

# Montana GSP Club News

Sponsored by the Montana German Shorthaired Pointer Club



January/February 2003

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## Exploring the role of ethics in bird dog training



**Author and Montana GSP Club member Christopher Eckhoff and his charges out for a training session.**

*By Christopher Eckhoff  
Upland Kennels, Savage, Mont.*

I have contemplated writing this article for some time. I review the subject in my mind, then one nagging thought had come up, which till now, stopped me from going through with it. The thought is I could be misconstrued first by a customer or, more importantly, by another trainer. Regardless, I think this subject needs to be discussed.

Each trainer has their own way of getting the job done. I believe that most trainers such as myself have served some type of apprenticeship combined with a willingness to research the field of bird dog training through books and/or personal discussions with other trainers. At some point in time, each trainer combines their apprenticeship training and research. This results in an individual method of training unique to each of us. Of course many bird dog trainers do things in similar ways, but I would be willing to bet that no two trainers would take any given dog and train it from start

to finish in exactly the same manner. Therefore, when writing an article about protecting the customer from unethical trainers, it is important for the customer to give each trainer latitude in the way they do things. Hopefully, this disclaimer will put all trainers reading this article a little more at ease.

In regard to customers misconstruing what I say in this article, please remember the following; the proof is in the pudding. Within limits, do not be as concerned with the way a trainer gets the job done as you are in the finished product. If the dog turns out to be what you wanted, that is the most important thing. Not the only thing mind you, but it is indeed the most important one.

The primary motivation I have in writing this article is to express a feeling I believe most trainers have. There is nothing more frustrating than trying to promote your program when someone with very limited abilities spouts off that they can get the job done in half the time

for half the cost when you know this is not possible.

The best example of this is force breaking to retrieve. This phase of a dogs training has become a hot item. One can find any number of advertisements for people that specialize in force breaking. For some, that's all they do. Indeed, I know a few trainers that subcontract the force breaking phase out to specialists, or at least have in their employ an individual whose primary, if not only job is to do the force breaking. I don't see anything wrong with this, I am just pointing out what a popular item force breaking has become.

There are claims a few trainers make in regard to force breaking that I'm leery of. The amount of time needed to complete the job comes to mind. I have personally witnessed the following example. At an NSTRA trial a couple seasons ago I watched from the camp gallery an English Setter drop a bird twice during a retrieve. The dog apparently had problems on his other retrieves as well since his scores were in the 50 point range, all five of them. A perfect score for a retrieve in NSTRA is 100 points. The dog ended up in third place for the day. The second place dog had four finds and retrieves but scored quite well on her work while the winner had five finds and retrieves. The third place dog would have won if his retrieves had been just average (considered 75 points in NSTRA). Needless to say, the owner was very disappointed. Along comes Joe Trainer and points out the obvious, the dog needs work on his retrieve and

**See TRAINING.....page 3**

# From the President's desk....

Do you like the new format for our newsletter? I hope so. Leanne is really putting her skills to work for the club. I encourage all of you to forward copies of this newsletter to all your friends. It will not cost you or our club anything and may help us build a larger club member base.

I also hope you will read and comment on any articles we publish. Leanne and I hope to make this newsletter a forum for Montana dog people to discuss pertinent issues. If you have an area of expertise we would be happy to review your training article or editorial for publication. If you disagree with an article you read, let us know and we can tell your side of an issue. The topic for the next newsletter will be rescue and the following edition will be dedicated to a discussion on dog food formulas. If you have a story to share or an experience or opinion you'd like to let other club members know about, please submit it to the newsletter. Other idea topics are welcome. Please get in-

involved in this newsletter and in our club. Eventually our club website will archive past copies of our newsletter as well as photos, articles and stories from our members. Our goal is to become a resource for German Shorthaired Pointer owners around Montana and increase our membership base.

Please submit your photos, articles, stories, ideas and opinions to Leanne at [kurtzlaw@attbi.com](mailto:kurtzlaw@attbi.com), 617 N. Raleigh Street, Helena, MT or call her at (406) 449-9940.

