

# Tracking for Airedales – a Manual

By L. Maugh Vail

## 1 Introduction

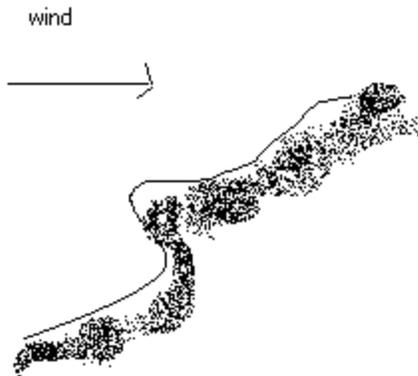
The purpose of this manual is to adapt some of the more popular tracking training methods specifically to the Airedale. The emphasis here will be on footstep tracking to obtain a result where the dog is sure of the track it is following.

A track is a scent record on the ground that is made when a person walks somewhere, like through a field or park. When a person walks, he crushes any vegetation in his path and also sheds skin rafts and other natural odors. Since the human has a natural temperature of 98.6 F, he is a walking chimney and is constantly emitting scent as well as leaving the path of crushed vegetation in his wake.

The discipline of tracking concentrates on the path of crushed vegetation, which is a record of the actual footsteps that the person took. So if the person doubles back out of the field, the tracking dog will follow all the footsteps and not be misled by the person's change of direction. An important thing to realize about a track is that the tracklayer is no longer present. The track consists of a record of where he went, not where he is. Tracking is essentially an evidence finding activity. It is not finding people, rather finding where people went. Put another way, there is no active human scent source present on the track, just the self-activating record caused by the bacteria in reaction to the ground disturbance.

Tracks can also be created when a person walks through a plowed field. There is bacteria in the soil which becomes more concentrated at the points where the person's foot has made contact with the ground. It is also thought that it is the bacteria released by the crushed vegetation that is primarily responsible for the odor of the track made through vegetation.

The figure below illustrates the difference between the track and the body or personal odor that is left behind when a person walks through an area. Notice that the personal odor is blown to the side of where the person actually walked. As time goes on, the personal odor particles can be blown entirely away, leaving only the footprint record as witness that a person was there. Or, the particles can pool around trees and buildings, leaving a scent mirage, i.e. a scent image whose source cannot be readily determined. A way to look at it, ground scent stays concentrated in the footprints of the person, whereas personal odor is air-borne.



A dog's natural tendency is to follow both scents. However, when the two scents part company, most dogs will tend to follow the air scent because it is easier. However, it is also highly misleading over time. Thus a special effort must be made to train the dog to follow the track scent and to ignore the airborne scent.

Experts speak of the "track sure dog", the "fringe follower" and the "trailing dog". Tracking training has as its goal to create the "track-sure" dog. This latter dog is able to sort out the tracking scent from the airborne scents and to follow it under all circumstances. This manual has as its goal to set forth a program for training a dog to be track-sure.

Now a few words to the sceptics. First, I have trained dogs for Search and Rescue work as well as for tracking. In Search and Rescue the assumption is made that there is a live person who continues to generate scent. In contrast, as we have seen, the track is simply a living record of where a person has walked, not necessarily where he is. The activity of tracking is more a kind of forensic reconstruction of where a person has been. The activity of search and rescue has as its goal to find and rescue a person who is lost and possibly injured.

In the case of Search and Rescue, air scenting is encouraged and taught. The dog is not on a lead and is encouraged to pursue an airborne scent to its live source. The person is much like a chimney or candle which is generating an odor that disperses into the air and is carried by air currents. This is a different activity. In this country there is no "sport" based on this kind of scent work. That is contrary to Switzerland, where dogs can be titled in "Disaster Dog 1,2", "Area Search Dog 1,2,3" and have 3 parts to their test much like the Schutzhund trials. It is a pity that there is no sport based on the dog's capability to find humans based on the airborne scent that they generate. Air scenting and search and rescue will not be further covered here.

