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Extract from:

The Police Dog: History, Breeds and Service

Chapter 3

Dog Training Foundations

Although this book is not a training manual, knowledge of the historical evolution and conceptual basis of training, and current practice, is fundamental to an understanding of the breeding and deployment of sport and work dogs. These breeds cannot be fully understood and appreciated without hands on training; not everything can be learned from a book.

Obedience

Obedience is the essence and foundation of all training, the rest is mostly a matter of getting out of the dog's way and letting the instincts and drives nature and generations of breeding selection have created fulfill their intended purpose. You cannot teach a dog how to track, you do not even really know how a dog tracks; all you can do is teach him the desired procedures, to respond in specific ways and adapt particular styles. Even much of this is superficial, to satisfy the judge in competitive venues rather than actually having to do with finding something of importance in and of itself.

Protection dog training is essentially a matter of letting the good dog out, overcoming the inhibitions of early training and day-by-day life so as to respond with spirit and power when confronted by an adversary. Strong grips become second nature through proper sleeve or suit presentation and crisp outs evolve as the dog learns that a quick, clean out is the sure path to the next bite. But the instinct and drive to engage and fight must be there, cannot be created through training.

In police or military service obedience, especially under stress and distraction, is a prerequisite, but only meaningful to the extent that it provides a foundation for the scent detection and protection service rather than as an end in and of itself. For these reasons obedience must not be heavy handed or intimidating, which diminishes or interferes with the initiative and enthusiasm for the actual working service. These are important considerations in the evolution of obedience training foundations in drive building, with correction remaining, but as a necessary component to be applied minimally and with finesse rather than a heavy hand.

Although protection applications and scent work are covered in subsequent chapters, they must not be perceived as separate topics; this is about dog training, and while the focus is on formal obedience the most important principle for police work is that one trains dogs, not tracking, obedience and protection as separate, stand-alone skill sets. Obedience only finds meaning and value as the foundation of

effective search, substance detection, pursuit and apprehension functions which are the essence of police canine service.

To train a dog one must establish psychological distance, become his leader rather than his friend; just as in raising children the parental role must be exactly that rather than friend and companion. For these reasons, many serious trainers keep their dog in a kennel run, at least through the initial training, rather than the home in order to maintain the correct relationship and focus on work as the best part of life. (Often an older or retired dog is in the house and the young buck is in the kennel.)

Heavy handed compulsion will perhaps create a certain level of compliance, and is the usual method of managing slaves. This is effective for human beings because they comprehend long-term cause and effect, know that the overseer will have them lashed to a post and whipped until the back is raw to achieve compliance. Dogs can also to an extent be trained in this way, but it is ineffective, unpleasant and can be dangerous in that at some point some dogs are likely to become handler aggressive. You never get more than grudging acquiescence and you live with the fear that the dog may revolt at the most inopportune moment. The other end of the spectrum, the so-called purely positive approach, has its own set of flaws and is discussed in detail later.

Ultimately all training comes down to a balance between compulsion and reward; it truly is as simple as that. Compulsion very seldom needs to be a matter of harsh correction, and if the foundation of the relationship is strong and well maintained most dogs do quite well with minimal corrections, to the point where they are quite subtle, perhaps not even discernible to the casual observer.

Over the years different training methodologies have emerged and been touted, sometimes reflecting real differences in philosophy and process but often merely to differentiate and popularize a particular trainer, seminar or book. The consequence is that in the beginning each of us must sort out vigorously defended training methodologies and philosophies, each, like a religion, promising the one true way. Naturally other training regimens are portrayed as producing disobedient, out of control dogs living as they please or despondent, surely dogs under the cruel yoke of repression.

Obedience training in the broad sense has two somewhat divergent aspects. One is training the dog to respond to commands or specific situations, such as an escaping prisoner, with the desirable action, in this case pursuit and restraint. The other is less specifically obedience in the command and respond sense but rather related to establishing desirable behavior patterns as in house training, staying off the furniture or avoiding interaction with other, neutral dogs. It is important to notice that these aspects differ in focus: one is concerned with teaching the dog to respond in a specific desired manner, that is, the way that you, the judge or the rules require. The other is focused on what not to do, and the importance of refraining when no one is hovering with the threat of immanent retribution.

Obedience and general social deportment are best developed through reward and approval of correct behavior and minimal but sufficient correction of inappropriate actions or responses. Heavy-handed domination, breaking the dog to be subservient and cowed, is an inappropriate and self-defeating. The downside should be quite obvious: a cowering, intimidated dog is unpleasant to live with, and is much less effective for those needing a dog where initiative is an important aspect of the actual service, as in police or patrol service.

While police training is often thought of as tracking or searching, obedience and protection one must be aware that you train dogs rather than tricks and exercises; pressure and problems in one aspect of training are surely going to have ramifications in other aspects. Thus when you put pressure on in tracking or

obedience the dog may be a bit less sure in protection. In general, problems or pressure in one area mean that you should tend to hold your ground in others. In particular, if you are doing things like a forced retrieve or disciplined tracking then in protection the emphasis should be on fun and drive building rather than higher levels of discipline.

Remember, if your dog is not having fun most of the time then perhaps you are doing something wrong or you have the wrong dog. And when your dog is having fun, you will be having fun too. For the serious trainer the gradual realization that you are training the wrong dog is always a possibility. No matter how good the pup's background and how solid the foundation there remains the possibility that training will reveal inadequacy, in which case you face the gut wrenching decision of breaking the emotional bonds with your dog, so carefully nurtured, or going on with the knowledge that the original competitive or service aspirations are compromised.

The essence of effective training is establishing and maintaining the correct relationship between man and dog; the methodology or procedural details are of secondary importance. The handler must become the leader; the dog must work from the instinctive and accepted concept that life is good when the boss is happy. But the gap between man and dog should be small so that the dog can naturally have initiative and joy in his work within established guide lines. Actually, as one of my reviewers with a police administration background points out, this is a pretty good approach to managing people too.

Priorities

We have and train dogs for diverse purposes. Some of us want a dog with which to share an otherwise less fulfilling life and thus need one obedient and well behaved enough to be secure and compliant. Others desire a dog as sports equipment, acquired in the hope of one day standing on a podium for a few moments and waving a large, empty cup. Still others seek a working partner. In order to achieve these ends it is necessary to acquire a dog according to breed and appropriate lines – most of the working and hunting breeds are sharply divided between the real and the ornamental – and to select a pup with the greatest expectation of success, based both on pedigree and evaluation of the candidate in terms of physique and character attributes.

The skill and art of dog training often evolves over most of a lifetime. Those fortunate enough to have a well established training environment with abundant clubs and instructors, and especially those with an effective mentor, have an enormous advantage, can advance quite quickly. But many of us, particularly Americans involved in the early years of the protection sports, especially those involved in one of the so-called alternate breeds, struggled to develop the skills on our own, in an inherently frustrating trial and error process.

As a consequence many of us go through several dogs in order to reach higher levels, and the training process, especially the social aspects, must build the experience base, social connections and credibility to get a better dog next time around. Credibility is important because the best candidates normally go to those whose previous efforts indicate potential future commitment and success; while it is true that proffering enough cash will buy many or most pups, those taking this tack are unlikely to have the knowledge and intuitive instinct necessary to make the best selection. Even the companion owner will be rewarded for his diligence in training not only because of better control and behavior in his current dog, but because if perceptive and observant he will gain in the knowledge and insight helpful in finding good dogs down the road and training them with greater ease and effectiveness.

Training and obedience are synonymous in many minds, but for those seeking functionality such as pointing or retrieving in hunting dogs or search, pursuit and engagement in the police dog the obedience must be instilled in such a way as to allow the instinctive capabilities breed into the dog to reach their potential, so that the dog can hunt or retrieve in response to command or search for and physically engage an adversary under the direction of the police handler. In police work the release and guard under command are just as essential as the willingness to engage directly and with power; the trick is to consistently achieve and demonstrate the one without inhibiting the other. In order to achieve these ends, the training regimen must be holistic, that is a program that builds aggression and power, or tracking initiative, together with the requisite discipline and control. Training must be perceived as quite broad in scope, encompassing functions such as tracking and protection as integral facets of the program; it must become an effective means of developing and enhancing the whole dog.

At a competitive level many young dogs will be found wanting and thus discarded. In order to achieve success, the competitive trainer must start with the best possible candidate – which is why many are willing to pay substantial sums for an older dog already demonstrating the potential – and conduct his training in a manner that will clearly differentiate the inadequate candidate as quickly as possible without putting excessive stress on a dog which would otherwise have achieved success. This is by its nature a complex and demanding process, and all trainers fall short of these ideals to some extent. If there were an easy formula for cranking out winners there would be no excitement in the competition, for to be winners there must be losers.

