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“I like what Walker says and the way he says it. This manual is a bird dog trainer’s bible. You can train dogs by it.”

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“This book contains lots of information, stresses respect for dogs, and with it good dog training can be done.”

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“The kindness of the training and the way it all ties together are major strengths of Dave’s book. It explains every phase of dog training a person would ever want.”

—*Jerry Jordan, Kojac Kennels, Inc., IA*

“As an exhibitor of purebred dogs, a few years ago I decided to train my dogs for hunting and field trialing. While attending a well-known dog training seminar, I asked about field trialing and was told, ‘Just do it.’ The seminar information was not commensurate with the cost. When I met Fay and Dave, they willingly shared their vast training expertise with me. Of all the dog books I’ve read, Dave’s book is the only one that covers all phases of training—puppy to champion. It is excellent, and the emphasis on the correct use of the e-collar is one of its strongest parts.”

—*Charles H. Smith II, Senopab Kennel, TX*

# **The BIRD DOG TRAINING MANUAL**

**How to Make Your Dog a  
Great Hunter or a  
Field Trial Champion**



**Dave Walker**

**Wade & Moeur Publishing, LLC • Ontario, Oregon**

# **The Bird Dog Training Manual**

## **How to Make Your Dog a Great Hunter or a Field Trial Champion**

**by Dave Walker**

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## **Preface—Note to the Reader**

*“In order to really enjoy a dog, one doesn’t merely try to train him to be semi-human. The point of it is to open oneself to the possibility of becoming partly a dog.”*

—Edward Hoagland

Dog training is an art, not a science. Good bird dog training is like a piece of fabric. It is seamless—not separate pieces stitched together. No one part is separate from the other parts. Many a good dog has been ruined because a trainer tried to teach one thing at a time.

This book is an effort to explain simply, straightforwardly, and honestly the most humane and effective way to train dogs. I’m neither withholding tricks of the trade nor suggesting any procedures or tactics that haven’t been tested and re-tested—often through countless trial and error sessions with dogs.

My intent is to share my love of dogs and my dog training experiences with people who love their dogs and want them to become the best they can be. It’s my earnest hope that this manual will help people become better dog owners, better dog handlers, and better dog trainers—maximizing the pleasure of the relationship between a person and a dog.

When I was a boy, my father began teaching me to hunt. While learning to hunt, I became interested in training dogs. I wasn’t particular about what kind of dogs I had, as long as I had dogs to train and to hunt. I had black and tan hounds, beagles, pointers, setters, and several “Heinz 57” mixed breeds and valued all for their particular abilities.

When I started training dogs, I watched and listened to local trainers who were using traditional methods. They powdered a dog’s behind with bird shot if he flushed or chased birds. If he blinked birds, they took him on a one-way hunting trip. They twisted his ears or toes for disobedience. They stepped on his foot to teach him to give up a retrieved bird. It didn’t take long for me to figure out that cruelty and harshness were key components in their training.

As I studied the training techniques of the day, I decided there must be a more effective and more humane way.

Dogs—like children—want to please, but to do so they must first be taught what pleases and what doesn't. At that time I started experimenting with different techniques—specifically concentrating on combining training components with dog walking.

Cruelty or inhumane treatment plays no part in my training. Dogs cannot learn when they're hurting or feeling they're being hurt either by your actions or the tone of your voice.

In the early '60s I began experimenting with the electronic collar, commonly called an e-collar. When an e-collar is used correctly, it doesn't hurt a dog; it spooks him. I had already found that I needed to put a collar on dogs so I could use the collar to shake or *spin* (lifting a dog's forefeet off the ground and rotating him 360 degrees) him for correction. I was looking for something—I wasn't sure what—to use with the e-collar to reduce its spooking effect.

Retiring from the U. S. Navy in 1973, I devoted all of my time to working with dogs and developing my training techniques. I was still searching for something to use with the e-collar. When I saw a training collar in a magazine, I ordered it because I thought it could be used to spin a dog and it might be something that could be used with the e-collar.

Training with Bill West, I noticed he was using a training collar similar to the one I had, but his was better. Using those as prototypes, I began modifying them and eventually came up with my version of a *no hurt* training collar. This collar is more humane and is equally effective as other training collars. Through the years I've made and sold hundreds of my *Dave Walker™* training collars. See **Appendix 4 – Useful Names and Addresses**.