Jim Wiitala and I are preparing for a training seminar May 10 and hunt test on May 11.

A hunt test is a pass / fail competition that anyone with a pointing dog can do and enjoy. The event will be held at the Plunket Lake Shooting Preserve near Toston. Judges will be Charlie and Sue Williams from Brighton, Colorado. The Williams will also conduct a "How To Start Your

Pointing Dog" Seminar. The seminar will be limited to 50 people with one dog each. We'll also have an informal dinner on the grounds and a fireside chat that evening with Charlie and Sue. More details will be available in the next newsletter.



**Montana GSPC President Nancy Lane and Vigen at the Helena Kennel Club dog show in September of 2002.**

## ■ January meeting minutes

### Hunt test set for May in Three Forks area

January 11, 2003 the Montana GSPC met in the home of Jean and Gerald Graham. Members also attended via speaker phone from the home of John Kurtz and Leanne Smith in Helena.

President Nancy Lane, Glendive, reported she sent a letter to AKC Dec. 9, 2002 requesting a change in our club status from performance club up to specialty club status.

Treasurer Carol Nelson, Billings, reported the club has \$814.08 in the checking account. Bills were presented for payment totalling \$170.

Carol and Nancy will get together and submit their suggestions for judges for the 2004 national specialty show. Members are encouraged to contact Nancy if they wish to have input into the nominations by calling her at (406) 486-5445 or e-mailing her at [lzyharts@midriver.com](mailto:lzyharts@midriver.com).

Secretary Leanne Smith, Helena, has assumed the duties of secretary. She is producing the newsletter and working on updating the website.

Several fund-raising ideas were discussed. Nancy and Leanne will work together and present the club with some ideas at the next meeting.

Jim Whiitila, Helena, is putting together the May 10 and 11 hunt test. It will be held in the Three Forks area. He needs volunteers. Please contact Jim at (406) 459-2365 or [spotteddogfarm@msn.com](mailto:spotteddogfarm@msn.com) if you can help.

The club unanimously voted to suspend the further production of membership cards.

Copies the official minutes will be sent to all club members and will soon be available online at our website: [www.montanagspc.org](http://www.montanagspc.org).



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**Officers:**  
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Alan Heltemes, Williston, ND, Vice-President  
Leanne Smith, Helena, Secretary  
Carol Nelson, Billings, Treasurer

**Board of Directors:**  
Jean Graham, Billings  
Christopher Eckoff, Savage  
Judy Merwin, Flaxville

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## Upcoming Events 2003

- Feb. 14-16**      **Bozeman Wild West Winter Fest; flyball, agility, schutzhund, terrier races, drafting, Rally-O, flying disk and much more. Contact Nancy Creel at [nmcreel@theglobal.net](mailto:nmcreel@theglobal.net) or call (406)-522-7748.**
- March 8, 11 - noon**      **MT GSP Club meeting, Chris Eckhoff's home, Savage, (406) 798-3457**
- March 16, 9-4**      **Helena Kennel Club Season Opener Show and Go; Helena Fairgrounds, obedience, agility and conformation competitions. Contact Vicki McLean at [agillabs@mcn.net](mailto:agillabs@mcn.net) for more information.**
- April 28 - May 2**      **GSPCA National Specialty Show; Riverside, CA.**
- May 3**      **GSPC of Riverside, CA will host a specialty show; Riverside, CA.**
- May 4**      **GSPC of San Diego, CA will host a specialty show; Riverside, CA.**
- May 3-4**      **NADAC Agility Trial; Missoula, A Rover Runs Through It. Show Contact: Ellen Calnan, 3752 Rodeo Rd, Missoula, MT 59803 or email [Lnrose22@hotmail.com](mailto:Lnrose22@hotmail.com).**
- May 10**      **MT GSPC seminar, "How To Start Your Pointing Dog", Plunket Lake Shooting Preserve, Toston**
- May 11**      **MT GSPC Hunt Test, Plunket Lake Shooting Preserve, Toston, Contact: Jim Whittila at (406) 443-2896 or e-mail [spotteddogfarm@msn.com](mailto:spotteddogfarm@msn.com).**

### Training.....from page 1

Mr. Trainer would be glad to take on the task. But here is the kicker. Joe Trainer knows this dog is scheduled to run in two weeks and promises the owner he can force break the dog before then.

