

# On The Right Track

by Gayle J. Geiger

## Getting Started

There is nothing quite so exciting as watching the demonstration of a successfully trained dog and handler team following an unmarked track. Tracking is truly a team sport with the dog as the leader. The ultimate goal is for you as the handler to train your dog to follow a particular scent, trust that the dog is committed to the track and have the ability to recognize when the dog encounters a scenting problem.

Training your dog to track begins with teaching the dog some basic scenting skills. At the same time, you are working on developing a working relationship with your dog.

Success is achieved when you are able to trust and believe in your dog's ability to track. The handler must also be able to recognize when the dog is off the track and develop the methods to encourage the dog to get back to the track. This is often referred to as "reading" your dog. By analyzing and understanding your dog's temperament and abilities, you will be well on your way to becoming a successful team.

## Basic Equipment

\* A non-restrictive tracking harness - I have used both a nylon harness and a leather harness with a padded chest pad. The nylon harnesses are relatively inexpensive and are adjustable.

\* A 40-foot tracking line - every handler has a preference. I have all kinds of lines including a cotton clothes line, a very narrow round nylon line and a one-inch flat mountain climbing line.

\* Tracking flags or stakes - I use flags available from gardening supply stores. They are approximately 30" tall with 3" x 3" fluorescent flags. Orange and pink seem to work best.

\* Articles - old gloves, socks, wallets, hats, scarves, etc.

\* Food - small pieces of hot dogs are most often used.

\* Tracking fields - local parks, undeveloped land and pastures.

\* Notebook - a detailed journal of the dog's progress or problems encountered.

### New TD Title

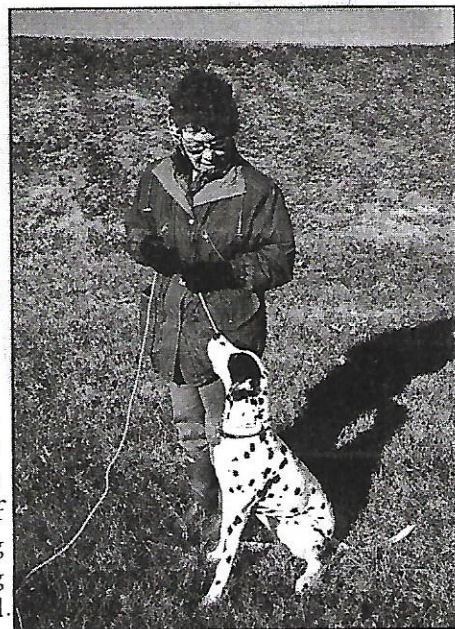
Jeannine Navratil of Missouri and her Dal,  
Captain One Eyed Jack TD

Jeannine writes that Jack was rescued from a Humane Society by "Spotsavers" of St. Louis. Jack was approximately three months old when Jeannine offered to foster him. Within a month, he had found his new home with Jeannine!

They started tracking in May, 1998 and were certified four months later. One month after certification, Jack passed his TD test at the age of ten months!! Congratulations to Jeannine and Jack and best of luck to them in the future.

## Training

If at all possible, try to find a local tracking group. Obedience clubs often have a tracking group willing to help those new to the sport. If you are beginning tracking training alone, I recommend the following books.



Each of these books outline a tracking training program: "Tracking From the Ground Up" by Sandy Ganz and Susan Boyd. "Enthusiastic Tracking, The Step-by-Step Training Handbook" by William (Sil) Sanders.

## 1999 DCA National Tracking Test, Denver, CO

An informal seminar titled "An Introduction to Tracking" will be held following the test. This will be a working seminar - dogs are welcome and encouraged to attend. Hope to see you there.

There is still time to support the DCA Tracking Test by sending your donation to Annette Guillaume, 10470B West Fair Avenue, Littleton, CO 80127. You can contribute to the general fund or sponsor a trophy - VST and TDX trophies are \$55.00 each and TD trophies are \$30.00 each.

