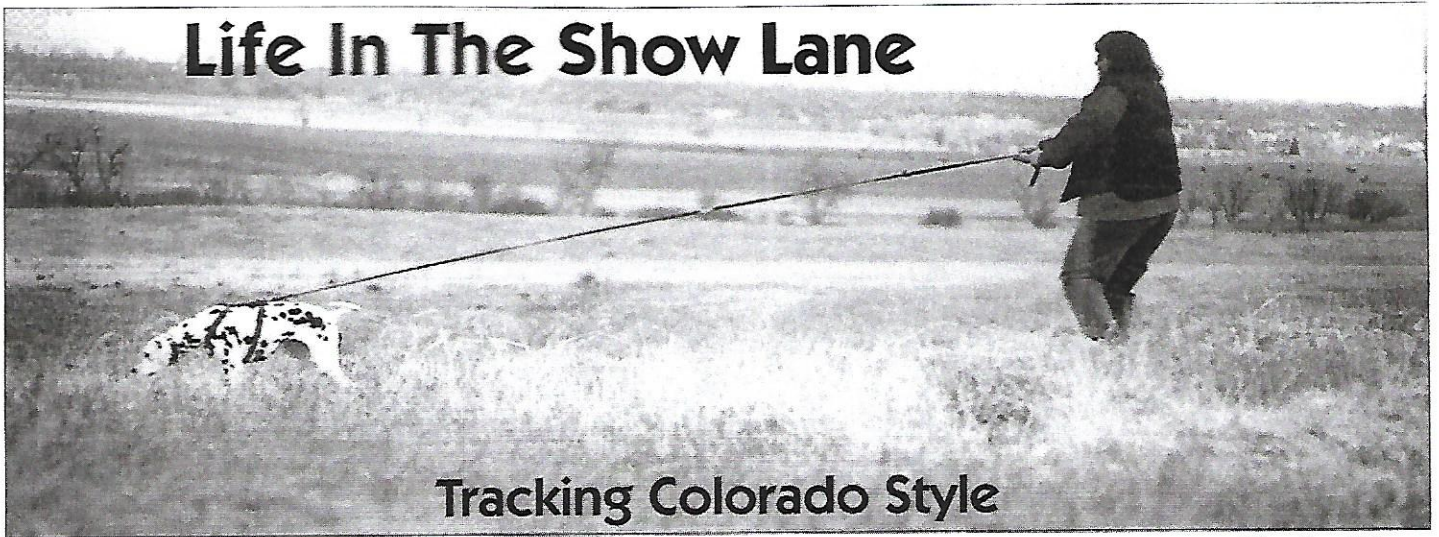


Life In The Show Lane



Tracking Colorado Style

Photo Jena Zafiratos.

By Carol Curlee, Cimarron West Dalmatians

I was told that winter in Colorado is the perfect time to start tracking. That might be true, but when you're a Certified Public Accountant, winter time means work. We started out tracking once April 15th passed. Spring came early in the foothills this year. We didn't get much of a winter with hardly any snow.

First we needed to let the dogs know what we wanted. They thought this was a fun game to be called from 50 yards away by someone who waved a glove in the air. It was even more fun to get to the glove and find hot dogs or some other equally tasty treat in it.

The next step wasn't quite so easy because the glove was hidden in the tall scrub. The first few times they went directly to Brant, our teacher, and wanted to know where the glove was. They slowly progressed to figure out we wanted them to find the glove all by themselves.

Have you ever seen a grown lady jumping up and down in a field acting crazy because her dog found a glove? I don't know who was more excited, my dog Georgia or me. Georgia took to tracking easier than I did. Since I didn't know what to expect I wasn't sure when she got it.

She seemed to use her eyes as well as her nose to track. She would look up at the start line and see if she could see Brant. If she couldn't then she wasn't sure what to do at first. We would take a few steps forward and I would try again to get her nose to the ground. We learned a new vocabulary, and had to teach it to the dogs.

"Track On" became one I used over and over. Georgia would stop and smell for critters. Was she on the track or was she just playing around? One of the hardest things for me was to trust my dog. The other smells in the field presented more hurdles to overcome.

We looked like a motley crew. A Doberman Pinscher, an Australian Shepherd, a mixed breed and Georgia the Dalmatian. Brant our teacher has Labs.

We have progressed from straight tracks to J curves and are now working on double J curves. We are working in the fields as well as parks. The different surfaces hold the smell differently. As far as I'm concerned, the taller the scrub the better. It really holds the scent.

Today the temperature will hit 100. Too hot to track in the heat of the day. Almost too hot to track in the cool of the morning at 7:00 A.M. it is still in the '80s. Fall is just around the corner and winter will be here before you know it. Once again everyone says that winter is the best time to go tracking. The cycle is complete.

Georgia's tracking is new for both of us. It was something I just knew she would be good at. I enjoy getting out in the field and watching her work. I also enjoy the positive praise I can give her for a job well done. It's never too late for an old dog to learn a new trick.



"Georgia" training with Carol. Carol writes "Tracking comes easy for some, but Georgia and I have had to work hard at it." Photo Jena Zafiratos.