In summary, although motivations and methodologies are as diverse as the people involved, the basic goals of dog training are enhancement of the desirability of the dog as a personal and family companion by instilling good manners and bringing the inbred drives and instincts to fruition for work or sport competition.

The Training Progression

Dog training has evolved over time. When I began in the late 1970s, in a Koehler oriented obedience training club, the primary reward was handler praise, and this was also the approach I learned in my early Schutzhund training. Food and prey or chase objects such as balls were not commonly used, and often disparaged. Many think of this as old school training, and some of us are not entirely convinced that it is obsolete.

During the intervening years a more modern school with emphasis on drive building and making extensive use of food and chase objects such as balls and Kongs, has come to the forefront. This has been enormously successful and transformative in competition venues. But the nature of this transformation is problematical to the extent that it exacerbates the ongoing separation between formal trials and actual police service in terms of breeding selection and correlation between sport success and suitability for real world service.

Men have been training dogs for untold generations, but the name most closely associated with the foundations of modern police and military training is that of Konrad Most in Germany. His 1910 book *Training Dogs a Manual*, translated to English in the early 1950s, is even today the classic reference to the old school foundations of police dog training. (Most, 1910) Bill Koehler's book represents a direct decedent of this philosophy, and his name has come into general use as a short hand reference to this entire school; in this sense there is really no distinct Koehler method but rather a continuation and evolution of traditional methodology.

Training regimens tend to be based on a sequence of teaching, repetition and proofing. There is nothing magic about these words but they do provide a convenient basis for discussion and experience tends to show that these stages are a natural pattern in the training progression whether the actual words are invoked or not.

You teach the dog, for instance, by placing the dumbbell in his mouth and holding the grip, and then on command taking it back and praising the dog, who complies because you have physical control of his head and the dumbbell. In time this progresses to the forced retrieve, that is, compulsion in doing the exercise, which often can be accomplished in as little as five minutes of the lifetime of the dog, after proper preparation and with consistent follow up. The new school alternative to the forced retrieve is a more inductive approach where the dog is encouraged and praised when he makes a tentative effort to take the object, this encouragement leading to enthusiasm and compliance. These are not distinct and opposing methods so much as the end points of a continuum, most real training incorporating a synthesis of both concepts according to the trainer's instinctive response to the needs of the moment.

Trainers become better and thus more successful by learning to adapt according to the individual dog and the needs of the moment. Mechanistic or cookbook training methods with a one-procedure fits all paradigm in general tend to produce mediocre results. There are rules, guidelines and principles in dog training, but excellence evolves through developing the instinct and confidence to break the rules according to the needs of the moment. Instinct is the key word here, for if the trainer needs to go through an explicit mental decision making process even the most transient delay all too often results in a lost training opportunity.

The use of the forced retrieve is a subject of intense ongoing controversy, not only in terms of the specific exercise but the underlying training philosophy. The Koehler approach, evolving out of traditional methodology exemplified by that of Konrad Most in Germany , old school if you will, was based on teaching followed by repetition where failure to perform resulted in a correction such as a tug on the training collar, and compliance brought forth handler praise. The more inductive approach relies on the desire to comply spontaneously arising from within the dog rather than from compulsion.

Teaching merges into the repetition phase where the exercise is performed over time with increasing emphasis in quickness, enthusiasm and style in the performance, with corrections for noncompliance, subtle or substantial according to handler instinct, and rewards. The efficacy of both correction and reward are dependent on precise timing, for a moments delay in correction is just punishing a confused dog. A delayed reward does not have as much immediate negative effect, but a repeated pattern of rewards as random events will tend to make the training more pleasant for the dog but do nothing to reinforce compliance, enthusiasm or style in the exercises.

This repetition phase tends to be the longest, indeed extends over the entire competitive or service career. The various exercises can gradually be incorporated into a sequence corresponding to the trial procedure, generally referred to as pattern training. The advantage is that the dog gets into the flow of the routine, anticipating and thus responding to the next exercise. The down side is that if something unusual breaks the pattern the dog may not maintain discipline or confidence in his performance. A further consideration is that the real world need for a dog does not occur in a foreseeable pattern of events, excellence in a police dog is in how he performs in stressful circumstances according to unfolding events and handler direction in response to the field situation. My view is that the competitive trainer should nevertheless do a certain amount of pattern training, including occasionally

the entire trial sequence, but that this should be in moderation, a relatively small portion of the normal training routine.

Proofing is having the dog perform under distraction, perhaps with another dog present, or a man with a sleeve. An specific example of proofing or distraction training is having fellow trainers throw a ball or Kong among themselves while you do your obedience exercises, teaching the dog that not all balls are his and that commands are not suggestions in case there is nothing more interesting going on. The ultimate proof is of course the actual trial performance.

These phases are in reality abstractions and generalities without hard boundaries, that is, teaching morphs gradually into training as the emphasis changes from showing the dog what is required to insisting that he take responsibility. Training in turn merges into proofing as increasingly overt distractions are introduced.

Many training problems have a root cause in preliminary phases of teaching. Generally exercises are introduced sequentially, one at a time, and training focuses on the new exercise until compliance is well established, with previous exercises done intermittently. If an exercise is not sufficiently instilled and established as a conditioned response before the next one commences, the dog may become confused and exhibit stress or avoidance.

Overly enthusiastic trainers will sometimes introduce distractions much too early and in an unfair way, which results in a dog being punished for behavior he has no way of comprehending as incorrect. As an example, I can recall a training class where the dogs were lined up and each handler in turn threw his dumbbell for his dog to retrieve. Naturally it was not long before a dog went out after his neighbor's dumbbell, and the instructor indicated that a correction was appropriate. This was wrong, for the dog had not been taught that it was specifically his dumbbell and his handler's command that required the retrieve. Sometimes proponents of Koehler come to see the distractions as an end in themselves rather than subsidiary to the training process, usually with negative consequences.

Although the progressions introduced here are in terms of the obedience exercises, they lend insight into other venues such as searching or tracking and the protection or aggressive search work. These applications differ because the objective is to induce the dog to explore and develop his natural and instinctive capabilities, based on the canine physique, the sensitive nose and strong grip, for use under handler direction and control. Here the trainer takes on more of a passive and supporting role, that is, provides the situation where the dog can learn on his own initiative, encouraged by handler praise. But in order for this training to be successful the ultimate reward for the dog must be the work itself rather than pleasing the handler, the primary motivation and reward must come from within the dog. To come from within the dog these responses must be incipient in the dog, and this is the purpose of generation upon generation of breeding selection.

There is so much more to dog training than a sequence of rote obedience exercises.

All in the Family

Large and potentially aggressive dogs require living situations where there is a commitment to training and discipline, owners with an informed desire for a serious dog and the personal commitment and psychological attributes to be the boss. Unfortunately in most police breeds today pet or commercially oriented show breeders have evolved emasculated lines, impotent replicas in a sense, in order to provide dogs with substantially less in the way of aggression, energy and drive adapted to casual owners. When we became involved in the late 1970s this was much less prevalent; our first Bouvier des Flandres (out of the Bowles lines) went on

to Schutzhund III and an advanced tracking title. In that era there was less distinction between work and companion lines, American and Canadian breeders having had stock much closer to the breed origins. Today, thirty years later, the commodity companions in most of these breeds, including the German Shepherd, Doberman and Bouvier des Flandres, are softer, less energetic and much less intense. The consequences of minimal obedience training or ineffective training are less serious than with actual police level dogs, but the potential for competition or service is also essentially nil. This section, while applicable to all dogs, is focused on these lower intensity or companion dogs. Those with dogs out of serious lines, even if not contemplating actual service or competition, need to become aware of the issues covered in the next section on competitive or service level training.

Training in manners and social behavior is not optional; the only question being whether good habits and desirable deportment is to be established or the dog is to establish his own behavior patterns and force you to adapt to his chosen lifestyle. Make no mistake, whether you realize it or not training commences the day the dog comes into your home in that specific behaviors are rewarded or tolerated and others discouraged. If the pup is fed from the table or allowed to sleep on the sofa the adult is going to persist in these things as well. It is not my place to dictate your behavior code. Indeed, if you come to my house you are likely to see an old bitch comfortably asleep on the sofa and a dog sprawled out on the bed. The point is that you must decide what is to be allowed and then consistently enforce your rules.

