

TRAINING A DOG FOR HGH

Advanced Training

by Ulf Kintzel

Let's assume the dog has been trained a while, is holding the border quite well and has gotten the idea that the sheep are not supposed to leave the graze.

Now I start to offer the dog three or four borders (four would be the entire graze). However, I don't always do that. In addition, here and there I let the sheep push towards the border. That's easily done by having hungry sheep in the morning in a fairly well eaten down graze. Also, I watch carefully if as a result a few problems or inaccuracies occur.

In addition, a few more exercises and commands are added.

I start to send the dog along the border to a cross border. It is taught as a mixture of plain obedience and motivation. I move out to the border, block on direction with my crook and start pushing the dog along the border using a "Go on" ("*Furche lang*") command. Important is that the dog will not be brought all the way to the cross border. The dog should move faster away from me than I follow the dog. Also important is that the dog has no chance to avoid the command by moving the opposite direction. This direction must be clearly blocked. Once the dog has learned to avoid the pressure by going the other way the training and teaching of this command becomes even more difficult.

At the beginning I send the dog where it makes sense. The cross border I send it to usually has sheep close to the border or even a few sheep across the border. That means it is not a plain obedience exercise, the dog gets some reward also. After the dog has executed the command I call the dog back to where I started. Now the dog gets praised and petted. This way I tell the dog that it did what I wanted and also that it is okay to come back. I don't praise anywhere in between, only when the command is finished.

At this point in training the weak nerved dogs start showing the first signs even if the drive is strong, the mediocre drive but strong dogs won't have an issue.

Another command I start to teach is "Stand" ("*Steh*"). I do not teach this before the dog actually works. I start by teaching this command when I have the dog right next to me while the sheep go around me into the graze or just while I stand next to the dog on the border. Once the dog understands the command I start giving the dog stand commands on the border with me standing in a bit of a distance but close to the border. I just approach the dog and say "Steh", lifting my crook. I always give the command when the dog is facing and approaching me, never when the dog moves the opposite direction away from me. There are three scenarios that I can think of: 1. The dog stands. I let it stand a while and then release it from a stand, call the dog to me and praise it. 2. The dog keeps moving forward. I increase the force by stepping a bit stronger towards the dog and giving the command firmer (but not loud). 3. The dog moves away from me.

That means there was too much force. I call the dog and the moment the dog turns I repeat the command gentler than before. generally speaking, I try to figure out how much or little force the dog needs to stand. this may vary from situation to situation.

I have sometimes a fourth scenario with other people's dogs that know a "down" command and especially when this was used in situation where the dog exhibited undesired behavior and was put in a down to stop it. This is the most difficult situation since the dog, when pressured, will lie down. The dog knows from previous situations that this is safe.

A third command, if I would include the "Come" command it would be the fourth command, is "Bleib". This would be best translated with "There" or "Work there". People who have done Border Collie style herding are familiar with this command. It is used when the dog has to work in a certain spot, on a certain part of the border. In other words, when that command is given the dog turns and continues working where it just worked before. It can also be used when a dog attempts to leave the border. This is taught in a similar way as the "go on" command. I only give the command when the dog is approaching me, is moving in my direction. I block with the crook the direction the dog is moving towards, point with the other hand in the opposite direction and say "Bleib". If the dog tries to continue to move the same way I increase force. The dog should have no chance to learn to avoid the command. It will try to do so when the handler stands to far in the graze or give the command while the dog moves away.

These commands will be also necessary once I start moving the sheep from graze to graze, on a road, farm road etc.

As a general rule, I teach commands when I don't need them. In other words, there is at the beginning no purpose at all. It is just that I practice the command. This way it is easiest done because one can fully focus on that and be fair with the dog. When the command is actually needed one might expect the dog to do something that it actually can't yet.

At that point in training and at that age I want the dog to obey me and work for me. I don't expect much independence yet, that comes with time anyway (usually at the age of about two to four years, depending on the dog). The dog has to listen. After the dog obeys well to every command, takes directions and comes every time it is called the dog can be given more freedom to make more decisions on its own and to gain experience.

In my opinion, a dog that is allowed to work independently too early and before the necessary obedience/control is gained might work well as long as things go smoothly. The moment it has to take directions and listen to what the handler says it won't work, the dog will try to make its own decisions which will not be always what the handler had in mind.

Besides the described commands and exercises I do a few other things. At first sight, they don't seem to have much to do with herding.

I sometimes stand a few feet or yards away from the border and just call the dog in from the border into the graze. Then the dog just stands a while with me, hangs out with me. This way the dog learns that it is okay for it to come in from the border. the dog doesn't know this yet since past attempts top break the border (and disturb the flock) have been corrected. This learning to

come in will be helpful once the dog will get taught to gather sheep and trained to move them without having the comfort of a border.

When there is nothing to do at all, no sheep near any border or in a graze where nothing can happen I step to the edge of the graze and have the dog hanging out with me. I am not expecting the dog to keep working when there is nothing to do. I've seen dogs being encouraged to keep moving along the border. This is not only a waste of the dog's energy which might be needed at a later time. It also gives the dog the idea it always must do something. However, sometimes not doing anything is doing the best. Whatever else the dog might do otherwise can be disturbing. An example for this could be when the shepherd is walking with a flock through a narrow passage, the dog goes with the handler. Also not doing anything needs to be learnt for many dogs. Especially hyper dogs have a problem with that.

Generally speaking I would say not every dog that is running on the border is actually working and not every dog that stands here and there on the border is lazy.



It takes some training until the dog knows that these sheep don't belong across the border. In this case Caro vom Quasliner Moor does know his job and pushes the straying sheep back into the graze.