

# Dog Scouts of America

## Flyball Preparation

### **BUILDING VOCABULARY**

There are a few basic words that your dog should learn along with their meanings. The dogs may or may not come to know the meaning of these words, but there's no harm in using them and trying to build your dog's understanding of what's going on.

**READY?** This word is meant to get the dog very excited. It means he is about to race. Your dog could also take it to mean, "line up and get ready"

**SET!** This can be used as in, "ready. . -set...go" SET is when we release the dogs (it means "go!" They never actually hear the word, "go" as they should be crossing the starting line, 20 feet away from you, by that time.

**GET YOUR BALL!** Use this to "pump up" your dog before you let him go in a race, or use it to send a dog back for a dropped ball. It is meant to get him to focus down to the box end.

**DOG'S NAME!!** This should produce an instant recall with a flip turn off the box and a burst of speed. It should also produce an instant recall at any time you want your dog to come back to you (like if he starts to take off down to the box without being sent).

**FALSE START** Say this to your dog to calm him down when the first dog has false started in racing. It means, "I'm sorry, but you're not going to get to run this time, so don't pop a vessel in your neck. It's beyond my control. You're still a good dog, and you WILL get to play eventually, but just not right now."

**JUMP!** If your dog fumbles the ball and goes out of the line of jumps, you can shout this to get him to angle back in to that 4th jump. Some people use it at the box, to remind the dog of the next thing he has to do.

**BIG JUMPS** Say this to your dog when your team has had to pull the little dog, and the jump heights have gone up. I don't know how much good it does, but if you say it often enough, the dog may come to understand he must be careful to clear the higher jumps. This is important if you did not warm up at the bigger height. You don't get a chance to practice them over the higher jumps once you're racing.

**QUIET!** While at a tournament, your dog will spend a good deal of time in his crate, or waiting to race. It is a good idea for him to know what it means to stop barking or whining.

**HURRY UP** Before or between races, you will want to exercise your dogs. A word like "Hurry" or "Potty" is useful. You want the dog to get down to business and get it over with.

**KENNEL** This is just to tell the dog to get in his crate.

**STOP IT!** This is just to get the dog to stop doing anything--twisting in circles while you're trying to hold him, biting the person in front of you, clawing the mat, whatever.

### **CONTROL EXERCISES**

For optimum safety in playing flyball, your dog should have a few basic control exercises under his belt. Here are some things that are important to work on.

### **COME WHEN CALLED**

It is obvious that if you do not have a dog which will come when called, then you do not have a dog! If the dog is not reliable at coming back to you, you will not be able to safely practice off leash, and much of the flyball training takes place off leash. In addition, we keep the door to the training building

open in the summer, and if your dog can not be trusted off leash, he might run into the road (cars go by at 65 mph) or run after the neighbor's horses and get kicked in the head or something. Please make sure your dog will come when called.

### **LIE DOWN**

Sometimes it is important to stop a dog immediately, or "park" him quickly while you take care of something. The emergency "down" cue works well for this. Make sure that your dog understands that when he hears this cue word, he is to drop in his tracks and not move until told to do so. This also sometimes helps when trying to catch a "runaway" dog.

### **LEAVE IT!**

Leave it means "Look at me instead" or "do not touch or molest it." Flyball is a very exciting, fast-paced sport. The dogs become very riled and anxious to join in the chasing and fun. Dogs which are the best at flyball are also the ones which love to chase things (like livestock, rodents, other dogs ... ), so don't be discouraged if your dog is wanting to go after the other dogs. This is natural. However, this is also unacceptable, and you must teach your dog a rock solid response to the "leave-it" cue. The best way to teach this to your dog is to divert his desire to chase or "go for" something by getting the dog focused on his object of attraction. This is a rope tug or other object that the dog loves to tackle at a flying run, shake the puddin' out of, and try to shred, while you hold onto the other end. The dog is in essence acting out the prey-catching game, and it's way more fun than actually going after the other dogs (who may bite back). For more information on the foundation steps of teaching the leave-it, see the positive training page on the Dog Scout website.

### **STAY**

Staying put is a good thing for a dog to be able to do. We expect our dogs to "Stay" when we give the lie down cue.

### **OUT**

If your dog does not give up the ball when he brings it back, you need to teach him to respond to a cue which means to spit it out. In a competition, you may get flagged and have to turn around and re-run your dog. That would be a little hard with a ball already in his mouth. Tugging and playing keep away is O.K., but get him to give it up on cue.

Your dog must also allow himself to be handled and restrained by strangers.