## **2 Tracking as a Sport**

This manual addresses tracking as a sport. In the USA there are primarily two types of organizations which offer tracking tests and titles.

## **2.1 Schutzhund Tracking (DVG, USA)**

The Schutzhund organizations now offer a wide variety of tracking titles at all levels of competence. Titles offered are Tracking 1, Tracking 2, Tracking 3, FH1 and FH 2.

Tracking 1 is a test where the handler lays his own track with two articles. The second article is at the end of the track. The track is twenty minutes old and has two corners and is 350-400 steps long. This is an excellent place to start.

Tracking 2 is a test where the track is laid by a stranger. The track is thirty minutes old and has two corners and also two articles. The second article is at the end of the track. It is 500 steps long.

Tracking 3 is a test where the track is also laid by a stranger. The track is one hour old and has 4 corners and 3 articles. Again the third article is at the end of the track. It is 800 steps long.

FH 1 and FH 2 are advanced tests using varied terrain, multiple corners, crossing of roads and other obstacles as well as cross tracks. FH1 is 1200 – 1400 steps whereas FH 2 is 2000 steps long. Both are aged minimum 3 hours.

## **2.2 AKC TD and TDX**

The TD test is in some ways similar to the Schutzhund 3 but it can be more demanding in terms of age and terrain. The Tracking 3 title is an excellent “warm-up” for a TD test. However, most Schutzhund tracks have a fairly uniform terrain, because the test is scored. TD tests are pass-fail and therefore uniformity of terrain is not a priority.

Thus the TD test has a more realistic feel to it. If a person happened to walk through some funny cover on the edge of a woods, well, that might be the track you have to follow.

The second way a TD test track can differ from a Schutzhund 3 track is in terms of age. Since the tests are not timed, a judge will not fail a dog as long as he is working. The track that I ran with Myles was run at 2:00 pm and was over two hours old. The rules state that the track shall not be over two hours old. A cockapoo had run before me and taken almost an hour before the judge failed him. I could have asked for another track, but I knew my dog would be okay. He was.

In order to enter an AKC TD tracking test your dog must earn a certification. A certification track is laid by an AKC judge. If your dog passes, the judge issues you a certification good for one year. You must send a copy of this with your entry. Judges have different requirements for certification. It is best to speak with the judge individually about this. In our Schutzhund club we have an AKC tracking judge who will issue a certification for any dog who passes a SchH 3 (Tracking 3) track with a rating of “good” or better (80 or more points out of 100).

The TDX track is similar in difficulty to the FH tests.

## **2.3 AKC VST**

The variable surface tracking is not covered in this manual.

## **2.4 Entering a tracking test**

### **2.4.1 Know the rules**

There is nothing more annoying than people who show up at tracking tests and are ignorant of the rules. Go to an appropriate web site and get them in writing. Both the Schutzhund organizations and the AKC have manuals that explain the rules in detail.

### **2.4.2 Give the dog a rest**

Last minute proofing is futile and even disastrous in tracking. Tracking is hard work. Make sure your dog is rested and fresh before the test. Give him 5-7 days rest.

## **3 Equipment**

The equipment needed for tracking is minimal, but a few things are essential. Here is a list:

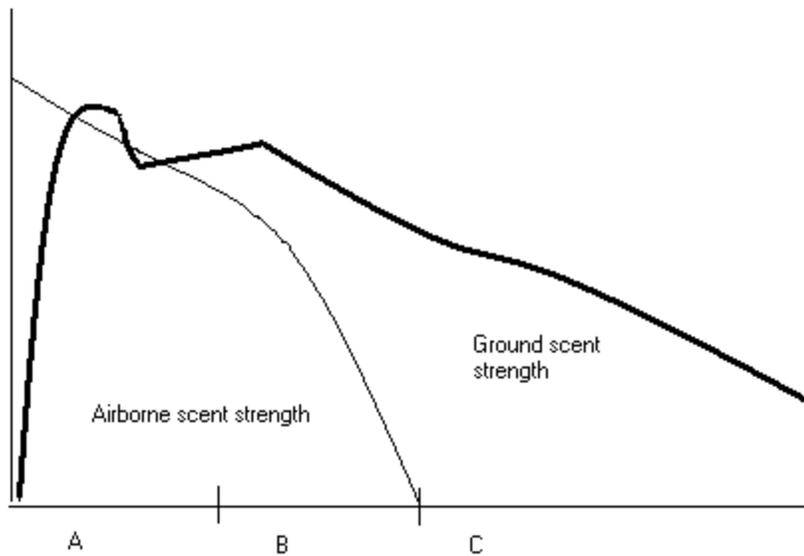
- Tracking stakes with flags
- Suitable food
- Good boots or shoes
- Water
- 30 ft tracking line
- optional harness – Boettcher harness recommended
- flat collar
- very hungry dog