This is not a training manual, will not present the details of training methodology. You will of course want to refer to texts such as Koehler's basic obedience book and others as listed in the suggested reading section. But even the best texts will not directly provide the instinctive reactions in command, correction and reward that are the essence of training, which is why a competent instructor can be so helpful for the novice.

There is an enormous amount of intuition and timing in dog training, which is more in the realm of art than science. So much depends on the subtleties – attitude, timing, reading the dog. One can study a text and then go to the training field and do what it says in a mechanistic manner and yet, while the motions are more or less those described, the dog's perception may be very different because of variations in timing, emphasis and the nature of the individual animal. A split second can measure the difference between an effective correction that the dog perceives and responds to and merely annoying a confused dog. When it comes right down to it, no book can contain words that extend the gifts of perception and timing.

In training the dog is above all entitled to consistency; it is not fair to punish today what was tolerated yesterday. Teach him that he has to bark twice and roll over before entering the living room if you want to – just begin early and allow no exceptions if this is what is to be necessary for your satisfaction. Thus each dog owner needs to adapt his own rules, appropriate to his circumstances, preferences and life style, and then consistently enforce them.

Being a puppy is the time to grow, to develop and have fun. Most of the activity with the pup, and there should be a lot of time with the trainer, should be essentially play. The confidence and self-assurance necessary for stable, responsible adult dogs takes time to develop; to attempt to accelerate the growing up process by putting pressure on the pup to perform beyond his maturity is likely to have negative long-term consequences.

The avenue to success is through firm but gentle training of the young dog, keeping the training sessions short and crisp, varying the routine and working under conditions that are pleasant, which means in the evening or at night during hot summer weather. In training, once is often enough; if a dog correctly executes an exercise, a barrier retrieve or a recall, then praise him and leave well enough alone

and go on to something else. If you run it into the ground and finally cause a problem to surface then a positive experience has been turned into a negative one. Correctly timed praise, when the dog has truly been correct, is vital.

An element of force, and sometimes the infliction a correction, is inherent in every effective obedience program. The dog must come to accept that your orders require compliance. While the sessions should be generally short, sometimes it comes down to a contest of wills, of persisting because the dog avoids doing what he knows you require or does not take you seriously. On occasion I have been drawn into a lengthy test of wills in order to establish my authority in a situation where a physical correction was not appropriate or likely to be effective. For me this has often been a moving sit, stand or down in response to the command, a pattern of the dog doing one or the other but not the one corresponding to the command. On one particular occasion the dog, on doing the stand for examination, would be perfect right up to the end and then slightly move one foot. It was flat out defiance, pure and simple. A loss of temper would have been a setback, the next time the situation would have only been worse. It was a simple matter of waiting it out, repeating the exercise until the dog finally did it correctly twice consecutively and then praising him and ending the session.

By being patient and persistent the dog learns that doing what is required is the easier way. Thus the concept is to repeat the exercise as many times as necessary to make the dog understand that he cannot get out of it by playing dumb, without impatience or excess pressure. Then quit after two correct executions, being certain to praise the dog. In this way he is rewarded for correct action and hopefully next time will just do it in order to avoid the hassle.

But such confrontations should be the exception, for if you and your dog are not having fun most of the time something is seriously wrong. When there are problems with your training attitude or methodology it is necessary to resolve them before proceeding, for little will be accomplished unless both the person and the dog are willing participants.

There are a number of skills and procedures requisite to success in training, such as the use of the collar and leash as correction tools. Timing and technique are important factors that are best developed by experience and practice under the eye of one who can point out faulty execution.

But training procedures and tricks are ultimately of secondary importance, the essence of effective training is communicating with your dog. You must be able to understand his motivations, desires and fears and use this knowledge to make him understand what you require and motivate him to act accordingly. Whether your objectives in training are simply a safer, easier and more convenient life with your dog or trial competition, the primary objective should be building up the communication capability.

The physical and psychological demands of aggression-based training require much of the dog in terms of self-confidence, emotional stability and courage; attributes which come to fulfillment only slowly with maturity. The larger and more robust dogs required, such as the Bouvier, can take longer to mature to this level, and the stress of overextending the dog can be less than apparent until damage is done. Young dogs, although becoming impressive, are often still quite juvenile at a year and in need of being treated as such, regardless of how large and rambunctious they may be. Many problems are caused by the failure to perceive that emotional maturity often lags physical development; and there are significant variations in the maturation patterns of individual dogs to which the trainer must be sensitive. This does not mean that training must be delayed until the dog is mature, but that it must always be according to the maturity of the dog.

While the tendency is to think of training in terms of classes and formal sessions, the reality is that we train our dogs as we live with our dogs according to what we encourage, tolerate or punish. You do not have a choice about training but rather only the options of doing it well and with wisdom or poorly through the tolerance or encouragement of undesirable behavior.

It needs to be understood that dogs are dogs, not little people or children substitutes, although a little discipline of children works from time to time too. Dogs should be exposed to and learn to cope with increasingly demanding experiences, such as being in the crate, not lunging on a leash, and not jumping up on others. This is a short list of things that can be beneficial for a dog to become acclimated to as he grows up:

Spending a night in a crate.
Being in a crate when the owner is out of the house for a few hours.
Going to the vet, and wearing a muzzle.
Staying in a kennel run for a few days
Spending a day or two with someone else.

Not all of these are necessarily convenient or appropriate for every dog or the choice of every owner, but the more diverse the experience in the formative months the better able he will be able to deal with separation and other stressful situations as they occur in daily life.

Every dog should be acclimated to spending time in a crate; from an early age it is wise to crate train him, starting with a few minutes and progressing to several hours and then overnight. In this way you can confine and keep the dog safe – and the contents of your home intact – while you are gone, have service people in with doors open and other similar situations.

Transporting a dog in a vehicle should be in a well-secured crate. In a smaller automobile or utility vehicle the crate might be constrained by the size of the available location, but in a larger vehicle or the back of a truck the crate should be securely restrained. In the case of a traffic accident well secured crate will provide the best situation at the moment of impact and prevent the dog from getting loose and running away, being run over by traffic or becoming aggressive to police officers or others responding to provide medical assistance. Be aware of the fact that you might not be conscious to command the dog, and your lack of response will likely be extremely stressful for the dog, making his reactions less predictable.

In recent years public dog parks have become more popular. Some areas are set aside specifically for training, often further outside of residential areas, and often the people, who tend to be more experienced trainers, are responsible, careful not to interfere with others. We are fortunate enough to live on a number of acres and train in similar settings, but this is not always the situation. But other dog parks, particularly in an urban setting, are intended primarily for pet or companion dogs, and large numbers of loose dogs can be a volatile situation. If a dog park is an only alternative, consider going very early in the morning or when the weather is unpleasant but bearable so as to have minimum risk; for some reason the troublesome people and dogs do not seem to be early risers.

Competitive Training

Over the past thirty years there has been rapid evolution in working dog breeding, training and sport competition. Training and breeding have emphasized drive building, the creation of dogs which are perceived as energetic, responsive and

happy in their work.[1] Increasingly, competition rules and judging have abetted this. This is in many minds, including my own, a double-edged sword, for there has also been a gathering trend to be less and less demanding, particularly in the protection exercises, particularly in Schutzhund. The attack on the handler exercise is gone, the sticks are padded, the distances and threat level in the courage test have been incessantly reduced. What we have is dogs looking better and better doing less and less; perhaps they will ultimately evolve to do nothing with perfection. Schutzhund, now rebranded as IPO, has less and less relevance to the realities of actual police service. These trends have in general had negative consequences for training strategy and practice in terms of producing and deploying real police dogs.

There is of course a positive aspect to these drive building trends, more emphasis on motivation and encouragement rather than defaulting to immediate compulsion, which was always bad dog training, is on the whole a good thing. As competition oriented training has increasingly focused on early drive building over past decades, training has commenced earlier and become less stressful for both trainers and dogs. Discipline and compulsion will always be fundamental elements of dog training, but by starting young and increasing intensity slowly and with perception, and applying pressure with sophistication rather than brute force, the innate potential for an enthusiastic demeanor as well as reliable compliance with command can more nearly be realized.

Establishing desirable behavior patterns in the young dog as he matures tends to minimize the need for severity in correction. Historically the need for harsher correction was rooted in the tendency to delay training until the dogs were mature enough to cope with it, but the problem was that less discipline as the dog grew up created the attitudes and behavior problems likely to require more severity. It was in a way the old chicken and egg paradox all over again.

