

## **Training Smart Making the Most of a Piece of Land and How to Keep the Land You've Got**

by Anne Everett

### **Making the Most of a Piece of Land**

As the amount of land available for field training continues to decrease in this part of the world, field trainers are having to become more creative with how they use the land they still have access to. Many of us don't have the luxury of being able to go to a different piece of ground each time we train. However, with a little creativity and thinking outside the box, it is amazing what you can accomplish in just one field.

For the purposes of this discussion, assume you have access to a field 200 yds long by 200 yds wide as shown in Figure 1. It's relatively flat and ideal for drills. On this one field you can start by lining to a back pile and teaching your force to pile (A). Once that is complete, add a three way casting drill (B, C and A). Your back cast is to the back pile you have forced to previously. Once your dog understands casting then run your mini-pile drill at that same place. You already have the piles identified through earlier work. The whistle sit can be taught in your backyard and the whole thing can be put together in the field. If all goes well you now have your dog, stopping, casting and running through to a back pile. To build the double T, simple back up until you have the dog running 80-100 yds to the back pile. Then add your two over piles about 20 yds from the line (D and E).

Once the double T is complete you can run your 3-5 legged pattern on the same ground. Just turn around and utilize the second half of the field (1-5). Once your dog is smoothly running the 3-5 legged patterns you can start to increase the distance of your casts on the 3-5 legged patterns. In addition you can introduce diversion marks with blinds and key relationship drills. i.e. a blind run under the arc of a throw, a blind run over an old fall etc. (6,7). The wagon wheel lining drill can be done incorporating the double T (dotted lines).

All of this takes you through early transition work and it's all done in one small field!

### **Where to Find Land and How to Keep It**

It doesn't take huge amounts of land to train marking concepts. Any small bit will do. Public parks that allow dogs off leash are good places. Try to schedule your visits during non-peak use times to minimize interference from other dogs. Some golf courses and farmers will let you on the property if you offer to chase the geese away with your dog. I have found farmers that welcome the noise my bumper boys make as they fire a power load which scares away the local goose population. Explore training lease options. Some farmers or landowners will be interested if you offer them a modest fee for the opportunity to train on their land. The main point here, is don't expect something for nothing and be prepared to offer the landowner something (labour, goose control, \$'s) in exchange for allowing you on their land.

Once you have received permission to train on a piece of land, treat it like the precious commodity it is. Here are some dos and don'ts:

**Do:**

- \*Close all gates behind you
- \*Pick up after your dog and take the bags with you when you leave
- \*Pick up all training ribbons and used primers/shells
- \*Always ask if it is OK to bring people along with you, don't assume!
- \*Send a thank you card and gift basket at Christmas or the appropriate holiday. A photo of you and your dog with a title or pass ribbon, or on a hunting trip is a nice gesture. Bob and I also include a pheasant or dressed duck along with a recipe card.

**Don't:**

- \*Dispose of ducks or any garbage on the property
- \*Drive or train on any seeded or cultivated areas
- \*Come on the property without letting the landowner know
- \*Allow your dog(s) to chase livestock or run in an out of bounds area

**And finally two important things:**

- 1) **If someone has permission to train on a piece of land and takes you with them as a guest, do not assume that you can go back there and train whenever you like. Your host has put a great deal of time into developing a relationship with the landowner and you could spoil it for everyone if you go on the property without permission.**
- 2) **Don't Assume Anything! Always Ask!**

The hunt test season is on the horizon and we are looking forward to seeing old friends and meeting new ones on the circuit this year. Until then, happy training!