The tracking flags that I use are similar to the ones that the telephone companies use to mark underground cables. Mine have wire stakes and are about two feet high. Some people sharpen the end of wooden dowels and tie flagging to the top. Any marker will do, as long as you can get it in the ground and see it from a distance. It is good to have about 12 of these. If possible have at least two colors.

## **4 The Track**

Throughout this manual detailed instructions are given regarding the laying of tracks. However it is important to have an understanding of what factors influence the track.

The track is initially a combination of a ground-based scent that is present in the footsteps left by the person who laid the track and an air-borne scent consisting of his personal body odor. Over time these two scents separate. The relative strengths of the scents can be pictured as follows:



Note the three regions A, B, and C. Note that Airborne scent strength starts high and continually decays. On the contrary, the ground scent builds up for awhile over time and then starts to decay more slowly. A shower can refresh the ground scent but does not influence the airborne scent.

Region A denotes a fresh track, under most conditions 5 minutes or less. Region B represents the time frame in which both scents are present, but the ground scent is beginning to dominate. Finally, region C denotes the time frame in which only the ground scent remains. This is after 2 or 3 hours or more.

There are some crude rules of thumb for determining the time frame for the regions A, B, and C. Glen Johnson in his book *Tracking Dog* gives a detailed discussion of this. This book is strongly recommended to anyone serious about tracking.

#### 4.1 Factors affecting the track

The factors affecting these time frames are humidity, wind speed, time of day, cloud cover, vegetation cover, and temperature.

The factors to be discussed have mostly to do with evaporation rate. A good ground scent remains present when the evaporation rate is low and it dissipates more quickly when the evaporation rate is high. This is a good rule of thumb when tracking.

However it is worth while examining each of these factors individually, since in our advanced training – for a TD, FH or TDX for example – we will want to have introduced our dog to tracks embodying extremes of each of these factors both separately and combined.

Think of these factors as color, line width, background, shading, size of a picture that you are viewing. Think how drastically the picture changes as you vary one of these or vary several in combination. You will begin to get an idea of how profoundly the track scent picture changes for the dog when these factors change.

### **4.1.1 Humidity**

Moderate moisture refreshes the ground scent and keeps it present. A nice dewy morning or after a nice spring (or fall) shower is a tracker's dream. On such a day, it may take an hour or more to go from region A to region B. Conversely, on a very dry, hot day it may be 30 minutes or less.

### **4.1.2 Wind Speed**

Wind does two things to the scent picture. First, it blows the airborne scent off to one side or down or up the track. Since we want to wean the dog off airborne scent early on, the best way to lay a track for the beginning dog is to have the wind in back of us. After a couple of weeks the direction of the wind should not matter.

When the wind is at right angles to our track, the airborne scent will be to side of the track. In the beginning the dog will want to follow beside the track rather than on it. This is known as fringe following. It may seem innocent enough, but the dog who learns fringe following is destined for a hard time as tracking training advances. The dog soon realize that the food is not there but rather in the footstep. In addition, an effort should be made to physically restrain the dog so that he remains on the track. This will teach him to discriminate between the two scents and to follow the ground based scent from the very beginning.