Drive building based training commencing at younger ages has demanded of the trainer more sophistication, perception and skill in that too much pressure too early can limit the long term potential. When the inevitable precociousness of the high drive pup leads the impatient trainer into overly harsh remedies the advantages of early training can be negated. The trainer needs to be constantly alert for indications that it is time to go slowly or even back off to allow maturity to catch up.

The reprimand or correction is necessary for effective dog training; but too often it is rooted in trainer frustration rather than a carefully applied response to disobedience. In order to be effective the reprimand must be immediate, measured and in response to an actual disobedience rather than confusion. Early training applied with a heavy hand is likely to result in a resentful, sullen dog and set the stage for long-term training and life problems. It is difficult for the novice and experienced trainer alike to know when the leniency appropriate to the pup is called for and when the dog is mature enough to insist on adult standards of behavior; it is perhaps better to allow the devious young adult to get away with puppy tricks for a few extra weeks or months than to force responsibility on a dog that is not quite ready.

In the initial stages of the protection training young pups are encouraged to bite and pull jute covered tugs and to run with their prize. This can gradually evolve to having a stranger present the tug, and then become gradually more serious in the game. At roughly a year of age, always according to the development of the individual, the young dog will be introduced to a relatively soft puppy sleeve.

Many years ago, in the early days of Schutzhund training in America, the teaching of the release or out command was generally delayed until a relatively

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[1] Drive is a term that has come into use meaning energetic and enthusiastic fulfillment of inherent genetic propensities, as in prey drive or food drive.

advanced stage of the training, when the dog was biting with confidence and overt aggression. The down side to introducing the release at this stage was the tendency to require severe corrections. The universal practice today is to introduce the out very early, in play before actual bite building. The pup learns that the clean release is the surest way to the satisfaction of the next bite, and the session ends with the dog winning the sleeve and taking it off the field as a prize. In this approach, the only release not rewarded is at the end of the protection phase of the trial, a relatively small part of the over training regimen.

The danger in pushing the protection work too fast is that apparent success and the resulting over confidence on the part of the handler may cause the youngster to be pushed too hard and consequently break down. A young dog can show impressive progress and strength in one location and working with a particular decoy and falter in another place or when facing another person. He who pushes his pup can do damage that will take months to repair and may in fact diminish the ultimate potential. Facing a large and aggressive man with a stick is meant to be a test of the courage and character of the adult dog; it takes time and maturity to build up the young dog to face the hard protection work.

The inherent problem inherent in the drive building trends is not in the methodology, which is generally sound when discipline is sufficient, but rather that trial rules and judging have been so accommodating to the resulting rote performance, more and more failing to vigorously challenge and test the dog through variation in exercises, overt decoy aggression and other means of more faithfully emulating the realities of street service. The rules and judging, particularly in Schutzhund, have evolved on the principle that what drive building produces must be the right thing, more and more ignoring the realities of actual police service.

For me, the most important objective of training a dog is not obtaining a trial title or even good behavior but the pure joy of participating in the fulfillment of the dog. It is a satisfaction to follow him as he works out a difficult track, persists even though changes in ground cover or cross tracks are momentarily confusing, and works out the problems. The execution of a set of obedience exercises by a good team is a pleasure to behold, calling for maximum rapport between a handler and dog. The protection work is the most spectacular, makes the greatest impression on the casual audience. When done well it is truly a compelling demonstration of what a good man and dog can accomplish together.

The Koehler Era

For many Americans introduced to canine obedience in the 1960s through the 80s obedience training was according to the methods and philosophy of Bill Koehler, the man whose training, books and seminars rightly cause him to be regarded as the modern father of American obedience training.

The Koehler Method of Dog Training, first published in 1962, quickly became the standard. Koehler more than any other American taught that obedience as preparation for the formal working trial and obedience resulting in a successful home companion are and should be the result of the same fundamental process. Koehler was decidedly old school in that, after an appropriate teaching phase to establish that the dog understands what is required; a level of compulsion is necessary and appropriate to produce reliable performance, even in the presence of distractions. Training with introduced distractions became the hallmark of the Koehler approach.

Koehler of course did not invent obedience training or the specific methodologies, in the early 1900s Konrad Most in Germany had produced an extraordinarily influential book, translated into English in the fifties. But the Koehler book formed the foundation for innumerable classes and provided cohesion and a common

methodology for many American obedience club programs. Thus when I speak of the Koehler method it can be thought of as a good representative of a broad class of training methodologies emphasizing careful, patient introductory training and then the evenhanded application of reward and compulsion to produce consistent results. In the Bouvier world for instance, the well-regarded Dutch trainer Caya Krisjne-Locker – who was not particularly aware of Koehler when she came to America as a teacher – teaches a very similar approach.

Koehler stressed handler praise as the fundamental reward, and was in general negative about the use of objects such as balls or Kongs or food as motivation in training. In his era the distinction between sport and real training was not nearly what it has become today, and as many point out it is not practical to carry a bag of doggie cookies on police patrol; it is a bit difficult to imagine a police officer with his automatic, radio and a shiny leather hot dog dispenser on his belt.

There were of course those in that era negative on the Koehler method, portraying it as stressful and unpleasant, even unkind, to the dog. Much was made of the ear pinch as an aid in retrieval training and suspending or hanging a dog in a response to inappropriate aggression. Many painted Koehler as an overly forceful and unforgiving trainer. And the truth is that some training done in Koehler's name was and is unfair and unnecessarily harsh; some trainers applied it blindly and with their own inappropriate extensions and embellishments. Some instructors could not seem to grasp the difference between distraction training and tricking the dog into a mistake so he could be punished. (When done in a law enforcement environment this becomes entrapment.)

I was fortunate enough to converse with Koehler in conjunction with various seminars, a couple of times over dinner and via a number of letters. He was most helpful and encouraging when I was in the beginning process of pulling my original Bouvier book together and seeking a publisher. Throughout all of this his emphasis was always on consistency and fairness to the dog.

The Bill Koehler I knew and saw in action, when he visited my original obedience club on several occasions, and in California, was a soft-spoken, low key, even gentle trainer. While the book covers a number of severe corrective procedures, these are included as the last in an escalating series of solutions, efforts to deal with serious behavior problems, where the remaining alternative might well be putting the dog down. In almost all instances they are the consequence of strong or fearful dogs becoming out of control and with the danger inherent in a physically mature dog.

I am willing to take extreme measures, such as the use of a rubber hose on a dog, where necessary. But to keep things in perspective, I have, to the best of my memory, taken out a hose three times in some twenty-five years of training, and actually used it twice. Both dogs were mature male Bouviers in other home situations. One was a dog with a propensity to go after small dogs. I took the dog to training night at our obedience club and, with the owner's prior knowledge, approached a small dog. The male went after the little dog and I rung his bell, struck him quickly across the bridge of the nose. Hopefully he had no idea where it came from and stepped back in some confusion. We subsequently approached another dog, and this time even though the lunge at the small dog was much more tentative, the result was the same. The third small dog was cause for a step back and that was pretty much the end of the problem.

Today the radio controlled shock collar has often taken the place of other, less sophisticated, methods of applying compulsion. This "hearing aid" can be an effective adjunct to training, but should come only after a thorough grounding in conventional training, and under the guidance of an experienced instructor. And of course the much cheaper and more reliable old-fashioned pinch or prong collar, properly applied, can even today be quite effective.

Overt compulsion in dog training tends to make the squeamish squeal. A prime example is the famous Koehler ear pinch as a means of reinforcing the dumbbell retrieve. The common picture conjured up is a long brutal struggle involving much resistance, pressure and compulsion. In general, the reality can be and for good trainers usually is quite different. Although I tend to use a prong collar as a correction in the forced retrieve, the principles are the same. My dog Iron was a good example, he was a very strong dog imported from Holland after police reports on behavior in the original home caused the breeder to get him back and offer him to me. Iron was subject to the appropriate preliminary training where the dumbbell is placed in the mouth and held until the release command is given, to make sure he truly understood what was required.

The fateful forced retrieve training occurred on one day. The dog was back tied with a two-inch leather collar; the pinch collar with the separate, foreword directed leash was put on. The dumbbell was offered and with a slight tug on the pinch collar the dog took and held the dumbbell. This was repeated a couple of times on the back tie, a couple of times off the back tie and a couple of times from the ground. End of the dreaded forced retrieve.

