

## QUALITIES OF A GREAT GUN DOG

No matter whether this is your first or tenth hunting dog, the thing that is common for a hunter is that you want a hunting dog. If the dog doesn't have the qualities of a good gun dog, no matter what the type of trial won or tests passed, it is not what you want in a hunting companion. Hunting dogs require special qualities that are not necessarily what wins awards.

These qualities can be put into four overlapping categories in no order of importance. The first is **SELF-CONTROL**: or maybe better put, control of its own temperament. This means the dog is laid back, taking everything in stride without letting innate excitement carry them away. The dog doesn't need a mile run before starting to hunt. It's down to business the moment the dog's feet touch the ground.

The second quality is the **ABILITY TO SHIFT GEARS**: to go slowly when the task demands it or to go quickly when the task allows it. The dog that goes only fast or goes only slow does not make a good hunting dog. The fast dog looks like it has a great desire to hunt. It has a great desire to run and that has little to do with hunting. Speed and loss of self-control should not be confused with desire to get the work done correctly.

The third, which really encompasses all the good characteristics of a hunting dog, is **COOPERATION**. This is the hardest concept to grasp. The cooperative dog is totally in tune with the handler, anticipates what is wanted and does it when the handler commands. The dog is working with and for his owner, helping all the way and never hindering.

The combination of all these is a dog with a high level of **TRAINABILITY**. The dog is easy to train, anxious to be trained and trying to do everything the right way. It is easily trained to understand concepts and quickly demonstrates that understanding. How do you get these qualities? Study the parents and if possible the grandparents. Observe them yourself and while possibly indicators, don't be fooled by paper, ribbons or hype alone. If both parents have the qualities, there is a good chance the pups will.

Excerpts from an article by Dr. Ed Bailey (B.S., M.S., Ph.D. Professor Emeritus, Animal Behavior). Author of the column: "Fixing Behavior Problems" in Gun Dog Magazine.