The second effect that wind can have is to speed up the evaporation process. Remember, the dryer the track is, the harder it is. If the wind is blowing strong and the humidity is average, do not age the track as long as you usually do.

### **4.1.3 Time of Day**

In the morning the ground is cooler than the air. Thus the ground scent has a marked contrast for the dog as well as a pleasing one.

In the day both the ground and the air have been warmed by the sun. Temperature wise the two scents tend to mingle together. Obviously in early spring and late fall this effect is minimized. However in the late spring, summer, and early fall this can be an important factor. The middle of the day is a time when the track scent dissipates quickly, so again use caution in aging the track.

In the evening the ground may be warmer than the air. Again a contrast in the two scents is created. The ground scent will begin to rise more quickly than in the morning but it tends to rise up into the air.

### **4.1.4 Cloud Cover**

The main effect of cloud cover is to control the evaporation rate.

### **4.1.5 Vegetation Cover**

### **4.1.6 Temperature**

Temperature also affects the evaporation rate. In temperatures below 70 degrees the track scent picture is changing slowly, perhaps 40-60 minutes between regions A, B, and C. At 80 degrees, this time may be compressed to 30 minutes. At temperatures above 80 degrees the time can be compressed to under 20 minutes.

Some words about tracking in warm weather. Remember that the dog must breathe at least once for every footstep taken by the tracklayer. This is very hard work and depletes the dog of moisture very quickly. Shorten the tracks – cut them in half for every 5 degrees above 80 degrees and carry water. Give the dog frequent rests and drinks.

## **4.2 Laying the Track**

Care must be taken that the track laid is such that we as the trainers can find it exactly after it has been laid. For this reason it is advisable initially to lay the tracks yourself. Then you know exactly where they go. Working with “blind” tracks, i.e. tracks laid by a stranger belongs to advanced tracking and should be attempted only when we have proofed the dog and know that he is track-sure under a wide variety of conditions.

In the beginning, scuff and stomp the track so that each foot print is visible to you. At the dog’s level they will not be visible, so this will not create a problem.

When corners are introduced, when in doubt mark them. A way to mark is to use flags. Some people put a flag right on the corner. I like to “spear” them about 3 feet off to the outside of the corner. I use wire stakes with small flagging for this purpose. The wire does not hold scent, and the dogs usually do not even notice their presence. Some people also use pieces of tape weighted down by washers and throw them out to the side of a corner. I have found that these usually have more scent associated with them and my dogs will notice them.

Good track laying requires practice. To practice, begin laying tracks with one or two corners before you lay the tracks your dog will follow. Drop a dime somewhere on each track. Make the tracks at least 100 steps long. Now run the tracks that you laid for your dog. After you have played with him and put him up, re-walk the practice tracks you laid and find the dimes.

As you practice track-laying, you will become more adept at sizing up a field and learning how to line up corners with natural landmarks. This takes practice. There is no other way. Better to lose your way on a practice track than on one where you are teaching your dog something.

## **4.3 Handling the Dog on the Track**

Handling the dog on the track is an area that is very difficult to write about. Handling in tracking is like handling in obedience – it is helpful to have a knowledgeable observer who can point out to your fault.

The best thing to do is to minimize problems by careful design of the track and

## **5 How the Dog Learns**

There are many books out there on the psychology of dogs, psychology of learning. It would be futile here to attempt to discuss these matters in any detail.

We need only a few simple principles:

- Dogs are creatures of habit.
- It takes 7 – 8 weeks of repetition of a behavior to commit it to permanent memory
- When under stress a dog always reverts to its earliest successful behavior
- Conflicts create stress

## **5.1 Dogs are creatures of habit**

We are teaching the dog some habits when we teach the dog to be track-sure. The habits must reinforce that the dog will always follow the scent it found on the ground of the scent pad and if it finds fresher or older tracks it will not follow them. The habits must also reinforce that if both the airborne and ground scents are present, the dog finds success by following the ground scent.

So the dog must develop, from the beginning, the habit of following the ground scent. To establish this habit we must present the dog with situations where it is rewarded by following this scent. Careful thought must be given to the track design so that this happens.