I say, "No way".

Can he get this dog retrieving in two weeks? Possibly.

Can he force break the dog in two weeks? no way. This owner was so desperate to do better the next trial he took the offer. I made a point of watching the dog the following trial, even asking the owner if I could walk along during the running of the dog. This Setter

dog had improved his retrieve, actually scoring in the low 70's. However, while the efficiency was there, the style was not. The point I am trying to make is, the owner should have had warning bells going off in his head when he heard the promise of two week force breaking. He should have asked about the trainers methods and what guarantees he offered. It's possible Mr. Trainer saw a glitch in the retrieve and gambled he knew a quick fix. I know for a fact he had not worked with the dog before, nor had the dog been force broke previously. This trainer misrepresented the truth in this case. He told the person he

## Classified Ads



Xanadu X Vigen puppies whelped 12/10/02. Xanadu sweepstakes winner at 8 months old, recent wins include both majors. Her full brother is Best in Show winner CH Lazy Heart's Xterra owned by Matinas Suzuki of Brazil. Male pups still available.

For more information contact Nancy Lane at (406) 486-5445 or e-mail her at [lzyharts@midrivers.com](mailto:lzyharts@midrivers.com).



would force break the dog and I have to believe he did no such thing.

The owner of a dog being lined up for training has to ask questions. Having spoken with a friend that had good luck with a specific trainer is great, but it's not a carte blanche credential. Perhaps the trainer did a heck of a good job with the friend's Gordon Setter which was used for guided hunts, but that does not in itself mean he has the touch for your Pointer you want to run in horseback field trials. Ask if the trainer has worked with Pointers before, and if so ask for the name of a customer See **TRAINING.....page 4**

## Training.....from page 3

or two.

Be willing to invest some of your time. Ideally, you live within a days drive of the trainer. If so, schedule a couple visits during the time your dog will be with the trainer. I have to believe most trainers welcome the involvement of their customers in the training process. An exception might be the dog given to a field trial trainer on a long term basis. Some trainers may not want the dog to have even a hint of distraction or divided loyalty.

I think it's nice if the trainer can show you one of their personally owned dogs. This can tell you a lot about the trainer and his touch with dogs in general. Do not necessarily look for an outstanding piece of dog work from the trainer's dog on a moments notice. At certain times of the year a good trainer may be very pressed for time with clients dogs and his own may be a little rusty. That's alright though. If the dog makes a mistake, notice how the trainer corrects it. The method of correction should be a high priority in any customers mind. Look and see if the dog is doing things because he understands what the trainer wants and is happy to do his best for the him, or is the dog doing things because he has been intimidated into it.

Be realistic about time frames and expense. You very much get what you pay for in this business. If you turn over a 10 month old pup that has had no formal instruction to a trainer in June be-

cause he told you the dog would be completely broke to wing, shot and fall by opening day September 1st, you probably made a mistake.

Most people have to live within a budget. In most cases the amount of money one can spend on training a dog is limited. However, don't go with a trainer just because he or she promises to get all things done within your budget. Rather, look to the trainer that says something like; OK, here is what I can do with your budget constraints and to get the job done you will have to invest some time of your own. Then, a good trainer will help you get set up to finish (or perhaps start) the dog. A good trainer knows where you will have problems and what phases of the training process are most critical. The trainer will be able to tell you where your money is best spent.

Any trainer worth at least his weight in salt should be willing to show you the results of your investment. I know many times it's not possible for the owner to come to the trainer and pick up the dog with two or three days of transition time to spend. But if you at all can spend some time, do it. It will give you a chance to ask questions as situations arise. Additionally, it will give you a chance to observe other dogs.

