



K9 Nose Work® in Canada

submitted by Donna Toews CPDT-KA, ANWI

In 2009, while wandering around the Internet, I came across some videos of dogs working on scent. The website described it as Nosework, a new sport created by professional detection dog handlers from California and what I saw, filled me with ideas of activities for my high drive, genetically hunting-charged, busy, 4 month old field bred English Cocker named Edge (CKC Badachro's Hayden). I bookmarked the website and referred to it often.

During one of the web visits, I read an announcement that one of the K9NW founders, Ron Gaunt, would be in the Pacific N'West in January 2010 to deliver a day-long seminar on the new sport. I flew to the phone and made contact with Miriam Rose... a professional detection dog handler and co-hostess of the seminar. She was thrilled to hear from a Canadian neighbour, quickly invited me to bring my 5 mth old pup and confirmed that we had a working spot.

So started our journey...

While I don't have references to support the statement, I have heard several times from the founders that a dog's first solid sense is the sense of smell because a pup must find the teat in order to survive and does so by locating the odor. I have also heard that the last sense to extinguish is the sense of smell... defined by the last breath... and in between birth and death, a dog scents and discriminates millions of odors in its lifetime. Discovering which odors pay! If we take this information into account, it would confirm that there is really **nothing** we can teach our dogs about odor!

In February 2011, Ron Gaunt gave the first K9NW seminar in Canada. It was a day of adventure and discovery. Through the use of cardboard boxes, the working teams were shown how to engage their dogs in hunting for food rewards. It did not take long for the dogs to willingly participate... after all, no one can teach them how to use their noses!

In the sport side of K9 Nose Work®, the teams (dog and handler = a team) are instructed through a process of ritual to work together to find odor. There is a ritual of changing into specific working gear, waiting at a start line, defining the activity with a signal (verbal and/or and physical), and rewarding the dog when the nose touches the source of the odor. The ritual helps develop effective communication in the team.

This activity is FUN!

The dogs are happy to apply their natural abilities to hunt and handlers are thrilled to be part of the excitement. All dogs and humans can do this sport: senior, young, infirm, reactive, "untrainable". All dogs are worked individually, no dog-sport experience is necessary, and it's likely the "greenest" sport since we use cardboard boxes and the world as our arena.

If teams progress to competition they work on identifying three specific, chemically-unique essential oils: birch, anise and clove. The dog is first trained on the odor of birch. The essential oil is dropped onto cotton swabs and the swabs are put in metal containers or "hides" and put out for the dog to find. Dogs are rewarded when they complete successful searches.

Teams find the "hides" in four elements: containers, interiors, exteriors and vehicles. Each element presents different challenges and the first rule of K9 Nose Work® is canine safety in the search environment. Handlers are responsible to check out all areas before running their dogs. Handlers may work their dogs off-leash in interior searches if they choose but other searches are done on-lead for safety.

As each dog becomes "odor obedient" they can take an Odor Recognition Test (ORT) where the team must search a room containing approximately 24 boxes (all the same size and colour!) and indicate which box contains the odor. .. in a time under three minutes. Once they have proven themselves in that event, they can go to trial. The trial levels are specific to the odors... NW1 tests the dog's indication on



birch, NWll on birch and anise and NWlll on birch, anise and clove. With each level, there is increased difficulty for the teams... added distractions, higher placement of hides and varying time limits.

K9NW changes relationships

Whether a handler decides to test their training in a trial, it really doesn't matter to the dog. Dogs, who participate in finding odor... change. I've witnessed reactive dogs ignore distractions. I've watched senior dogs engage in life again... deaf dogs working without verbal direction and blind dogs working independently. I've watched dogs in carts eagerly and successfully win at the game. I've watched frustrated dogs lose destructive behaviour to focus on the search. I've watched shy dogs reach a level of confidence that nothing else could reach. Every dog has been my teacher and their successes are soundly celebrated.

I've also seen huge changes in the human part of the team... frustrated handlers who said their dogs are "dumb", see their dogs in a whole new light. Handlers who were giving their dogs "one last chance" do a 180° turn and embrace this activity as a lifesaver. Handlers who "control" their dogs, step back and let the dogs take the lead.

Sharing this activity with the dogs and their handlers has been a joyous time. We all win when our dogs succeed. And we all come home with the best dog in class. This is something that we can do for the life of the dog and while we may take holidays in training, the dog never unscrews his nose for a holiday. He practices every day and is therefore, the master!

Speaking of class... my first class has wonderful dogs who are waiting for today's hunt challenges. I have a picture in my mind of 50+ boxes and some plastic Christmas decorations!

For more information about K9 Nose Work® sport visit: www.nacsw.net

GROOMING #4 : FOOT NOTES

Yvonne Van Wyk (Especially)

With feet I start by using a #30 blade and trimming out the excess hair between the pads on the bottom of the feet. Nails should be kept as short as possible. I like to trim toe nails shortly after a bath as wet toe nails are softer and the dogs seem to tolerate the clipping and grinding of the nails better when the nails are soft. After clipping the hair from the bottom of the feet, I use thinning shears to trim the hair from around the foot, always with the foot on the table.

Straight shears can be used to trim excess hair under the foot that the clipper did not get but should not be used on



the top of the foot. It sounds simple enough to do feet but in actuality can be one of the trickiest areas to do. It requires a great deal of practice to make the foot look as "catlike" as possible. A good foot with thick pads and nicely arched toes can be made to look flat footed if too much hair is taken off. However, these are English cockers and not Cavaliers so the hair needs to be neatly trimmed around the foot so it does not appear that it is wearing bedroom slippers. Care must also be taken to watch for mats between the toes as this can be very irritating to the foot especially when wet. Just one more note, something that I have noticed over the years. I take particular caution to keep toe nails short when puppies are teething as it seems the foot "flattens out" a little during this stage and can be permanent if toe nails are not kept short. Also how the feet develop can also be influenced by the flooring/surface of dog run a puppy is housed in.