore a large indoor venue or outside is preferable.

Have fun with your HPR, whichever breed you have, and remember don't despair as there are people out there to help you.

For those of you seriously interested in training your dog for the shooting field then I suggest you get in touch with the breed clubs or associations of your particular breed and ask them for the HPR training groups in your area and then pop along and watch first to see if you like the way they train before joining up. Details of the HPR training groups can also be found by contacting the kennel club.



<http://www.thekennelclub.org.uk/>

Call Sophia on 01359 233 049 to discuss your dog training requirements.

www.OnTheScent.co.uk