

WEIGHT PULL TRAINING

PART I

BY

MARK LANDERS

WHEN I SAT DOWN TO WRITE THIS ARTICLE I THOUGHT, HOW DO I TAKE A FAIRLY COMPLICATED SUBJECT LIKE TAKING A PUPPY OR YOUNG DOG AND TEACHING SOMEONE TO TRAIN IT HOW TO PULL. THEN I THOUGHT, SIMPLY GO THROUGH THE SAME SIMPLE STEPS THAT I GO THROUGH WHEN I START A DOG.

FIRST LET ME GIVE SOME BACKGROUND ON HOW I GOT INVOLVED IN WEIGHT PULLING. MY FIRST EXPERIENCE WITH ANY WEIGHT PULLING AT ALL WAS WATCHING AN ADBA WEIGHT PULL HERE IN DENVER IN 1984. I HAD BEEN SHOWING MY DOGS WITH SOME SUCCESS, BUT MORE FAILURE. TOO FAT, TOO SKINNY, TOO SQUAT, BAD BITE! THE GENERAL THING YOU HEAR WHEN YOU HAVE HUMAN JUDGMENT INVOLVED. THEN I SAW THE WEIGHT PULLING. I LIFT WEIGHTS. I FEEL BETTER AND LOOK BETTER WHEN I LIFT, AND I AM A LOT STRONGER NOW THAN I WAS WHEN I STARTED. OBVIOUSLY A POSITIVE ENDEAVOR. PLUS, A DOG WILL EITHER PULL THE WEIGHT OR NOT PULL THE WEIGHT. THERE ARE NO DIFFERING OPINIONS OR JUDGMENT CALLS.

MY FIRST MISTAKE WAS FOLLOWING THE LEADERS, WHICH MEANT BAITING YOUR DOG. YOU SEE, MOST OF THE PEOPLE IN COLORADO AT THAT TIME PULLING THEIR PITS WERE BAITING THEM. THEY USED HIDES, TOYS OR WHATEVER THEIR DOG WOULD GO AFTER. BASICALLY STIMULATING THEIR PREY DRIVE. THIS DID NOT TEACH THE DOG TO PULL, BUT FRUSTRATED THE DOG ENOUGH TO DO WHATEVER HE HAD TO IN ORDER TO GET HIS OBJECT OR PREY! AT THAT TIME I HAD A HOUSE DOG NAMED MAX. HE WAS A JIMMY BOOTS BRED DOG THAT I HAD TAKEN THROUGH AN OBEDIENCE COURSE. WE BOTH LEARNED A LOT. HE WAS A VERY SMART DOG. I WAS VERY SURPRISED HOW EASY IT WAS TO TEACH A DOG SOMETHING WITH PRAISE AND REWARD.

ANYWAY, BACK TO MY MISTAKE. I HAD A LITTLE BLACK BITCH IN MY YARD THAT WAS AN INBRED BAD COMPANY DOG. SHE WAS TWO TIMES GAMEY AND TEN TIMES NUTS! SHE WOULD DO ANYTHING TO GET AT HER TOYS (TIRE OR HULA HOOP). SO SIMPLE ENOUGH. PUT ON HER HARNESS, HOOK UP SOME WEIGHT, AND LET HER "GET" HER TOYS. OH BOY! SUCCESS! SHE WON A FEW PULLS. TOOK SOME TROPHIES FOR PERCENTAGE. I STARTED GREAT, BUT THERE WAS ONE SLIGHT PROBLEM. WHEN THE WEIGHT ON THE CART GOT

CONTINUOUSLY HEAVIER AND HEAVIER, SHE COULDN'T PULL IT. NO MATTER HOW SHE JUMPED, BARKED, OR FLAT OUT STRUGGLED, SHE COULD NOT GET HER TOYS. SHE BECAME FRUSTRATED! THAT MEANT SNAPPING AT THE AIR, THE CART BOYS, THE JUDGES AND FINALLY AT ME. I HAD NOT TAUGHT THIS DOG TO PULL. I HAD TEASED IT'S NATURAL PREY DRIVE.

DOGS IN THE WILD LEARN BY MANY THINGS. BUT, FOOD IS A GREAT THING COMBINED WITH PRAISE AND REPETITION. ANYHOW, AT THAT TIME I HAD NO IDEA WHAT I'M TELLING YOU NOW.

I HAVE SINCE GONE ON TO PRODUCE SEVERAL GOOD PULLING DOGS, AND THREE IWPA INTERNATIONAL WEIGHT PULLING MEDALLISTS. THE ABOVE MENTIONED ORGANIZATION IS AN ALL BREED, PURE BRED OR OTHERWISE, WEIGHT PULLING ORGANIZATION. IT IS PRIMARILY BASED IN THE WEST AND NORTH WEST UNITED STATES. IT ALSO HAS BRANCHES THROUGH OUT THE CONTINENTAL U.S. AND CANADA. IT HAS SIX DIFFERENT WEIGHT CLASSES: 35 LB. & UNDER, 35-60 LB., 60-80 LB., 80-100 LB., 100-120 LB., AND 120 LB. AND ABOVE. YOU WILL SEE EVERYTHING FROM LITTLE JACK RUSSELL TERRIERS TO 140 LB. ST. BERNARDS. THE TYPE OF CART USED IS A WHEELED CONTRAPTION THAT CAN BE CONVERTED TO A SLED FOR WINTER (SNOW) PULLS.

