

coming to report to you. Is there a pattern to your dogs searching - i.e. he smells the strongest scent area before alerting, wags his tail harder, puts his ears up or down? Learn to watch and read your dog.

10. Did you see, by *watching the dog's body language*, that he found the scent source? Why ask him to show you if you know he has not found the source. Are we asking them to lie to us by pressuring them to commit to something? We, as handlers, are programmed (or well trained) in how the search sequence is done. Give the dog the command - dog finds article - dog alerts - dog is asked to show source. Questions you should ask yourself when you are observing your dog are did you see the point of discovery? Did the dogs body language change? Where was the last place he looked when he took the bringsel or gave alert? The dog might not have the source if he is slow to alert (or does not want to alert), keeps working the scent, or has overwhelming scent conditions.

11. *If the dog cannot pinpoint the source, it does not mean the dog has failed.* Recognize that there are times when they are not able to pinpoint. If you are working on an overwhelming scent source, acclimatize your dog to the area; let the dog adjust to the new smell. I have observed many times when dogs work an area where a body has badly decomposed - and they will continue to work the area smelling everything but will not necessarily alert on the spot.

12. After the dog alerts, and you ask the dog to show you the source - if there is hesitation on his part it's probably because the dog is not sure of the location of the scent source. He might also show you several different things or areas on the same refind indicating confusion. Or, the dog may just keep alerting and not do a refind when asked to show you. Understand, by continuing to ask the dog under these circumstances to show you, you are asking him to make something up.

SUMMARY

We are good at training our dogs to search - but that doesn't mean that we can't change or make a better decision on any given search. Be flexible. Treat each search or training as a new challenge, use all the things you have learned but keep an open mind on how to solve THIS problem. Your dog will not fall apart if you do not ask for the refind. Reward your dog for finding a scent pool, but remember - Don't reward your dog when you don't know what they have found. Don't set your dog up for failure when you know the dog has no idea of where the scent source is. Re-work the problem as suggested above. Do a tight grid search. Help your dog by working the problem in a logical, organized way. Don't work your dog until both of you are frustrated. Stop - rethink the problem. When you see a teammate getting frustrated with their dog, remind them in a kind way, "maybe your dog doesn't know where the exact scent source is". Suggest they take a break and help them come up with a new plan.

Try setting up a training problem (buildings work very well) where the scent source is up high or not accessible to the dog, and watch several dogs work. Can be a wonderful handler learning experience.

LESSONS LEARNED

THE LESSONS LEARNED AND WHAT WE CAN DO TO HELP CORRECT THE PROBLEM

1. *Don't believe everything your dog tells you.* They are not lying, but they might not be showing you what you want. As handlers we have been told to always believe our dog. A better attitude is to learn how to read what our dog is telling us.
2. *Help your dog.* Can you move objects of question out of the scent pool to a new area and then ask your dog to show you the source? If this is a crime scene or an investigation, make sure you get permission from the agency to move anything.
3. *Give your dog a break and then re-work the area.* Try a different time of day, temperature or wind direction. This might help you and your dog figure it out. Try working the problem coming in from a different direction.
4. *Have another dog work the area* to see what it does and what object it wants to show the handler. Use a dog that has a different alert system, or a different style of working.
5. Many times you will not be able to completely figure it out. Let the agency know you have an *area of interest* and let them do the evidence gathering or investigation.
6. Expect and accept that we will not always understand the answers. *Don't analyze everything to death* - its OK just to say, "my dog has interest in this object or area". Our dogs are trained to alert on cadaver scent. They decide what qualifies for that category. For example, we don't really know how human fear or trauma scent relates to cadaver. We suspect from observation that they do react to it, but we need real conclusive research to verify this. We also know cadaver dogs will find sewers, dirty diapers, and anything with blood on it --it is after all decomposing human scent.
7. *Document what the dog did*, even if you don't understand it. Your search report should include: time of day, wind direction, temperature on the ground and air, predominate wind direction, wind direction at time of search, other searching or disturbances in the area prior to your search, and a map of the area or a picture. Check back with the agency to see what they have discovered in the case. This helps you understand what your dog was telling you.
8. The more pressure you put on your dog, the more likely he will be to show you things that have nothing to do with what you want. *Learn how to read your dog* when he is not sure where something is located. In training we can help them learn how to discover it, but in the real world - don't pressure them - we don't know the correct answer. They may show you something just to please you.
9. *Train yourself to watch your dog.* This is best done when you are in the training mode, because you know the correct answer. Watch where your dog gets excited as it goes over the scent pool, where did the dog last smell before

Box Effect - The Yahtzee Phenomena

The yahtzee phenomena, as we have come to call it, began when doing a search of a house and garage. We were asked to look for blood evidence to place a homicide in the house. As usual, we worked our dogs without watching the other teams work and did not share information until we were all finished with our initial search. An observer monitored all of the teams.

When we had finished our initial search we met together to compare notes. All of the dogs had shown interest and/or alerted on a sink drain, mop bucket, and woodpile. These 3 locations were within a single car garage area. In those areas there was nothing visible in the way of evidence. When the dogs were asked to show us or pinpoint the source near the woodpile, all went to a yahtzee box sitting on the floor and pawed at it. We looked at the box, saw nothing and again asked them to "show me". All gave the same response - back to the yahtzee box. The box was taken as evidence along with other items found in the garage.

Finishing our search and debriefing with the agency, we left feeling incomplete and not understanding what our dogs had told us..... We could not understand what the yahtzee box had on it and were hopeful the crime lab would be able to tell us something. Several months later in talking to the agency we were told that nothing had been detected in or on the yahtzee box. However, they had found blood that matched the DNA of the victim on the wood pile, drain and mop bucket!

Several months later we set up a cadaver scent training exercise in a building with the scent source up high - the dogs unable to get to it. We watched approximately 12 dogs work the problem. All of them caught scent and alerted. When asked to show the handler where it was, they all pointed to a raised area of the floor approximately 12" x 15" x 3" high located under the scent source. Suddenly it all made sense to us. We knew what they were doing but had failed to realize the significance months earlier. Yahtzee had returned!

Recalling the yahtzee search, we can see how the box was a predominate object in a scent pool. The yahtzee box meant nothing, it was simply something that stood out and the dogs picked it to show us. We insist during training that they show us something specific, so the dogs have learned that we expect them to show us a thing/location. When the dogs can easily find the scent source they will show us, but when they have a scent pool or are unable to get to or find the source, they show us something that probably has scent on it but is not necessarily the scent source. A buried body sometimes gives off less scent where it lies than does the scent pool that has formed, and the dog will show us the scent pool.

We tend to think that every thing our dogs do is significant. We feel we have trained them to show us where the scent source is. In training this is possible, but on a real search we may not know the correct answer. What we have done is train them to show us something so they can please their handler and be rewarded. They have learned to make us happy by showing us something within the pool - *anything*.