In the beginning it will be important to choose places to track where the airborne scent can really blow away, leaving a clear ground scent picture for the dog. So we want to avoid laying tracks close to buildings or treelines where the airborne scent can pool and hang as a cloud over the track.

## **5.2 Permanent memory**

To establish a behavior as a habit in a dog takes about 7 – 8 weeks. This is why so many people who take their dogs to a single obedience class a few months later exclaim, “He didn’t learn a thing”. That single obedience class is like having a week course in calculus. Without habits that are reinforced until they are committed to permanent memory, whether human or dog, real learning does not take place.

This means that learning tracking will be a slow go. This is especially true of the Airedale, who like to air scent and would prefer to follow the airborne scent when it is there. We will be laying tracks with plentiful food for the first 7 weeks to ensure that the pattern of following ground scent is firmly established. Once we have this habit in place, future progress in tracking will occur at a rapid pace.

## **5.3 Under Stress dog reverts to first successful behavior**

Airedales are often perceived by their owners as “clowns”. One trick that a clown uses is to run through a repertoire of behaviors that seem to have nothing to do with a given situation. In the case of Airedales, this is often a subtle reaction to stress.

The important thing here is to realize that as we prepare the dog for a tracking test, there will be stressful days. The test itself may be stressful. We may be late, the terrain might be really bad, the line might get tangles, who knows what?

Once again the importance of teaching the wanted behavior from the beginning is what is important. We want the dog to track. Do not allow the dog to get away with substitute behaviors, or these will be what come out at the test. The dogs early experiences with tracking must be successful. When under stress, presented with a bunch of distractions and unfamiliar odors, we want the dog to *track!*

## **5.4 Conflict creates stress**

Initially we want the dog to learn in as stress-free environment as possible. We we want is, we lay a track that has food drops in every step. We want the dog to come out, start tracking, eat all the food.

### **5.4.1 Food**

In order for this to happen, the dog must be really hungry. This means cutting his rations in half for the previous day. If he is not hungry enough – doesn't eat all the food – then cut his rations in half again. He may lose a couple of pounds, but he will track on probably the third day.

It is important to use a food that he really likes. Boiled liver or hot dogs are good. But anything you dog is especially fond of and regards as a treat. You must be able to cut this up into small, manageable pieces. The sizes should be comparable in size to the pieces obtained from a hot dog split lengthwise, then cut across 18 times.

### **5.4.2 Distractions and Toys**

Do not put toys or bowls of food at the end of the track. This once again creates a conflict for the dog. He wants his toy and he is going to go get it. "No, track!" his owner yells or restrains him. But he knows his toy is there. He becomes excited. When a dog is excited, his ability to concentrate diminishes to almost zero. Now we are trying to get this excited dog to do what is best accomplished by a calm, instense state of mind. We have created a conflict for the dog. He cannot learn under these circumstances.

After the track has been successfully completed, some handlers then whip out a toy and play with the dog. We certainly want tracking to end on a pleasant note, and as long as this does not interfere with tracking *per se*, it is fine to do so.

### **5.4.3 Articles**

Articles are nothing special for a dog that has learned to track with the deep nose. He will always find the articles. We delay working with articles until the dog has been successfully following the ground scent for 8 weeks.

## **6 The Log Book**

It is important to make daily notes about your dog's tracking progress. If problems develop, light can often be shed on them by reading the log. If you have a coach, (e.g. a Schutzhund training director or an AKC tracking judge) the first thing they will want to see is your log book.

Label each tracking session clearly with the date and time. Note the cloud cover, the approximate temperature, the wind strength, humidity, time of day, how much the track was aged. Sketch each track indicating the wind direction. Use one color to sketch the track. Indicate all food drops and later all article placements. Indicate all flags and landmarks. If track is beside a building or if there is a tree or a stand of trees or bushes anywhere near, note these also.