Not that it is always that easy. I trained one Bouvier male out of the fashionable Dutch show lines. This dog was entirely different. No matter how long the preparation was he would play stupid and resist the dumbbell. After a long and unpleasant session he would finally get the message and take the dumbbell. But two days later it was as if he had never seen a dumbbell before. The point here is that all dogs are not created equal, that the background, the breeding selection process in the lines behind the dog, has a profound effect on the trainability of the individual dog. Obedience training can bring forth and refine the genetic potential; but it cannot create what is not there, conjure out of thin air character attributes not latent in the genetic background of the dog.

As mentioned above, Koehler and others of his era was generally negative about the use of food and play objects as rewards in dog training. His general thesis was that these things are not reliable motivators; that you are essentially offering the dog a deal, do this and get that. This of course implies a choice on the dog's part, clearly not the road to reliability. In general the higher-level trainers have moved beyond this and incorporate play objects and food rewards in order to build drive and enthusiasm. Just as Einstein went beyond Newton in the understanding of the physical world without diminishing the stature of Newton, advances in training practice have not diminished the foundation laid by Koehler and the others of his era.

As a final point, many characterize Koehler, Konrad Most and the others of this school as being of the reward and punishment methodology. Punishment, defined as the infliction of delayed correction, is useless and abusive, for a dog can only understand an immediate action. But Koehler in his books, in person and in the obedience classes I began my dog training in emphasized above all else the timing of the correction and the reward. These accusations are false and dishonest, and reflect poorly on the people perpetuating them, whether out of ignorance or maliciousness.

The Post Koehler Era

Over the past thirty years, the use of food and prey drive objects such as balls or Kongs as motivation has become a fundamental component of many if not most training regimens. At an extreme, a few trainers promote what they refer to as a purely positive approach, where the dog is supposedly never subjected to correction or negative consequences. Koehler and similar traditional approaches are, implicitly or explicitly, often disparaged as old fashioned at best or as brutal and repressive at worst.

What is the truth of all of this?

The reality is that competitive canine events such as AKC obedience and the various protection sports such as Schutzhund and Ring have changed and evolved, with the emphasis on quick, crisp work and an enthusiastic demeanor. In order to accomplish this it has become increasingly necessary to select for what have come to be referred to as high drive dogs and build or reinforce these incipient drives, which have become fundamental to training for competition. An important open question is to what extent these trends in evaluation, training and breeding selection relate to discernible enhancements in actual police patrol performance, and to what extent they reflect and exacerbate further divergence between practical real world service requirements and increasingly artificial sport venues.

The research of Ivan Pavlov and other behavior scientists did much to consolidate and formalize our understanding of behavior, and his work on the conditioned response based on repeated cycles of reward for performance illuminates the process of training to create the conditioned response. A prime example is provided by animal acts, as in trained seals and dolphins, where the fish reward occurs during the actual performance. The adaptation of these conditioning and training methods from entertainment act preparation to higher scoring performances in dog trials is the essence of the modern school of canine training, and the effectiveness of this in terms of trial results is beyond question. The question that remains is what these evolutionary developments mean in terms of police dog performance on the streets.

Notice that the role of the human being in the performance based on the conditioned response is marginalized or even absent. The trained seal responds to the setting, the sequence of events and the expectation of the reward, the command of the man being secondary to the process, or even absent. The setting for the performance and the sequence of events are rigidly maintained to minimize distraction so that the conditioned response can play out. The sport trial obedience performance is in many ways similar, and the commands of the handler become almost secondary, reduced to the role of supporting markers in the sequence of conditioned responses. Trial judging is rapidly evolving into a world of style points rather than an objective recording of whether the exercise was actually completed correctly.

But the police canine officer operates in an entirely different world. There is no sequence of events and ceremony leading up to the conditioned response. The canine team responds to unpredictable unfolding events in an environment, often with serious distractions and extreme stress, where there is no do over, where a break down in discipline may have long-term consequences much more serious than a reduced trial score. The commands of the police officer to his dog are of course based on conditioning and training, but they are real commands rather than timing markers in a scripted obedience performance. Criminals are not apprehended because the police dog twists his body in a U shaped curve to stare intensely into the face of the handler, they are apprehended because the dog is alert, environment and situation aware, responding to command, able to adapt to the unexpected, to improvise in response to unpredictable actions by his adversary.

Older training books, such as that of Konrad Most, generally mention food only in the context of training food refusal as a safety precaution in order to keep a dog from being poisoned, either on purpose or inadvertently by coming across spoiled of contaminated food. Tracking or search training in this era is often described as an extension of the object retrieve rather than the food hunt of modern practice, and I have seen Belgian training done in this way. There is a case to be made today that the use of food for motivation and reward is a further – and some would say undesirable – step in the ongoing separation of training for points and training for real service.

Dog breeding and training cannot and should not ignore the advances in understanding revealed in the work of scientists like Pavlov and innovative hands on trainers, revert to a previous less sophisticated era. But questions and issues remain. One question is to what extent these new school training methods are useful in the preparation of dogs for real police service. But a more important issue is whether the evolving training and trial scoring realities are producing breeding and selection decisions for rote dogs which are animated and precise but lacking in the initiative, hardness and fighting drive that comes into question when the pattern is no longer there to support the rote trained response.

None of this is meant to imply that we should ignore methods demonstrated to be effective and useful, but our focus should be to increasingly build up the requirements of the working trials through features such as variation in the order and pattern of the exercises from trial to trial, longer distances in the remote pursuit exercises, a call off, that is, a command to return to the handler when the dog is in pursuit of the adversary. Our current trend is to more and more achieve points through superficialities such as focusing on the face of the handler while heeling, transforming our trials into events eventually determined by style points.

So, are the old school methods associated with names such as Most and Koehler obsolete, as so many would claim or imply? My answer is no. The basic Koehler approach is still fundamentally relevant and generally appropriate for the companion animal in inexperienced hands. This is particularly true of working breeds destined to mature as big and powerful dogs.

The evolution of obedience competition to emphasize the quick rote execution and strong focus on the handler has meant that top level competition is increasingly restricted to specific breeds such as the Golden Retriever and the Border Collie and, indeed, into specific competition lines within these breeds. Similar evolution has occurred in the world of the protection sports, and played a role in the separation of breeding lines into competitive trial and serious police service factions. In the companion dog world this has resulted in a divergence of obedience classes into those focused on the garden-variety home companion with no expectation of trial competition and more advanced venues for the serious obedience trial candidate.

Thus the obedience competition trainer, while his training in many ways may retain elements of a Koehler style regimen, will adopt his methods to gradually introduce combinations of drive building methods, that is food and prey drive objects such as balls and Kongs, into his program. In short, competitive success today, while it can be effectively built on a Koehler foundation, needs to incorporate elements of the drive building methods which have come into common use.

Just as a fishing lure must first appeal to the fisherman in the store before the fish have a chance to give an opinion, some training philosophies pander to what the novice wants to believe rather than what is actually meaningful in real life dog training, as in the highly promoted concept of purely positive training, essentially, if taken literally, a cult with a focus on love and understanding to the exclusion of compulsion. While this is probably on the whole preferable to the brute force of slave management, it is seriously flawed in terms of the basic nature of man and beast alike, for essentially the dog becomes an equal, and there is no leadership or control among equals; the truly useful and effective dog must obey commands promptly and reliably, which comes only through the discipline of consequences for noncompliance. The reality is that purely positive training is often more of a strategy to sell a book or draw people into seminars; in practice there is usually an element of compulsion.

Proponents of this approach will recite a litany of dogs they have seen or known of ruined through compulsion in training, which may have a basis in fact but indicates an inappropriate use of compulsion rather than that compulsion is not necessary. The implication is that by being nice to the dog you never have to force

him to do what you want, that he will naturally reward your friendly, undemanding approach by performing according to your desire. Many of us have been witness to the sad result of similarly permissive theories of child rearing.

In a very limited sense you can train a dog to do what he naturally wants to do without compulsion; exercises such as catch the cookie for instance. The trained seal jumps through the hoop for the reward, the chunk of fish from the pail. There is no force or compulsion, but the trainer can carefully select tricks with a quick response, and if a seal does not want to do a particular trick it can be omitted from the act. But in serious canine training the dog must learn to do things he would prefer not to do, as in release the sleeve, and must respond reliably and with vigor when there is no expectation of an immediate, explicit reward such as food or a ball to play with. This is discipline, not really present in the trained seal act, but fundamental to a dog that is going to go in harm's way on the street. Discipline ultimately requires compulsion. It may have very little overt force, it may be subtle, but it must be there.

