

Hunt, Field & Retriever Test Training VS Dock Jumping Training

Contributed by Mark Haynes

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I have competed and watched many of the DockDog events and there is one thing I have noticed. The handlers that train their dogs in the Hunt test & field trials seem to have some trouble. Not all of them, but a large majority of them do. There are a couple of reasons this may happen.

Hunt test and field trials takes a lot of discipline and gives your dog a "job" to do. The dog must be under total control at all times, no barking, jumping, and answer to whistle commands. You put on your vest, gloves, and hat, and grab your bird dummies and take to the field to train. As soon as you do this, your dog is fully aware of what you are about to do, and starts to ready themselves to go to work.

This is the complete opposite of what you want to see in a dog at a Big Air event. You want your dog to get excited, loud and jumping around so they can throw all that energy into that big leap. Jumping your dog in Dockdog events should not be a controlled "job" for your dog but more of a fun filled reward for them. This should be playtime, at home and at an event. It should never be a job for your dog, always make it fun for you and them.

Here are a few suggestions that might help you in making that transition from field dog to a Dockdog jumping competitor.

1. Never wear the same clothing for a jump event that you wear for field tests or practice. I really believe your dog knows the cloths and will go into their controlled JOB mode.
2. Leave the whistle at home. Again don't confuse your dog. This is to be a fun activity for you and your dog, not work. Let them get a little out of control by barking jumping and getting excited. I am sure that your well-trained field dog can and will answer to your verbal commands.
3. Never use the same throw dummy that you use in the field for a dock-jumping event. You will be amazed at the different reaction you will get from your dog if you trade in your field throw for a different colored "play" bumper.
4. Try to stay away from the "chase" technique. Your dog already knows how to get that big pop going into the water from your field training, capitalize on that training and roll it over in to big air. Throw your dummy into the water and let them charge after it like you have taught them. This web site can show you ways to get the height you'll need.

Try these small suggestions and see if they help you in making that transition over from a Field dog to a big air dog. It could make the difference between a novice jumping dog and a senior or master class dog. But, as always, the most important thing to remember is :

JUMP BIG & KEEP IT FUN.

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