

Q. The last time I took my puppy hunting at the club they planted 3 chuckar for us. My puppy did very well! He held point long enough for me to flush the birds and all 3 birds were shot. The only issue is that he doesn't want to give me the birds. He would pick them up, but then prance around like a proud peacock. Of course I forgot the hot dogs. Thankfully, he did respond to "come" and I'd get the bird then, but not without effort.

A. I'm thrilled he's picking up the birds and carrying them!! If a dog will do that, getting a retrieve to hand is a piece of cake. Playing keep-away is very, very normal behavior. They don't want to give up their prize. They want to show it off first and savor the moment. Forget using the word "fetch." If you do, since you can't enforce it, you'll just be teaching him he doesn't have to obey the command. Instead, just tell him to "come." He's probably not going to leave the bird behind. He'll bring it with him. Try to have some meat to trade for it if he doesn't want to let go with the "give" command. If he won't let go voluntarily, blow (hard & fast, like a huff) into his ear. Reflex will make him drop what's in his mouth. Just be sure you have your hand on the bird when you do so or he'll just quickly re-grip it. If he won't come when commanded, use your e-collar to make him come. It doesn't matter that he has a bird in his mouth. He'll associate the correction with disobeying the come command, because he already knows that command and that there are consequences for disobeying it. For now, command him to come, then snap on his leash and let him carry the bird for a little while before you take it away. While you're leashing him, praise-praise-praise. What a good boy!! While he's leashed and carrying the bird, if he starts putting it down and picking it back up, it's time to take it from him. If he starts mouthing it while he's carrying it, it's time to take it away from him. But so long as he's just carrying it as you're walking, let him have it for 5 minutes or so. Then take it from him, trade him for a piece of meat if you can, and praise him like crazy.