After the dog runs the track, make elaborate notes about his performance. It is often convenient to make these notes on the sketch itself. If anything, err on the side of copious notetaking.

## 7 What's Different About Airedales?

Airedales have excellent noses. They are typically high energy dogs and delight in chasing game. To be successful in chasing game, the Airedale has developed a scenting ability which makes use of airborne and ground scent. In this regard the Airedale is a lot like the bloodhound.

Airedales learn and generalize very quickly. This means that we must be extra careful that we teach them the right thing. They are very goal oriented and will toss out past behaviors and invent a new one of they perceive it to be useful.

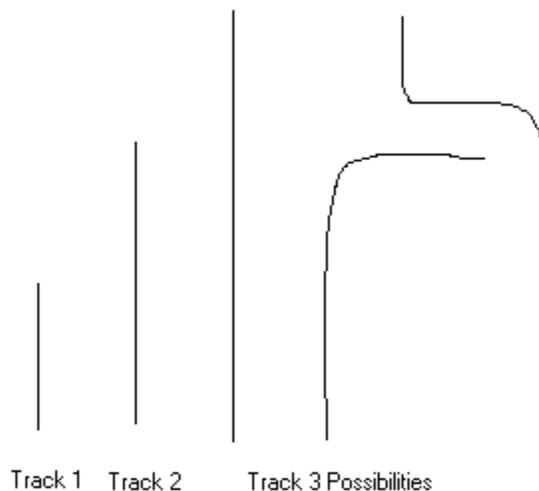
An Airedale will seldom do something just because you told it to.

## 8 A Tracking Schedule

### 8.1 : Footstep tracking (7 weeks)

It has been explained that it takes 7 weeks for a dog to commit a pattern to permanent memory. For this reason, the first thing we must do is to ensure that the Airedale will make footstep tracking his primary pattern. So we are going to spend 7 weeks reinforcing and ensuring this behavior.

The method will use 3 tracks. The first track will always be straight and will be stomped and scuffed in so that there is a strong ground disturbance. The second track will be longer than the first but otherwise similar to the first, and the third will be roughly double the length of the second track. The first and second tracks will always be baited heavily. The third track will be the only one that contains something new for the dog to learn – thinning out the bait, corners, etc. These steps come however, only when the dog is doing footstep tracking flawlessly, without wanting to skip steps.



One way to gauge the size of the tracks is to ask yourself, how many hot dogs shall the dog consume? If the hot dog is split lengthwise and then cut into small pieces, there should be 30 – 36 pieces per hot dog.

Three tracks totaling 90 - 100 steps require approximately 3 hot dogs. Three tracks totaling 120 – 130 steps require approximately 4 hot dogs. We will work with these numbers initially.

### 8.1.1 Week 1

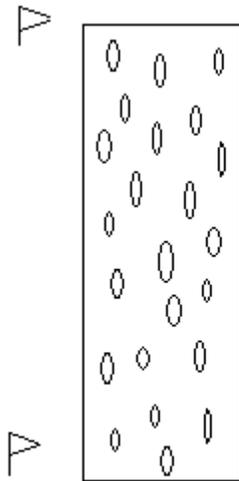
The first week it is good to have grass that is at least 2 inches high but not more than 5 inches high. A corner of a park or lawn will do fine, since we will not be using up much space.

In preparation, make certain that the dog is really hungry. Reduce his rations by half the day before. If you track in the morning, do it before feeding him. If you track in the evening, do it just before feeding time. As we have seen, either the morning or the evening are usually the better times to train because of track conditions.

#### 8.1.1.1 Step 1

During this week we will not use the three tracks. Rather, we will stamp a rectangle 4 ft long and 2 feet wide beside our flag. You may mark the end of the rectangle also with a flag if desired. We will stamp it in as densely as possible. The figure below shows roughly what we want, but make the steps even more dense. Then sprinkle food inside the square – 2 –3 cut-up hot dogs. Make sure that the food is on the bottom, near the roots of the grass. We want the dog to get in the habit of penetrating the ground cover to its roots, where the majority of the scent in the footprint will be.

