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Pointing Dog[®]
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"A Chance to Double"

by David Drinkard

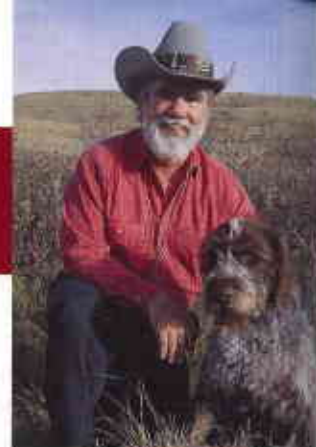
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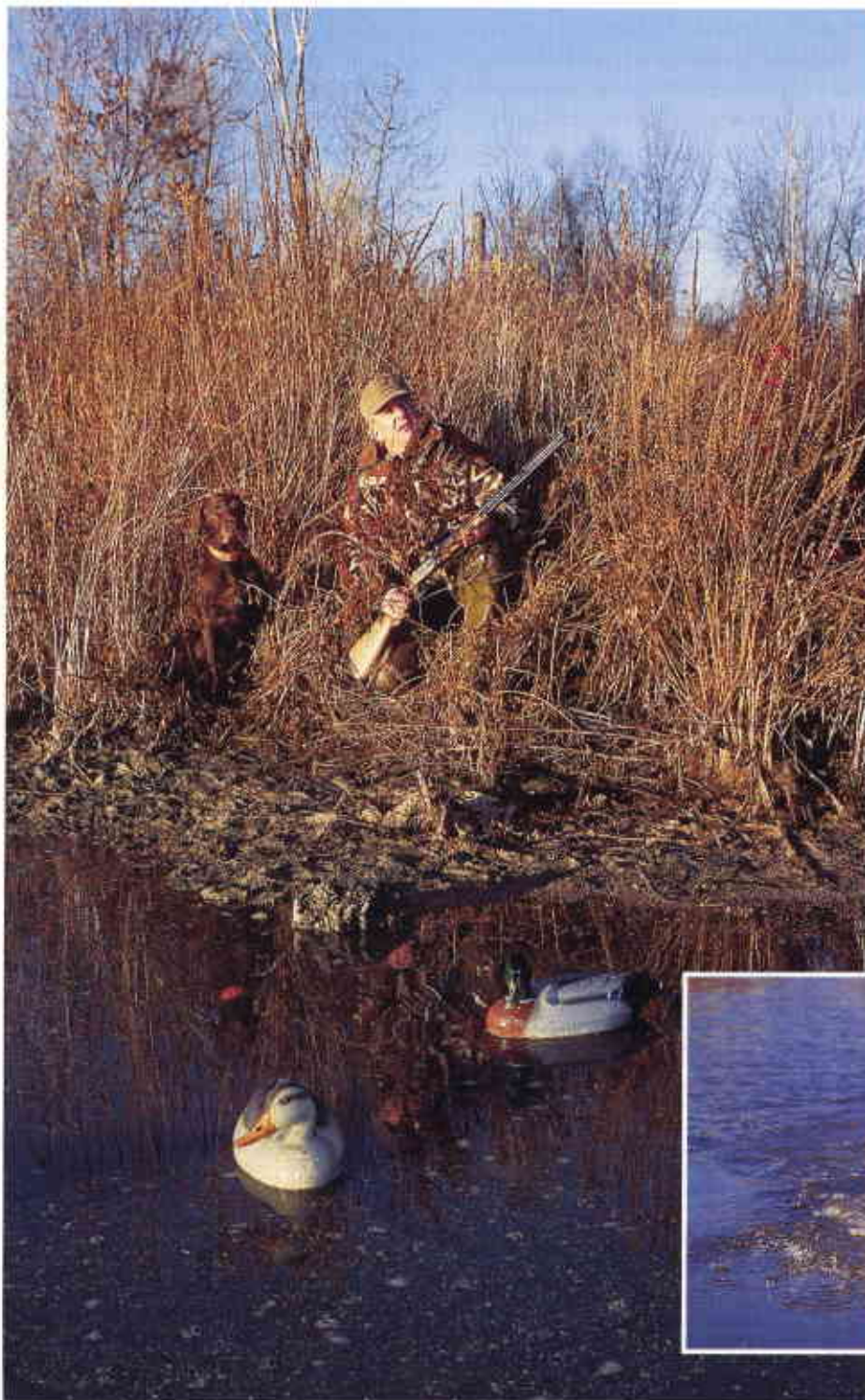
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The Versatile Hunting Dog

by Chuck Johnson



Bob Farris on Pudelpointers



Due to warm weather, duck hunting last year was slow in most of the Rocky Mountain states. Bob Farris (pudelpointer breeder and owner of Cedarwood Kennels), Jeff Funke (German wirehaired breeder and owner of Three Devils Kennel), and I had planned a duck-hunting trip for late last year, and thankfully by the end of December the weather finally turned cold and the ducks started coming down into southwest Idaho.

The place we were hunting was one that had been specifically managed for waterfowling. The owner had flooded several grain fields, providing ideal habitat, and there were also a number of small ponds on the property with duck blinds spread throughout the property.

Bob brought Dusty Rose, his male pudelpointer, and Jeff had Jake, his big, male wirehair.

After having flushed several hundred ducks while walking to the blinds, we settled into two concrete blinds situated on one of the small ponds. Since there was still a few minutes before legal shooting, I decided to kill some time by asking Bob how he started breeding and training pudelpointers.



BOB FARRIS PHOTOS



Bob started his kennel in 1970. At that time, he played the field trial game with Chesapeake Bay retrievers. In 1980, he began taking in gun dogs to train and has since trained over 15 different breeds. Since Bob hunts both waterfowl and upland birds, he kept looking for a single breed to fill all of his hunting needs. To his surprise, he found that pudelpointers were excellent bird dogs; they had a superior ability to search for cripples in both field and water; and they're friendly, inquisitive, and eager to please. He also found them to be a cooperative dog that makes an ideal companion and house dog.