If this sort of non-compulsive training is an overreaction there has been a persistent element of brutal training to inspire overreaction. But the mainstream trainers whose foundation is the tradition of Koehler and Most were not and are not in any sense brutal, inappropriate or ineffective; but it cannot be denied that things done under this banner have gone beyond good training into brutal training in too many instances. There have been video clips on the internet and television of American police trainers suspending a police dog with his feet off the ground and kicking him without mercy. (In this instance the video was taken public by another police officer, showing courage and compassion in overcoming the general and natural tendency to honor the blue line.) I know directly from two KNPV judges that several dogs have died on KNPV training fields as a direct result of brutal compulsion in training. These are unusual and shameful extremes, but they are a reality that needs to be incessantly guarded against.

There are those in AKC, Schutzhund and KNPV who have used very compulsive methods. Sometimes they may seem to have good success for a while, but in the end both the trainers and the dogs tend to burn out. Such training creates conflict the consequences of which will inexorably turn up at the most inopportune moment. And of course severely conflicted training is a good way to be very seriously bitten. One remedy is in judging, that is, for the system to reward a happy, up performance by giving the judge the latitude to reward more than just rote execution of the exercise.

Some will perhaps perceive such training as abusive, but these are important issues which require candid discussion. I do not believe that dogs perform well because they love you. I believe that dogs perform well because they enjoy the experience of training with you. When I was a beginner as a trainer I came to realize that I had to make the dog go to training, and that something was seriously wrong. Now all of my dogs pull to go out for tracking, obedience and protection. This is not bragging, I just simply stop and figure out how to restore drive when I find it is not present. Sometimes, this means finding a home for a dog, and that is the nature of breeding selection.

In all training, the time comes when track means track, heel means heel and out means out. The handler must be the boss; just as in my work I have a boss. When I was actively employed, my boss was usually a very good man, and we normally had an excellent relationship. Sometimes we might disagree, which is permitted. But in the end, the boss makes decisions and the employee carries out the plan or seeks a different situation. So it must be in dog training; there must be consequences to fail to perform an exercise the dog understands, and sometimes compulsion is necessary. No dogs in any serious sport or line of work perform at the top level without an element of compulsion.

The truth is that effective training is always a balance between compulsion and reward. It should be obvious that brutally applied compulsion, as in beating the dog if he delays an instant in fulfilling the slightest trainer whim, is stupid, cruel and more to the point fundamentally ineffective. But purely reward based training can also be cruel if the lack of real discipline results in an accident or a dog being disposed of as unmanageable, neither outcome likely to result in a good ending for the dog.

Effective dog training entirely devoid of compulsion, however subtly and cleverly applied, in reality cannot produce reliable, useful dogs. The slogan itself is primarily crafted to sell books, seminars or individual trainers to the gullible. The implication, and the appeal, is that one can train without any unpleasant compulsion or punishment; the reward of a hot dog chunk and pleasing the trainer can be enough. This is indeed the appeal of the slogan, but if this is applied literally it is preordained to failure.

If, on the other hand, "Purely Positive Training" in the end conveys to the dog that he can be positive that working with you will make his life pleasant – with the implication that less than the best effort will make life less pleasant – then it is little more than a clever slogan to sell a book, promote an individual trainer or attract training clients. In this case, the need of compulsion, while perhaps only implied, is nevertheless real.

Compulsion is a fundamental component of all effective training protocols, but used to excess or with a heavy hand is detrimental in that an intimidated dog will be timid in his work and erratic and unpredictable when confused.

In summary, I believe that:

He who uses the least amount of compulsion to train his dog is the best trainer.

He who uses just the slightest amount of compulsion less than necessary is destined to be a frustrated, unsuccessful trainer.

He who can discern the necessary level of compulsion is the wisest trainer and will have the reward of the best his dog is capable of.

Obedience Classes

Although much of a dog's training occurs as a natural part of daily living or independent training, there is also a place for formal instruction. The options include amateur and commercial group classes with much variation in size and sophistication – and cost – and private instruction. Private lessons are likely to be more expensive, but much more focused on your particular level of knowledge, the attributes of your dog and specific problems as they occur. An instructor or coach can often spot incipient training problems and thus nip them in the bud rather than after a poor habit is ingrained and thus in need of extensive remedial action, an ounce of prevention being better than a pound of cure. Group instruction, properly run, can provide good distraction training through the discipline of working in the presence of the other dogs, an opportunity to see alternatives that might not suit your dog and often become pleasant social experiences.

Effective dog training is on one level a relatively straightforward process, but in an era where many of us grow up outside the agricultural tradition, where dealing with animals was a routine part of life, there is generally a need for direct instruction. Training for competition or service is a more subtle and less forgiving process best learned hands on under the influence of a teacher or mentor. Experienced trainers can of course do much of their obedience and tracking foundation working alone, and even in later phases where others are necessary to

provide distractions or assistance there is no particular need for especially skilled people. But ultimately to rise to his potential every trainer needs mentors and colleagues who can observe and point out faults or make suggestions.

When we first became interested in Schutzhund in the late 1970s, some of those in our obedience club and dog people in general were seriously concerned about the protection work; there was a fairly widespread attitude that civilian participation in the protection was inappropriate and that the dogs would become overtly aggressive in inappropriate circumstances, a liability. Some obedience clubs would not allow guest training privileges for those involved. Although I have not been involved in AKC style obedience activity for many years and am out of direct personal touch, my general impression is that these concerns have abated.

Nevertheless it should be kept in mind that many people in general and some instructors are uncomfortable in the presence of high level or intense dogs and are thus best avoided. Also, some class situations allow or even encourage dog interaction, things like doggie playtime, which in my opinion is never appropriate for a serious police bred dog. In general those with police level lines, or generally with the associated breeds, need to ascertain the prevailing attitude of potential instructors or class situations and seek training assistance from those with enthusiasm and experience with such training, especially if the dog is to be involved in protection work beyond the basic obedience.

Protection training by its nature requires at least two people, the training helper and the handler, and is greatly facilitated by larger groups for things such as line handling and distractions. While this can and often is done in groups of two or three, in general larger groups – such as a sport club, police training unit, or even a commercial class – become the most effective approach.

Many amateur obedience training clubs offer classes, and these can be very high quality, cost effective solutions. There are of course many commercial establishments and individual instructors working out of their home or coming to yours. Begin your search with your social network, your friends and acquaintances, particularly those with well-behaved dogs. Ask around; inquire at your veterinarian office, do a quick internet search. Watch for an operation that has some history, been going on for a while. Be especially sensitive to an empathetic attitude toward the police breed culture and the protection work.

In selecting a class, the novice should consider his level of experience, the time he is willing to devote and what it is he wants to accomplish with his dog. The highly competitive AKC obedience or Schutzhund competitor that offers classes to others is perhaps not a good choice for the inexperienced dog owner who does not really understand what it is all about; for the pressure is likely to be incompatible with his needs and desires.

On the other hand the person who has done some training and wants become competitive in trial situations is well advised to seek out the instructor who has personally been successful in such venues. He should understand and accept the pressure and expectation of persistence and consistency that preparation for serious competition demands. He must also be prepared to accept that the instructor may inform him that his dog is just not good enough and that in order to be competitive he should get another one. (A second opinion is most definitely in order here, especially if this is coupled with an offer to provide a better dog.) This is simply the nature of things, for just as relatively few men have the potential to be a first rate athlete, not all dogs are good candidates for top-level competition, be it obedience or one of the protection forts.

In many urban areas there are a number of options from which to select a formal training class. Such classes are run by park districts, obedience clubs and private individuals of varying degrees of competence. (Anybody that wants to can hang out

a shingle and be an instant training instructor.) There is thus a wide diversity in class size, quality of instruction, philosophy and objectives of the program. Regardless of the organization involved or the philosophy espoused, the most important factor is the capability, experience and enthusiasm of the instructor, who should be seen in action if at all possible before a commitment is made.

The ideal format would be four or five dog/handler teams that met for an hour or less two or three times a week so that the instructor could give the amount of individual attention necessary and so that a faulty technique would not be practiced for an entire week before being corrected. If at all possible, avoid the large class situation, more than ten or twelve dogs. Such classes tend to result in a mechanistic approach, with the instructor demonstrating an exercise and then mass confusion as the class attempts to duplicate it.

When a potential class opportunity has been identified, it is wise to observe one or preferably a couple of training sections. If there is reluctance to permit this, be cautions, there is probably a reason. Mention the Koehler book that you bought and notice the reaction. If it is an "Oh my god, not that" be on the alert. A strong negative reaction might be a warning signal, you need a compassionate and sensitive instructor, but one committed to discipline in the conduct of the class and in the development of the dog.