Let the food sit for 3 – 5 minutes and then bring the dog to the rectangle. Encourage him to find the food with his nose. If he lifts his head up encourage him by pointing to the ground. If he lifts his head a second time, again encourage. Third time, take him away and reduce his food once again by half.



Lay two “practice tracks” at least 100 steps each with one corner. Drop a dime on them. Re-walk the tracks and find your dimes.

#### 8.1.1.2 Day 2

On the second day do the same thing. Again, three strikes and you’re out. If he strikes out, reduce the regular food by one third.

Lay two “practice tracks” at least 100 steps each with one corner. Drop a dime on them. Re-walk the tracks and find your dimes

### **8.1.1.3 Days 3 - 5**

On days 3 – 5 we can begin testing the dog. As we pull him gently out of the rectangle he should pull to try to stay inside the rectangle. When he does this, praise him softly and pat him.

Lay two “practice tracks” at least 100 steps each with one corner. Drop a dime on them. Re-walk the tracks and find your dimes

### **8.1.1.4 Days 6-7**

Rest, give full rations of food.

Whew, we are through one week! But in this week the dog has learned to use his nose to find food that is in the proximity of footprints. This is what we want. Tracking is not “traveling”, it is dwelling on the scent record that a person has left behind.

## **8.1.2 Week 2, Step 2**

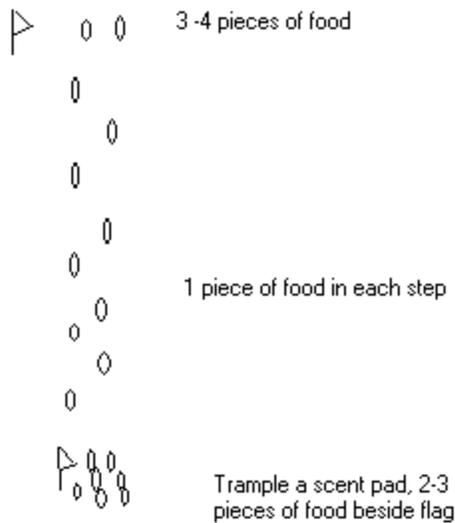
Now we will actually start laying the three tracks for the dog. However, we must be certain that the dog does not get the idea that tracking is “traveling”. Therefore we will track three days a week and on the alternate days we will repeat the rectangle exercise above.

For tracking terrain, again grass that is somewhere between 2 inches and 5 inches tall is idea. If necessary, shorter grass can be used, but it will be important to stamp down well and hide the food drops among the grass blades taking care that they are not visible to the dog.

### **8.1.2.1 Day 1**

All 3 tracks will have a piece of food in each footstep. Make sure the footsteps are well stamped in the ground, visible to you if possible. If possible, put the food drops in the heel indentation of the footstep or at least make sure that the food is in the bottom of the footstep. Each track is ended with both feet brought together and 3-4 pieces of food, again the food at the bottom of the grass.

Lay all three tracks at once, then immediately get the dog and run them in order. Give soft praise at the end of each track. Give encouragement as needed.



Track	Length	Age	Food Spacing	Comments
1	10 steps	nil	Every step	Heavily scuffed
2	15 steps	nil	Every step	Heavily scuffed
3	30 steps	nil	Every step	Heavily scuffed

When running the tracks, if necessary restrain the dog so that he dwells long enough at each footstep to find the food.

How did he do? Was he absorbed in what he was doing? Did he try to skip steps? If so, restrain him physically, so that he has to dwell long enough on each footstep to be able to eat the food. In your log book draw out in detail each track you laid and make notes about the behavior on each track.

Generally the dog will do better on the 3<sup>rd</sup> track. What we are looking for is that he does equally well on each track. We will stick with this tracking pattern and these lengths until we see that consistent performance.

### 8.1.2.2 Day 2

One day 2 we do the Rectangle. Again 3 strikes and you're out, with rations reduce by 1/3.

### 8.1.2.3 Day 3

Repeat Day 1.

