

Introduction to Hallway Retrieves and Blinds (rev. 8/3/11)



Step 1:

Brea is about eight weeks old, the perfect age to begin her training. I find a long hallway and close all of the doors. Then I return to one end and hold on to her while facing down the hall. This is easier said than done.



Step 2:

While gently holding Brea, I roll a tennis ball half way along the hall within her view. I can feel the intensity in her body as I hold her. I like this; it's easier to work with than apathy.



Step 3:

I release her and call her name simultaneously. She runs down the hall to pick up the ball. There is only one way back, which is past me. I like to sit on the ground and leave a gap so that the pup can attempt to skirt me. It is then simple to intercept her.



Step 4:

After Brea has mastered a very simple retrieve, which should be accomplished in a couple of days, I add in her first “blind”.



Step 5:

Brea has become conditioned to run down this hallway and make easily marked retrieves. This time I have placed a ball in the far left corner of the hall while she wasn't looking, but I'm careful not to place it too far away she won't catch site of it. She is anticipating me throwing her a retrieve as I have done in the past. Instead I introduce a new word “mark”. I am still gently restraining her.



Step 6:

I am looking for a slight indication that she sees the retrieve. Then, her ears perk very slightly as she catches a glimpse of the ball. I immediately encourage her by saying the word “back”.



Step 7:

I encourage her return by tapping on the ground. I am well aware that her inclination will be to run past me with her prize if she is given the opportunity.



Step 8:

As Brea starts to skirt me, I very gently intercept her. I never whistle or talk at this point. I am more interested in observing.



Step 9:

I make Brea as comfortable as possible when she returns. I encourage her to hold the ball by saying "hold it" repeatedly. This command will pay dividends later on. I will let her hold the ball for quite a while before I take it from her.