

Things_NOT_to_do_with_Munster_puppy.txt

(Question)

Last night when I was walking him, I ran into a friend of mine who has a nine month old Springer pup (and an older one) and she invited us to join her bird dog training group that meets once a week.

(Answer)

It's great that you've already found a training group! Training can really be a blast. We've made some wonderful friends through NAVHDA. A Springer is a flushing breed, so you should not hunt (or field train) your young Munster with him/her. Once your puppy is fully trained and has a couple of year's experience in the field, you can hunt him with a flusher, but definitely not now. If you do, you'll probably find he will stop pointing and will start flushing. A point is merely a pause before a pounce. All pointing dogs intend to pounce on their prey, and will, as soon as it moves. We've selectively bred our pointers and versatile breeds to extend the pause for as long as possible. Versatile breeds that aren't pointers (i.e. English Pointer, German Shorthaired Pointer, German Wirehaired Pointer) weren't bred to have as staunch and stylish of a point as their Pointer cousins. Munsters are fairly new to North America. In Germany, they really don't care what the dog's point looks like. They accept flagging (tail wags) and even lying down on point. In Germany, it's all about what happens after the shot. They breed and train for retrieving (land and water), as downed game is never to be left in the field. Our North American Munsters aren't very far from their German roots. We've done a very good job in North America of improving the style and staunchness of our Munsters' points, but it's very easy for our dogs to lose their point if we're not careful.

Besides not hunting your young Munster with a flushing dog, you also want to take precautions so he does not catch birds. Often pen-raised training birds aren't very good flyers. Some don't fly at all. Others will only fly a short distance and won't get up a 2nd time. Your puppy will quickly figure out he can catch them. And if he is allowed to catch them, he'll stop pointing them. You want to get him on as many wild birds as you can. If that's not possible, pigeons make a very close second. They will flush and fly away if your puppy gets anywhere near them. That will teach him to slow down, be careful, not get too close, and to stop and point as soon as he smells them. If wild birds, pigeons or strong flying quail/chukar aren't possible, you can use quail or chukar in release traps. The NAVHDA folks will most certainly help you with all this and will have all the necessary equipment.

There's nothing to be gained by playing hide-and-seek with dead birds or bird wings. He will easily find them by tracking where you walked and when he finds them he might decide to play with them, shred them, or even eat them. Until it gets close to NA Test time, you don't need to worry about putting him on birds. Hunting and tracking are the same skills no matter what the quarry. He can practice on anything living. So let him hunt squirrels, rabbits, mice, frogs, or anything else that strikes his fancy. As a versatile dog, he was bred to hunt furred game as readily as feathered game. So he should never be discouraged from doing it. It's possible to hunt rabbits with him one day and chukar the next. It's rare for our dogs to take off after a rabbit when we're pheasant hunting, unless there's no pheasants to be found. In which case, we'll shoot the rabbits. Through training and repetition, he'll

Things_NOT_to_do_with_Munster_puppy.txt

soon figure out what you're after by what he's wearing, what you're wearing and where you are hunting. People who hunt multiple types of game with their dogs generally have different collars/vests for each type. For instance, a tracking harness for blood tracking deer and a neoprene vest for retrieving ducks. You'll also find he will "mouse" a lot. Don't discourage this. All good bird dogs mouse. Adult dogs only do it to entertain themselves when there's no game scent. Young dogs practice hunting on mice, and if successful, they'll eat them, which is also fine.

When your puppy's older, he should be "sharp" on fur, and he should "voice" on fur. Sharpness means he'll kill it. Voice means he'll bark, either on sight or on track, but preferably both. This is a highly prized trait in Germany. In Germany it's called "laut" and breeding dogs are required to possess this trait. So, if he barks when tracking, don't be surprised!