### 8.1.2.4 Day 4

Repeat Day 2

### 8.1.2.5 Day 5

Repeat Day 1.

Today we evaluate his behavior. Is the dog performing equally well on all three tracks? Has he settled into a pattern so that he is rhythmically using his nose to locate the food? Is he really absorbed in what he is doing? Make notes about his behavior in your log book.

### 8.1.2.6 Days 6 and 7

Rest, recreation, full rations

## 8.1.3 Step 3 (week 3)

From this point on we must be very careful in moving forward. We must at the beginning of each new week determine whether the dog is ready for the next step. Read the log entries made last week. Is the dog ready for Step 3? If not, repeat Step 2 for a week.

Step 3 has as its goal to reinforce further the tracking pattern that has begun to establish itself and to build a little stamina by demanding slightly longer tracks and a slight aging.

### 8.1.3.1 Days 1,3,5

Lay the tracks as follows.

Track	Length	Age	Food Spacing	Comments
1	15 steps	3-5 min	Every step	Heavily scuffed
2	20 steps	3-5 min	Every step	Heavily scuffed
3	35 steps	3-5 min	Every step	Heavily scuffed

### 8.1.3.2 Days 2,4

Continue to run the rectangle

### 8.1.3.3 Days 6,7

Rest and recreation with full food rations

## 8.1.4 Step 4 (Week 4)

Read the log entries made for the previous week. By the end of the week did the dog do equally well on all three tracks? Is the dog ready for Step 4? If not, repeat Step 3 for a week.

In this step we will begin to vary the food placement on the 3<sup>rd</sup> track from every footstep to sometimes every two or three steps. The pattern must be a random one. At first we will do this only once or twice on the track. If the dog handles it well, we can begin to vary it more until finally the entire third track is a random pattern so that the dog always expects a food drop but is never entirely certain it will be there.

It is important to take the required time with Step 4. If it requires 2 or 3 extra weeks, so be it. Better to invest the time now than to try to fix problems later.

#### 8.1.4.1 Days 1,2,3,4,5

In step 4 we continue to make the tracks longer and slightly older. There is one important difference. On the third track we will occasionally skip 1 or 2 steps. On the first day we might do this only once or twice. Pay careful attention to how the dog behaves. If the dog continues to examine the footprints without food, then continue varying the food spacing on subsequent days. If the dog skips these steps, then subsequent tracks must also have food in every step. On the other hand, if the dog is handling this well, try to get to the point where track 3 is mostly fooddrops every 3 step. Be careful however to keep some randomness in the pattern.

Lay the tracks as follows.

Track	Length	Age	Food Spacing	Comments
1	15 steps	5-7 min	Every step	Heavily scuffed
2	30 step	5-7 min	Every step	Heavily scuffed
3	50 steps	5-7 min	1-3 steps	Heavily scuffed

#### 8.1.4.2 Days 6,7

Rest and recreation with full food rations

#### 8.1.5 Step 5 (Week 5)

Read the log entries made for the previous week. By the end of the week did the dog do equally well on all three tracks? Does the dog continue footstep tracking when the food is mostly spaced every 3 steps (but still keeping a random pattern)? Is the dog ready for Step 5? If not, repeat Step 4 for a week.

At this point we still want to keep reinforcing the footstep pattern. If the dog is doing well with the randomized mostly 3-step pattern, then we can go on and vary the food drop pattern from 1 to 5 steps. But watch closely. If the dog lifts his head up or shows a tendency to want to skip steps, go back to the 1-3 step pattern.

During this week we will introduce the dog to corners as well. Corners cause a dramatic change in the scent picture for the dog. If done right, this can be an exhilarating experience for the dog.

## 9 : Tracking challenges

## **10 Resources**

### **10.1 Books**

1. Johnson, Glen R., Tracking Dog Theory and Methods. Arner Publications, Inc, 1977
2. Patterson, Gary, Tracking from the Beginning. Sirius Publications, 1992

### **10.2 Websites**