Legal shooting time came and immediately we had a flock of ducks working our decoys. Jeff took the first shot and brought down a drake mallard, which Jake gathered up quickly on command.

After that it seemed as if every five or 10 minutes a group of mallards was working our blind. We took turns shooting, and the two dogs rotated retrieving duties.

Dusty, sitting next to Bob and watching the sky as the birds come into the

blind, was eager to retrieve. On command, he dashed out, made a beeline to the downed duck, and gently carried it back to the blind and delivered it to hand. We took our fair share of ducks after that, and the morning seemed to be over almost as soon as it began.

The pudelpointer is a medium-sized dog, standing 22 to 25 inches at the shoulder and weighing from 50 to 70 pounds. The color varies from light to dark liver with white markings sometimes seen on the chest and paws. The pudelpointer's coat varies widely, but ideally it is harsh and dense. All pudelpointers should have pronounced eyebrows and whiskered muzzles.

The tail is docked at approximately two-thirds of its original length. The Germans developed this Continental breed in the middle of the last century by crossing a pointer with a poodle. Despite the dog's versatility, it still has yet to catch on with bird dog enthusiasts. Today, there are fewer than a dozen serious pudelpointer breeders and kennels in North America.

In spite of their relative obscurity, pudelpointers are truly one of the most versatile dogs, at home in high mountains, the pheasant fields, or the duck marsh.

After the hunt, we had a chance to sit down and discuss pudelpointers and Bob's breeding/training program. He started by saying how he looks for a stud that stamps his puppies with a positive attitude, as well as a cooperative and biddable nature. And feeling that the female provides 60 percent of the genetic influence in a litter, she must

SPORTING DOG PRINTS

by

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be a strong individual with a good nose and a great deal of desire.

Since both good and bad traits are passed on at breeding, Bob tries to eliminate negative qualities, called endpoints, as much as possible. And to that end, he never breeds two dogs that have the same negative quality.

Bob studies pedigrees back three generations in an effort to eliminate endpoints. All the dogs in his breeding program have had at least two years of proven hunting experience on wild birds, this being the best way to observe and judge a dog's desire and ability to hunt. Bob looks at a dog's ability to cover terrain, find birds, point, handle cripples, and retrieve. He also evaluates their water work both in the fall and in January, when the weather is at its worst.

Bob hunts his dogs with setters and pointers in the field and with Labs in the duck blind. He believes that a versatile dog should be able to stack up to a Lab on a January duck hunt as well as an outstanding setter or pointer in an upland field. By hunting his dogs alongside the top dogs and dog handlers of other breeds, Bob is able to maintain high standards in his breeding and training program.

Bob believes in linebreeding – breeding successive generations among themselves to secure certain desired characteristics. He also outbreeds on occasion to bring in desirable characteristics and to strengthen the qualities he is looking for in his breeding program. An integral part of his breeding program is PennHIP® testing all of his dogs for hip dysplasia before breeding.

In his constant quest to improve the breed, Bob stays in contact with pudelpointer breeders in North America and Europe. When he finds an outstanding dog from another kennel, he arranges to breed that dog to one of his.

The North American Versatile Hunting Dog Association (NAVHDA) test results bear out Bob's successful breeding program. For a dog to qualify for breeding at Cedarwood Kennels, it must:

- receive at least 100 points in a Natural Ability test;

*Not only can
a pudelpointer
work a field
like a setter,
but they also
take to water
like a Lab.*

- receive at least 175 points in a Utility test;
- be OFA or PennHIP® certified to be free of hip dysplasia;
- have a good temperament, coat, and conformation.

Bob has won a number of breeder awards along the way. To win a NAVHDA breeder's award, at least 75 percent of your litter must be successfully tested in Natural Ability with an average score of 90 points per dog. Bob also likes to test his dogs in Utility at a young age. He feels that a good Utility score earned before age three is more important for prospective breeding than a prize earned at a later age or after several tries.

Bob hunts all dogs in his breeding program on wild birds. Toward that end, he has developed a small parcel of land for duck hunting by building three ponds as well as a rustic cabin. The surrounding area is also great for hunting pheasants. Being an avid hunter, Bob spends most of the fall hunting both in the field and in blinds. He uses his land in the winter, spring, and summer for training his dogs.

Bob trains his pudelpointers year around as well as one or two dogs from other owners. He usually gets back about a third of his own pups for training, which enables him to keep track of his breeding program and to see first-hand their development. Surely, if all breeders had to take responsibility for training their pups as Bob does, they would have a lot better insight into what kinds of dogs they are producing.

Bob produces only two litters a year



express a desire for a family dog. He guarantees the owners complete satisfaction with the pups until the age of six months.

While talking with Bob, I noted his enthusiasm and love for his dogs. At day's end, I asked him what he felt was his main goal in his breeding program. Noting that breeders have a limited amount of time to leave an impression on a breed, he felt that he would like to make a positive impression and improvement to the pudelpointer breed for future generations of breeders. He would also like to see the pudelpointer receive the recognition it deserves as a fine hunting

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and is very selective as to who gets to own one of his puppies. Prospective owners must be active bird hunters and

dog and great companion and hopes that more hunters will choose the pudelpointer as a hunting companion.

Chuck Johnson is the owner of Wilderness Adventures Press, a retailer and publisher of hunting and fishing books, located in Bozeman, Montana. He's been active with versatile dogs since 1979. At present, Chuck and his wife Blanche own four German wirehaired pointers. You can contact Chuck at books@wildadv.com.