And finally, it will not only show you what the dog is capable of but as importantly, how the trainer did the training. This allows for a smooth transition and very few backward steps or problems. What I do is put the dog through its' paces under my direction, then have the owner do all the handling on his own dog for the remainder of their visit. If a problem of transition comes up I may step in to make sure the dog doesn't get mixed signals, but mostly the owner does the rest with their own dog. Then I have them assist on other clients dogs providing a chance to watch the training process. This way the client has a better idea how the training was done.

There's another occurrence I have observed which needs mentioning. This one happens in many occupations but is very prevalent among dog trainers. The question is whether the owner should go with that young, hard charging trainer or the older, sage one that exudes experience. This, in my mind, is not a valid question and should be shoved out of your decision making process. So as not to have the reader think I have a prejudice, you should know I

See TRAINING.....page 6

### Attention writers and photographers

The Montana GSP Club newsletter and website is soliciting original articles, opinion pieces, poetry and photographs.

This is a great opportunity to test the waters and share your knowledge, opinions and photographs.

Send your submissions to: Leanne Smith, 617 N. Raleigh Street, Helena, MT 59601 or e-mail them to [kurtzlaw@attbi.com](mailto:kurtzlaw@attbi.com).

## How can you help?

The Montana GSP Club can use donations of:

### Auction/Raffle Items

- art work •merchandise
- vacation packages •event tickets
- golf course passes
- t-shirts, hats, travel mugs
- guided fishing and hunting trips



### Rescue Program Needs:

- Dog Food •Bedding •Cash donations for medical care
- Foster homes •Transportation

To donate contact:  
Nancy Lane (406) 486-5445  
Leanne Smith (406) 449-9940

The Montana GSP Club is a non-profit organization registered with the Secretary of State. It is a 501(C)(3) organization and follows all Federal guidelines to maintain its status.



# German Shorthaired Pointer Club of America standards of the fore and hind quarters

•Forequarter

The shoulders are sloping, movable and well covered with muscle. The shoulder blades lie flat and are well laid back nearing a 45 degree angle. The upper arm (the bones between the shoulder and elbow joint) is as long as possible, standing away somewhat from the trunk so that the straight and closely muscled legs, when viewed from the front,

appear to be parallel. Elbows which stand away from the body or are too close result in toes turning inwards or outwards and must be faulted. Pasterns are strong, short and nearly vertical with a slight spring, loose, short-bladed or straight shoulders must be faulted. Knuckling over is to be faulted. Dewclaws on the forelegs may be removed. The feet are compact, close-knit and round

to spoon-shaped. The toes are sufficiently arched and heavily nailed. The pads are strong, hard and thick.

•Hindquarters

Thighs are strong and well muscled. Stifles are well bent. Hock joints are well angulated and strong with straight bone structure from hock to pad. Angulation of both stifle and hock joint is such as to achieve the optimal balance of drive and traction. Hocks turn neither in nor out. Cow hocked legs are a serious fault.

## Join the MT GSP Club today

Your Name

Mailing Address

City

State Zip

Home Phone

e-mail address

Please check interest or participation in the following dog activities: upland bird hunting\_\_ waterfowl hunting\_\_ hiking\_\_ field trials\_\_ hunt test\_\_ obedience\_\_ show\_\_ agility\_\_ tracking\_\_ rescue\_\_ other\_\_

Number of dogs owned \_\_\_\_\_ Breeds \_\_\_\_\_

I hereby apply for membership in the Montana German Shorthaired Pointer Club and \_\_\_\_\_enclose \$30.00 for one year's dues (Make checks payable to the MT GSP Club)

\_\_\_\_\_enclose \$300.00 for a lifetime membership

\_\_\_\_\_enclose a donation for Montana GSP Rescue \_\_\_\_\_\$10 \_\_\_\_\_\$20 \_\_\_\_\_other

I agree to abide by the Constitution and By-Laws of the Montana German Shorthaired Pointer Club and the rules and regulations of the American Kennel Club.

