

FIELD NEWS

The Board thanks retiring Field Co-Chairs, Noel Cacchio, Bobbie Kolehouse, and Marsha Linehan for their hard work over the past several years, organizing field activities (including instinct tests), making them more visible to our membership as a whole and pulling together myriad points of view to gain a consensus on the following description. They certainly deserve a well-earned break. And while they will be missed, the Board looks forward to getting to know and work with their successors – Venee Gardner (East), Kaye Bennett (Midwest) and Elaine Grabowski (West). KLP

"The Cocker Spaniel Hunting Style

Cocker Spaniels are the smallest of the Sporting Spaniels today, possessing an instinctive ability to quest game. They are alert, merry, and willing to please, making them good hunting companions.

Cockers hunt at a moderate pace, covering ground in an efficient manner, making use of both foot and air scent. Cockers may occasionally glance to their handlers for direction.

Cockers will clearly indicate they are making game by their animated body movements and vigorous tail wagging, which may be preceded or followed by a momentary hesitation, where they appear to use their nose, eyes, and ears to help them locate the exact area they have detected bird scent. A bold flush will follow.

Cockers are particularly excellent hunting dogs for Grouse and Woodcock often found in areas of thick hedgerow and dense berry bushes, where they will exhibit their true boldness to cover.

Cockers are excellent markers, and willing retrievers. Although bred as upland bird dogs, Cockers are willing swimmers, and will retrieve game from water in an efficient manner.

Summary: A Cocker Spaniel has an action all his own, and will hunt game methodically and at a moderate pace. His smaller size permits the Cocker to be hunt efficiently in hedges, brambles, and around downed trees. His merry action will clearly indicate when he is making game. A close working spaniel, the Cocker stays within gun range, and has the natural instinct to find, flush, mark and retrieve small and large game birds to his hunting companion." (*approved January 2007*)

From Breed Care News (distributed by Bobbie Kolehouse). If you are interested in beginning yard work with your Cocker, the American Spaniel Club has two good booklets available for minimal cost at \$2 each. One is a reprint of the original Ralph Craig booklet (and you can also find it in Al Grossman's book too, if you have it) and the other is put together by Ruth Tabaka.

Order them from our new ASC West Field Chair, Elaine Grabowski, cockerspanieltoo@aol.com

Other books I've found useful are Martin Deeley's, "Working Gundogs," www.martindeeley.com and Tony Roettger's "Urban Gun Dogs: Training Flushing Dogs for Home and Field." www.urbangundogs.com. Both books describe the exercises and why you are doing them, which is helpful if you are not a hunter and are not familiar with hunting. It is one thing to understand the procedure of the exercise, another to understand in context.

My favorite field supply source is Lion Country Supply, www.lcsupply.com You can buy an assortment of canvas dummies, the lifelike Dokken bird trainers, and dried wings. I zip tie wings

onto canvas dummies. And buy yourself a spaniel whistle, Acme 210 1/2 and a lanyard to put it on so you can wear it around your neck. That whistle is an amazing tool.

Keep your training tools special. Don't let the dogs have them except when you are working with them.

Noel told me last night on a phone call as she and Bobby drove home, that she'd taken a mounted rooster pheasant (taxidermied) along to PA for the Field exhibit and carrying it through the tack room, different dog were interested but one particular ESS lit up. They were just walking through and the handler was grooming the dog. Noel said the person working on the dog called those around her to come see her dog's interest.

It is pretty exciting to watch that instinct turn on, even when it isn't your dog.

It's fun. A lot of training in England is on dummies, not live birds and that works here too. You can train at home. Even, as Tony's book focuses on, if you live in the city. Cockers love the fundamentals of the work, the hunting it up and the retrieving, and it makes it easy for both of you to enjoy.

Good for their souls and for yours to know you make them happy and can build confidence and character."