In observing the training you should be alert to the instructor's control of the class. Are problem dogs segregated for separate attention? If serious problems are dealt with in class by stopping and working individually with the problem dog others may benefit from observing the problem and remedy. But if this becomes routine, it can quickly degenerate to the point where the typical student winds up standing around wasting his time and money. In the obedience club we were initially involved in the director of training and perhaps another senior trainer would observe a number of concurrent beginning obedience classes and be able to pull out a problem dog and/or handler for one on one problem resolution. In the more advanced classes such a situation would be unusual, for the instructor is dealing with someone they probably know from previous classes and problems will have been identified and dealt with.

There is a lot of variation in instructor quality, the discipline expected of the participants, the general level of the clientele and the number in the class. Many classes tend to be oversubscribed in the expectation that there will be significant dropouts, people who will come for a couple of times and then just disappear. This can work to your advantage, for you might end up with a very small class or even a semi private training situation. But in a really large class the individual is likely to be more or less lost in the crowd.

Active trainers with increasing experience usually evolve into group training situations instead of formal classes, where experienced fellow trainers can make suggestions, point out things they can see from the sideline that you cannot be aware of and provide opportunities to train in the presence of other dogs and people, as in procedures for reporting to a judge where two participants and their dogs are present, in the Schutzhund venue for instance.

Although my early obedience and Schutzhund training provided an environment where neutrality to all other dogs was a given requirement, apparently some contemporary training encourages social interaction among the dogs. This is a serious mistake. My recommendation is to avoid classes that condone or even encourage interaction with other dogs, impartiality and aloofness should always be an essential aspect of the training discipline.

There is a lot more art than science to dog training, and the instructor who has a set pattern and methodology that is expected to work for every dog may well be covering up a fundamental inability to deal with the dog and handler on an individual

basis. It is an unfortunate fact that such an approach is almost a necessity when dealing with an excessively large class.

Thus the novice would do well to consider private or small group sessions with an experienced instructor. Such an approach might be somewhat more expensive in the short term, but when you consider that in a class situation seventy or eighty percent of the time is spent standing around individual instruction may well be the more cost effective option.

Dog Aggression

A fundamental requirement of police canine training and deployment is ensuring that each dog reacts appropriately in the presence of other dogs in training, on the street and in everyday of life. This is especially important in the police breeds because of the size, power and inherent aggression and inborn, instinctive tendency to dominance. Much of civilian training deals with dominance and aggression as undesirable attributes, problems to be solved through training and breeding. But dominance and power in the police dog are not problems to be resolved but rather essential attributes enhanced through breeding selection. In order to maintain general order and safety it is essential for the police dog handler to have a clearly established leadership role which precludes direct canine dominance initiatives, that is, dogs posturing and making eye contact with other dogs, behavior which unchecked will likely ultimately lead to dog fighting. This is among the reasons that much of police dog training is done in groups where appropriate relationships with other dogs can be established and potential problems identified and dealt with.

Although dogs are not simply domesticated wolves, the consequences of their extended family social structure based on group cohesion, and instinctive reactions to exclude intruding outsiders, powerfully influence modern canine behavior. The domestication process over time modified these natural relationships according to new canine roles, but much of the aggression and dominance of the wolf is retained as the basis of the working utility. Although the stock manipulation aspects of herding evolved as an extension of the hunting instinct, predation control is based on pack or group cohesion with strong instinctive reactions to exclude all outside intrusions. From a historical perspective the primary function of the herd guardians was to regard the herd as the extended pack or family and thus to drive off or if necessary fight intruders, be they man or beast.

The key to human and canine survival is flexibility and adaptability. In the lowlands of the British Isles for instance the Border Collies deal not primarily with sheep in herds, but with sheep who routinely roam free to find sufficient grazing in a sparse and often rough environment, that is with steep slopes and deep gullies. This is of course only possible in regions where predator pressure is vanishingly small, and the wolf has been extinct in the British Isles for centuries. Thus the herding role evolved locally from keeping the animals in a compact group for effective control and defense to one of locating and retrieving effectively free ranging sheep. In this work the dogs of neighboring shepherds must often coexist in close proximity during the ordinary course of their herding work. But this style of herding is a recent evolution according to circumstances unusual from a historical perspective rather than typical of herding work in general. Over much of history and most of the world today the guardian role of the working stock dog predominates.

The fighting breeds, such as the Pit Bull Terrier, were for many generations bred according to the propensity to fight, to engage and persist onto death, any unknown dog. The cur, the dog not immediate and persistent in his attack, was ruthlessly culled. While the pit bulls on the streets today are often descended from among the rejects or excess fighting stock, and are often cross bred to god knows what, much

of the blind fighting instinct can be and often is still present, even when not immediately apparent. Sometimes the owners of such dogs are unaware of this potential and thus careless and irresponsible in the management of their dogs; and sometimes they are simply on the lookout for the opportunity for their dogs to dominate and thus prove their manhood.

Thus on the streets and in the neighborhoods of contemporary America we have dogs from diverse backgrounds with widely differing social propensities, from those basically a generation or two removed from fighting stock to those from more cooperative backgrounds much less likely to initiate aggression or dominance. In light of this the only sane way to raise and train dogs for this environment is to reinforce from the beginning the concept that new dogs in new situations must be ignored, that guarded neutrality is the appropriate response.

Yet it has apparently become fashionable in many pet training circles to have doggie playtime as part of training classes and in general encourage playful interaction. In the newly fashionable urban dog parks, it is apparently the expectation that large numbers of dogs can just be turned loose together and expected to interact peacefully. (There are also many public training areas, and here there is a strong expectation that each owner will keep his dog under control and avoid interfering with their training.)

If you teach your dog that an unknown dog is an opportunity to make new friends, there is always the possibility that he is going to start a fight without really understanding what is happening. All dogs should be taught to remain neutral in the presence of other dogs, not to initiate interaction; one should be leery of any training venue where the instructor is not firmly committed to this principle.

The Electric Training Collar

Beginning in the 1970s, the radio controlled electric shock collar, which enables a remote correction, has gradually come into common use. These units have over the years become much more sophisticated, reliable and affordable. When applied with skill and discretion they can be enormously useful in many situations such as small, fragile or disabled handlers with larger or more hardheaded dogs. They have also come to have a well–established place in the mainstream of canine training and even sometimes in deployment. The modern units allow the adjustment of the level of correction remotely, according to the needs of the dog and the situation. Many units have a vibration feature, a separate button on the remote control that causes vibration that the dog perceives without the corrective element of the electric shock. This is enormously useful in training; my own experience is that once the dog has been properly introduced to the collar the use of the vibration is much more prevalent than an actual shock correction.

That said the potential for inappropriate use or abuse is there. The novice should not begin by strapping on the electric collar and experimenting on his dog, but rather should proceed through initial training in the conventional way, with a collar, long line as necessary and leash. The guidance of an experienced trainer or instructor leading up to the initial use of the electric collar will generally facilitate safe and effective use. More experienced trainers will generally introduce the electric collar according to their perceived needs and preferences, always with great care in the initial introduction and acclimation process. It is generally appropriate that the dog should wear a dummy collar or the regular collar turned off during preliminary training so as to lessen the association of the equipment with the correction; although most dogs quickly learn to associate the collar with the possibility of a correction, and, more to the point, the lack of a collar with an electric correction not being possible.

E collar use requires patience, timing and discretion on the part of the handler; attributes that however latent in the beginner need to be developed through the normal collar and leash training process. When you make a mistake in timing or correction level with the training or prong collar it is immediately obvious, the link between cause and effect is apparent. This tends to provide quick, obvious feedback and allows the handler to develop the skill of the appropriate, well-timed correction.

There are those who make a business of running expensive weekend seminars where the novice is led to expect that in two days he will be introduced to the E collar, probably sold to him at substantial mark up, and jump over all of the effort necessary to build skill and insight by traditional training methods. Such people are akin to the old-fashioned snake oil salesmen, and will likely be out of town counting their cash when the negative consequences of the poor training begin to emerge and become apparent.

Breed Considerations

Specific breed commentary has been avoided in this training discussion because it tends to evolve into excuse making and encourage reality avoidance in the enthusiastic breed advocate, especially the novice. The foremost principle is that one must train the dog in front of him rather than some abstraction of all dogs or the mythology of a particular breed, that is, adapt methods and temper responses according to what is experienced with this dog rather than preexisting expectations, often illusions based more on mythology than objective reality.