Your signature

Date

Complete and send to: Jean Graham, GSP Club, 3165 Conestoga Way, Billings, MT 59105

## Training.....from page 4

am 51 years of age. I consider this to be middle of the road.

Granted, the older trainer has a background of experience that cannot possibly occur with a young trainer in, say, their early 20's. But, this old trainer may be resting on his laurels of days gone by. His methods might be dated and some older trainers are very resistant to new ideas. At the same time, the young trainer may have had a great deal of success with an individual dog, taking the dog to tremendous heights of recognition, yet the dog could have been a great one no matter who trained it. Plus, this may be the trainer's only success. The other side of these coins is also obvious. The old trainer may be very progressive in his or her methods in addition to having all that great background of experience. The young trainer may be extremely dedicated to the field of dog training working hours the older one could not possibly be capable of. What I am saying is, the decision to pick a trainer based on age is not a valid one and should not even be considered. Question, questions, questions, that is where the answers lay.

I was reading the newspaper the other morning and happened to hear on the television that a dog expert was going to be interviewed after commercial break. He was going to show the five most popular breeds of dogs. My attention was drawn. Before the start of the interview, the moderator mentioned to this expert that his dog was eating goose droppings found around the owner's pond. She had put this question to the audience earlier in the show and a trainer, who was obviously watching at his home faxed in a response saying the owner should gather a few droppings and put some Tabasco sauce on them. When the guest expert heard this he said, and I quote; "That is the most stupid thing I have ever heard of. Doing this is cruel and mean. It is obvious this dog has some sort of deficiency in his diet and correcting that will correct



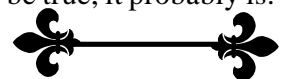
**Author Christopher Echhoff with one of his students.**

the problem."

Well, in the context of this article, the issue is not which one is correct. The issue is that the 'expert' supported his approach by downgrading the other trainer. Be careful of these 'expert trainers.' A good trainer has an open mind. Certainly everyone is entitled to their own opinion. In the field of dog training there are frequently multiple solutions to any given problem. A good trainer is sensitive to that and may suggest their approach is more efficient, but they should not say the other trainers' idea is "stupid". If it is stupid the stupidity will surface quick enough on its' own. It is the owner's responsibility to consider all the solutions they have heard and decide which one is best for them. One trainer should not be downgrading another, especially in such a public format as presented in this example.

I could go on and on with nuances of particular trainer/client encounters. The point is more general. It's the responsibility of the client to gather the information they need from a trainer, then decide if this person is the one they want. However, be careful of mislead-

ing statements. If you talk with a variety of trainers (this is one reason fields trials are so important to our business as they provide an opportunity to speak with a number of trainers who are all gathered in one place at one time), and one persons statements are out of sync with all the others, no matter how good it may sound, watch out. As the old saying goes, "If something sounds too good to be true, it probably is.



*Christopher Echhoff is a professional dog trainer and member of the Montana German Shorthaired Pointer Club. He may be reached at [upland@midrivers.com](mailto:upland@midrivers.com). This article may not be reproduced without written permission from the author.*

*The opinions expressed in this article are Mr. Echhoff's and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of other club members.*

*Please mail your response or comment on this article to Editor; MTGSPC Club Newsletter, 617 N. Raleigh Street, Helena, MT 59601 or e-mail to: [kurtzlaw@attbi.com](mailto:kurtzlaw@attbi.com). Responses which are libelous in nature or considered to be in poor taste will not be printed.*



By *Leanne Smith*  
*MT GSPC Secretary*

There are two bills before the Montana Legislature that club members may be interested in keeping an eye on. They both deal with animal cruelty.

Senate Bill 73, introduced by Sen. Dale Mahlum (R) of Missoula, increases the penalties for a first-time conviction of cruelty to animals from a maximum fine of \$1,000 or imprisonment in the county jail not to exceed 1 year or both. A person convicted of a second or subsequent offense of cruelty to animals would face a fine of \$2,500 or a two-year sentence in the state prison, or both. Under the cur-

rent law, first-time offenders may only receive a maximum penalty of \$500 or six months in a county jail or both. Currently second-time or subsequent offenders face a maximum penalty of \$1,000 or a two-year sentence in the state prison or both.