Continuing to experiment, I found that by using a check-cord attached to the training collar, I could flip the check-cord to make a popping sound with the buckle connecting the training collar and check-cord. The sound got the dog's attention, but it didn't spook him. Through trial and error, I learned the spooking effect of the e-collar could be mitigated by simultaneously combining the shaking of the collar, the feel of the e-collar, and the popping sound of the training collar buckle.

I began training with the dog wearing both the e-collar and the training collar. At first I used just the check-cord and training collar—not the e-collar—to get a dog’s attention. When a dog began to respond consistently to the stimulation of the check-cord and training collar—after many training sessions—I combined the stimulation of the e-collar with the training-collar stimulation. The dog did not separate the stimuli. I never use the e-collar alone until all field work is completed.

The principle of my training is akin to associative learning—learning that is based on the belief that ideas and experiences reinforce one another and can be mentally linked to enhance the learning process.

Through the years I’ve developed a way of training bird dogs, using the e-collar in all phases of it—not to hurt the dog but to enhance both speed of learning and retention. I use it as a training device as well as a correction device. A dog can learn from fear, but fear spoils the great relationship of a hunting team: companions in the field enjoying and pleasing each other. The results of my years of experimental training have become known as *Walker’s Way*. My method is simple: walk a dog in a prescribed manner and simultaneously teach verbal and nonverbal commands.

To have a dog you enjoy and are proud of, train him logically, treat him humanely, and consider his needs and wants.

My dog training is not compatible with the practices and procedures of most other dog trainers. If you’re going to use my way, do not use potentially harmful or confusing gadgets, devices, or techniques such as choke chains, whoa posts, barrels, pinch collars (also called spike collars), half-hitches around a dog’s belly, poles, bird launchers, dizzied birds under bushes, knots in check-cords, and so forth. These have no place in my training. When people want to know if I use any gadgetry, I tell them, “No, I can’t carry those along on my back when I’m training or hunting in the field.”

If you do not have a check-cord, training collar, and electronic collar, or are not comfortable using them, you can still use my method of dog training. You will need some kind of lead—one no more than 12 feet long—which you attach to your dog’s ID

collar. You must not talk to your dog except to teach explicit verbal performance commands. Follow the same procedures given in this manual: walking, flipping the lead, shaking or spinning the dog for correction, never letting him pull on the lead, and petting him when he makes proper responses. This training (without a training collar and an electronic collar) takes much longer, and the retention rate is not as great. It's a matter of personal preference, the amount of time you devote to the training, and the extent of training you want your dog to have.

The art of walking a dog while teaching all the commands is central to my training. This training is done through mental and physical strategies and positive reinforcement, rather than through physical practices that may cause pain, fear, or confusion. Your dog will respond to this type of training. Praise through petting brings pleasure to your dog and makes him want to please you by responding to both verbal and nonverbal commands.

Repetition and consistency are essential. The training is not linear; it is cyclic. Training is not like putting nuts on bolts. All too often trainers think that once they've taught a procedure it's permanent. Such is not the case. You must constantly go over previously learned experiences as you introduce new ones. Just as children learn, dogs learn by constant and consistent reinforcement. Be consistent and work with your dog every day if possible. He will retain the information longer. In education this is called carryover. The more intense the training the more carryover you will get, and you will have to spend less time repeating elements of the training.

This training is highly effective and can be used to train very young dogs because it doesn't frighten or hurt them. It can be initiated much earlier than other types, and dogs retain it much longer.

By using this manual, you can train your dog to be your best buddy—one you can be proud of as a hunter or field trial champion.

—Dave Walker

For ease in writing, the word *dog* in this manual refers to both sexes.

**CHAPTER 7**

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**TRAINING IN THE FIELD**

**Chasing Birds**

**Gun-Shyness**

**Running at Birds**

***Steady-to-Wing***

***Steady-to-Wing-and-Shot***

***Steady-to-Wing-Shot-and-Kill***

***Steady-to-Wing-Shot-Kill-and-Retrieve***

***Relocating***

***Stop-to-Flush***

**Honoring**