My experience has led to the conviction that at the elementary level dog training is dog training, that those learning the process should not commence working with a Rottweiler, Bouvier or Doberman based on perceived esoteric breed characteristics, but rather should train the dog in front of them, adapting timing, pressure and technique according to what is actually experienced rather than what is projected from expectations often rooted in breed mythology. With experience over a number of dogs specific breed propensities – the intensive defensive drive of the Bouvier, the flash of the Doberman, the stubbornness or the Rottweiler – will emerge as generalities, but one should discover and adapt to these things as the training progresses rather than proceed according to preconceived expectations. As one advances in experience and expectations expand to embrace more competitive scores in competition, seeking out guidance from those with a history of success in a particular venue or breed will help to evolve the insight and experience necessary to perceive and deal with emerging behavior characteristics in their early stages when they are easier to channel and correct.

That said, selection of a particular breed, lines within that breed and a specific pup or young dog within those lines has enormous consequences in terms of the potential for satisfaction in a particular sport venue or service application. The appropriate sports equipment for IPO or one of the suit sports is a German Shepherd or increasingly a Malinois, and those whose primary objective is to wave a cup go directly to these breeds, and so should you if this is your priority.

Certainly the Rottweiler advocate should work within his breed, and when he goes on the sport field his dog is judged according to the same rules as any other. But the rules have primarily evolved under the influence of the German Shepherd establishment for IPO and the Malinois community for the other sports, and beyond the basic requirements of the exercises the winning points are in the style of the performance in the eye of the judge, who became a judge by convincing other judges that he could and would give the winning points according to the traditional expected style. Is this right of fair? Probably not, but it is reality. To be a "winner" the Rottweiler enthusiast needs to find a young dog that he can train to do a

convincing German Shepherd impersonation, that is snappy stylish healing with the neck in a big U shape to stare intensely into the eyes of the handler and speedy recalls. But the Rottweiler was created as a massive, powerful, aggressive dog – one certainly capable of obedience, reasonable social deportment and completing a trial obedience routine. But it is unrealistic to judge such a dog in terms of the style, flash and subservience of a sport winning Malinois or German Shepherd.

One must come to understand that at the higher levels the dog sports are a political and commercial process and that those making the rules, certifying the judges and especially selecting the judges for elite events are doing so for their own diverse agendas, which ultimately relate to supporting particular breeds, national pride and commercial interests. If this offends your sense of amateur idealism, take note of the fact that the Olympic games have given in and openly embraced professionalism, overt commercialism and nationalism, with the façade of amateurism relegated to the disappearing world of university athletics participated in by rich young men with no need or expectation of a professional career. Today American college football is a world where amateurism is little more than an excuse to cheat the "student athletes" out of a legitimate share of the enormous profits. Why should anyone expect dog sports to be different?

At the end of the day, dog training can only be successful when one selects a candidate dog, training regimen and guidance according to his own goals and expectations, finds fulfillment and satisfaction from within himself rather than according to the manipulation of organizations primarily serving the interests of the establishment insiders and those seeking to derive income from their involvement.

Sport and Service

As we have seen, much of contemporary obedience training is based on the conditioned response to the cue or marker, one variation being clicker training, the objective being to take a dog to the trial field or ring and reliably, like clockwork, demonstrate a precise pattern of conditioned responses. The rules, judging and tradition are all geared to minimize distractions or variations in the environment or routine. But the police dog does not live in such a pristine, well-ordered world, must respond to unpredictable events and challenges, often under the stress of a hostile engagement. The old school Koehler style – typical of traditional training – puts emphasis on distractions and unforeseen challenges, on exposing the dog to so many novel situations and occurrences that he emerges well prepared to deal with the intrinsically unpredictable nature of the street working environment. This inherent, profound conflict between sport and service has serious ongoing consequences for police dog breeding and deployment, for rote sport training does not in the long term well serve either breeding selection or training for actual police service.

My expectation is that if this trend continues unabated police and sport lines will diverge to the point where they separate entirely; the emerging preference of KNPV and ring style Malinois for police service may well be the harbinger of things to come.

From the beginning, at the turn of the twentieth century, these training and evaluation venues had diverse and ultimately conflicting functions:

- Identification of suitable dogs for breeding so as to enhance the overall quality of individual breeds and lines in terms of willingness, initiative, physical aptitude, stability and courage.
- Fostering an emerging community of trainers and especially instructors and training helpers so as to evolve and propagate increasingly more effective training regimens and make this emerging body of knowledge more generally accessible.

Provide a competitive sport venue as a recreational outlet for amateur trainers, thus providing an ongoing source or pool of young trainers, instructors and especially training helpers.

Multiple objectives unfortunately tend to have the potential to foster tension and compromise as conflicting priorities emerge. As sport participation becomes the primary objective and competition intensifies the focus is increasingly on trial points with less regard for other, often unintended, consequences of the training regimen. As competition becomes more intense winners and champions are increasingly those teams which can flawlessly display a precise rote performance. The need to differentiate between increasingly similar performances should have led to more demanding exercises so as to reveal the intrinsically better dogs, that is variation in the routine, novel distractions in each trial, greater distances and in general more physically and psychologically challenging exercises.

Instead, especially in Schutzhund, judging came to focus on stylistic aspects, such as intensive focus on the handler in the healing or snappy sits, in order to differentiate among increasingly precise dogs. Even tracking and protection evolved to become stylized sequences of exercises with emphasis on rote obedience rather than more effective performance, where style points predominate over evaluation of attributes important for police work such as initiative and stability in the face of unforeseen and unprepared for occurrences. Most critically, initiative on the part of the dog becomes a fault rather than an essential aspect of his usefulness; all other things are sacrificed for the servile performance. The problem with all of this is that when increasingly formalized sport drives the selection process it will produce higher scoring dogs but not necessarily better or even in the longer term adequate police dogs; if you for test for the wrong things ultimately you are going to wind up with the wrong dogs. As a consequence the cops, at least the smart ones, begin to look elsewhere.

In my professional career as an electronic and systems engineer, primarily concerned with the evolution and deployment of public safety radio and dispatch systems for police and fire agencies, it was my practice to spend as much time as possible on customer sites, riding along with a patrol officer or spending a night in a dispatch center. Interaction with the patrolmen, sergeants and dispatchers as well as the department technical and administrative personnel provided an enormously useful insight into real world police communication, dispatch and control functions. On one level system creation was a matter of antenna site design and placement, radio circuitry and integration of the communication infrastructure into the agency computer operations, but much more important was the way the system interacted with and enabled the personnel, the dispatchers and responders in the field. Such things simply are not obvious or even comprehendible to an engineer sitting at a desk or running computer simulations in a research laboratory. It was not literally hands on experience, but it was the next best thing.

In a similar way the evolution and advancement of police dog breeding and deployment is most effectively realized through active police trainer, handler and administrator participation so that evolving breeding lines, training regimen and trial criteria can be based on realistic service requirements rather than arbitrary exercises conjured out of thin air by sport bureaucrats and show breeders. When police trainers and handlers, bringing street perspective, are not an active part of the process over time it tends to drift off course, serves the wrong training priorities and as a consequence ultimately produces the wrong dogs. Some venues such as Dutch KNPV have always had strong police participation, but Schutzhund and even more egregiously IPO evolved in the latter half of the twentieth century according to the needs and profit of show breeders and canine bureaucrats with little or no concern or empathy for the requirements of actual police dog service.

As a practical example, refusal of food from a stranger or found on scene is an important part of police service preparation, and part of the evaluation process in KNPV and ring trials, because poisoning the police dogs or inadvertent contact with spoiled food is a real hazard of service. But Schutzhund and IPO, where food as a motivator and reward is common in much of the training, do not have food refusal requirements, ignore the practical consequences. In a similar way, the arbitrary nose in each footstep style of Schutzhund tracking is largely trained by putting food in each footstep, not only creating a working style less and less relevant to practical work but potentially setting the dog up to be poisoned in his service.

Although this divergence in the priorities of sport and service has been especially disruptive in America, in many ways retarding progress toward an increasingly independent domestic breeding and deployment culture, which can only evolve through police and civilian cooperation, it is also an ongoing and disturbing trend in Europe. But many experienced Europeans, and younger Europeans with established mentors, are much better able to carry on their breeding and training in the old ways, especially in unified and cohesive clubs and training groups. Unfortunately for Americans our involvement, in the 1970s and 80s, came at a time when this divergence was emerging, thus thwarting the establishment of police and sport cooperation, and fostering ongoing dependence on European support and dogs. Commercially, this has been to the advantage of many European breeders, judges, dog brokers, politicians and canine organization bureaucrats.

Angel's Lair All Breed **Angel's Lair Schutzhund** **Police Dog Book**