Neither the proposed bill nor the current law prohibits a person from humanely destroying an animal for just cause or the use of commonly accepted agricultural and livestock practices on livestock.

SB 73 was indefinitely postponed in the Senate Judiciary Committee January 22.

House Bill 317 was introduced by Rep. Jim Shockley (R) of Victor. The bill would allow a sentencing court to require a person convicted of cruelty to animals to pay the reasonable costs incurred by a public or private animals control agency or humane animal treatment shelter for the care of the animal or animals.

HB 317 is out of committee and headed for a vote on the house floor.

Both bills were drafted as a response and remedy to the recent seizure of 166 collies, two shelties, two Stabyhouns, a fox terrier and 10 cats at the Canadian Border Crossing of Sweet Grass in Toole County on October 31, 2002. The ema-

ciated, dehydrated animals were also reportedly caked in feces and urine. They had been transported from Alaska and were enroute to Arizona where the couple who stands accused of 187 counts of animals cruelty claim they were headed to relocate their kennel. One collie was found dead in her make-shift crate in the back of the filthy, poorly ventilated truck.

Toole County has been tasked with caring for and treating all the animals at an estimated cost of \$35,000 per month. The couple, whose trial is on-going at time of publication, have stated through their attorney that if they are convicted, the will appeal to District Court and ask that the trial be held in another jurisdiction. Should that scenario play out, it could be several more months before a final decision regarding the animals could be made. In the meantime, Toole County and other organizations must bear the cost for continued feeding and on-going medical care for the 187 animals and the nine puppies subsequently born.

Readers are urged contact the legislature and tell them how you feel about these bills at P.O. Box 201706; Helena, MT 59620-1706 or call (406)444-3064.

## Hunt Test

May 11



Contact: **Jim Whittila**  
**(406) 459-2365**

## Websites of Interest

**Montana Pets On the Net:** [www.montanapets.org](http://www.montanapets.org) is a site dedicated to Montana shelters, rescue groups, and dog-related events in Montana.

Readers can track bills in committees or on the floor of the Montana Senate and House of Representatives by logging onto: [http://laws.leg.state.mt.us/pls/laws03/LAW0200W\\$.Startup](http://laws.leg.state.mt.us/pls/laws03/LAW0200W$.Startup)

[www.fielddog.com](http://www.fielddog.com) is your premier Internet source for field trialing and bird dog hunting information. Featuring many national bird dog associations and clubs.

[www.versatiledogs.com](http://www.versatiledogs.com) is a site dedicated to pointing dogs, retrievers and spaniels.

[www.thecheckcord.com](http://www.thecheckcord.com) is the sportman's one-stop site for upland hunting, bird dog training and competition information.

If you'd like to share your favorite websites with club members, please e-mail the addresses to Leanne Smith at [kurtzlaw@attbi.com](mailto:kurtzlaw@attbi.com).

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Please visit our website at:  
[www.montanagspc.org](http://www.montanagspc.org)

## In our next issue:

- The role of rescue in the MT GSP Club
- Rescued GSPs available for adoption
- One family's tale of adoption
- Club member Donna Cook speaks out about rescue and breeder responsibility

## MT GSP Club Objectives

To encourage and promote the breeding of purebred GSPs and to do all possible to bring their natural qualities to perfection.

To encourage the members and breeders of GSPs to meet the requirements of the American Kennel Club (AKC).

To urge members and breeders to accept the Standard of the breed as approved by the AKC as the only standard of excellence by which GSPs shall be judged.

To do all in its power to protect and advance the interests of the breed by encouraging sportsman-like competitions at dog shows, field trials, obedience and hunt tests, as well as at any dog event.

To conduct AKC licensed matches, events and specialty shows, field trials, hunt tests, obedience trails, agility and tracking tests under the rules of the AKC.

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