

## Introduction\_To\_Birds.txt

Q: I am new to owning a Small Munsterlander, or any pointer for that matter. I was hoping for some advice on how to best introduce my pup to birds. I've read a few books and talked to a few folks but everyone says something different, whether it be using wings or live birds. I do not have a release or anything like that.

A: Save your money by forgetting about using wings. They are nothing more than dead bird parts, so they aren't even close to the real thing. I don't know anyone who wants their dog to point carrion. Believe me, your puppy will be finding and bringing you plenty of smelly dead stuff without you having to encourage it. The only reason to put a wing on a fishing pole is to get a picture of a young puppy pointing. It's just a sight point, the puppy is interested in something that is moving, so it isn't in any way encouraging a puppy to point live birds.

With versatile hunting dogs like Munsters, you want to limit the number of live, uninjured birds your puppy catches. If your puppy catches a lot of birds, you'll probably end up with a flusher instead of a pointer. Therefore, you want to use only strong flyers and you don't want to dizzy the birds very much. Also be careful not to bury the birds in the grass. When you place the birds in the grass, don't cover them over. Make sure they have plenty of open space above them to fly out as soon as your puppy gets too close. Ideally, if your puppy moves in close, the bird will fly far and fast and completely get away from your puppy. Sometimes quail will fly only about 20 yards and come down, which makes it easy for a chasing puppy to catch them. If you find this happens, your quail aren't strong enough flyers, so just leave any others you've planted in the field and call it a day. Find a game breeder with chukars for your next attempt, as they are generally stronger flyers than quail.

Get 4-5 strong flying quail or chukar. Plant them in a big circle, approximately 50 yards apart. Clip bright orange clothes pins (you can spray paint them), or trail marking clips (<http://amzn.to/10Ntw5a>), to the tall grass near where you have planted the birds so you can see them from a distance. You want to know where the birds are.

Bring your puppy into the field with you and start out toward the first bird you planted. Do not use a check cord. Simply verbally encourage your puppy to come with you with words like "over here, this way." Check wind direction and walk your puppy fairly close to the bird on the downwind side. Keep moving, even if you have to circle around the bird a few times until your puppy gets its scent. When he smells the bird, your puppy may point, but more likely he will move in to investigate and catch it. If all goes well, the bird will see him coming and fly away. Your puppy should chase. Let him. If you need to do gun conditioning, this is an excellent time to do so. Only shoot while he is engaged in chasing a flying bird and he will come to associate gunfire with the fun of the chase.

When that bird is gone and the chase is over, call him to you, praise him and encourage him verbally to follow you to the next bird. This time when he gets the scent, he'll probably be more careful. He is more likely to point this bird. If he does point (or stop), very quickly move in and flush the bird yourself. Don't tip toe around. Boldly and directly go in and flush the bird. Unless you have no other

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option, approach your pointing/stopped puppy from the front or side. Avoid coming up behind him, because that can "push" him into the bird (cause him to move forward).

With each bird, your puppy should get a little bit more careful. A point is nothing more than a pause before a pounce. The puppy is taking care not to scare the bird, because he doesn't want it to fly away. (He wants to catch, kill and eat it.) By using strong flying birds that will always get away from the puppy, you are encouraging him to become extremely cautious. Eventually he will stop as soon as he catches even the faintest scent of a bird.

Only do 4-5 birds per session. Even 3 birds would be enough. Wait 5-7 days and do it again. Once he is fairly proficient at searching, finding and pointing the birds, you can start shooting them. Since you don't know what he'll do with the bird after it's shot, have a couple of hot dogs in your pocket. If he retrieves the bird to you, you can trade him for a piece of hotdog. If he plays keep away, get close enough to toss a few hotdog pieces next to him and hopefully he'll leave the bird in order to eat the hotdogs. Then you can pick up that bird and continue with your training.

This training also helps build your puppy's cooperation. We all want a hunting dog that hunts with us and for us. You want him to move around the field in tandem with you. (By the way, a well-bred versatile hunting dog will quarter a field naturally. It's not necessary to train him to quarter or to use hand signals.) By taking him to the birds as a puppy, you are making him believe you are the greatest hunting dog on the planet. You know where all the birds are! Of course he's going to hunt with you!