THE RULES FOR THE IWPA ARE SIMPLE. THE DOGS MUST PULL THE WHEELED CART OR SNOW SLED, 16 FEET IN 60 SECONDS OR LESS, NO FOULS. HANDLERS MUST STAND BEHIND THE CARTS FIRST WHEEL OR BEHIND THE FINISH LINE.

AT THE TIME I STARTED PULLING, COLORADO HAD VERY FEW ADBA PULLS EVERY YEAR. SO, I WAS REAL INTERESTED IN GETTING INVOLVED WITH THE ALL BREED PULLING. PLUS, IN THIS AREA THERE ARE SEVERAL EVERY YEAR. BUT, THERE WAS ONE PROBLEM. NO BAITING. AT THIS TIME I STARTED A TRAINING PROGRAM THAT HAS PROVEN TO BE VERY SUCCESSFUL. I USED WHAT I HAS LEARNED IN MY BASIC OBEDIENCE CLASS TO TEACH MYSELF HOW TO TRAIN MY DOGS TO PULL WEIGHT ON COMMAND.

LET ME START OUT WITH A FEW KEY POINTS. FIRST AND FOREMOST, YOU AS THE TEACHER MUST BE PATIENT AND REASSURING TO YOUR PUPIL. THE DOG YOU ARE WORKING WITH MAY BE A NATURAL. HE OR SHE MIGHT PULL LIKE A MAC TRUCK. BUT, CHANCES ARE, IF YOU ASK TOO MUCH TOO SOON, YOU WILL CONFUSE THE ANIMAL AND FRUSTRATE YOURSELF.

SECONDLY, A DOG THAT WON'T EVEN WALK ON A LEASH OR COME TO YOU WHEN CALLED NEEDS SOME BASIC OBEDIENCE WORK. THERE ARE SCORES

**OF BOOKS AND PLENTY OF REPUTABLE OBEDIENCE CLASSES IN YOUR AREA.
CHECK THE YELLOW PAGES.**

THERE ARE SEVERAL DIFFERENT CONDITIONING METHODS TO GET A DOG IN SHAPE FOR PULLING. THE METHOD I PRIMARILY USE WAS TAUGHT TO ME BY A GOOD FRIEND OF MINE, EDGAR EDDINGTON FROM TULSA. TO PUT IT SIMPLY WE CALL IT "DRAG WEIGHTING". THIS CONSIST OF GOING ON 1/2 TO 2 MILE WALKS WITH YOUR DOG DRAGGING WEIGHTS BEHIND IT. NOW LET ME SAY IN THE BEGINNING, YOU NEED TO DO EVERYTHING STEP BY STEP IN INCREMENTS. FOR EXAMPLE: I HAVE A 60 LB. BITCH THAT CAN DRAG 8090 LBS. FOR TWO MILES ON A WARM DAY. OBVIOUSLY I HAD TO SLOWLY BUILD HER UP TO THIS. SHE IS ALSO UNDEFEATED IN THE IWPA PULLS AS A RESULT!

LET'S GO OVER THE BASIC EQUIPMENT NEEDS. YOU WILL NEED A PROPER FITTING HARNESS, A COLLAR, A LEAD (6 FT AND 16 FT) AND A WHOLE BUNCH OF PATIENCE! FOR THE DRAGGING WEIGHT, YOU CAN USE A TIRE WITH ROCKS IN IT. BUT, THE IDEAL THING ARE WINDOW WEIGHTS ATTACHED TO A TOW CHAIN. WINDOW WEIGHTS ARE FOOT LONG, TORPEDO

SHAPED WEIGHTS THAT RANGE FROM 3 LBS. UP TO 15 LBS. THEREFORE, MAKING THE INCREMENTAL INCREASES EASILY. THEY HAVE AN OPEN END WHERE YOU CAN ATTACH A HOOK TO THE WEIGHT AND THEN ATTACH THE WEIGHTS TO THE CHAIN. BECAUSE OF THEIR OBLONG SHAPE THEY DON'T GET CAUGHT IN SHRUBS OR BOGGED DOWN IN SAND. YOU SHOULD BE ABLE TO FIND THESE WEIGHTS AT MOST JUNKYARDS. THEY ARE ACTUALLY THE OLD COUNTER WEIGHTS USED IN WINDOW FRAMES OF OLDER HOMES.

THE FIRST THING YOU NEED TO DO IS INTRODUCE YOUR PUPPY OR DOG TO THE HARNESS. THAT'S RIGHT. I DID SAY PUPPY. YOU ARE GOING TO GRADUALLY BUILD YOUR PUP UP TO PULLING HEAVY WEIGHTS. DON'T START HEAVY! BESIDES, YOU ARE TRYING TO TEACH YOUR DOG TO PULL, NOT FORCE IT. IF YOUR PUPPY HAS NO AILMENTS AND IS HEALTHY, THERE IS NO REASON NOT TO INTRODUCE IT TO THE HARNESS AND LIGHT DRAGGING. START OUT BY PUTTING THE DOG IN THE HARNESS FOR SHORT PERIODS OF TIME, SAY 15-30 MINUTES. PLAY WITH THE DOG WHILE HE IS IN THE HARNESS. MAKE HIM FEEL THAT PULLING TIME IS FUN TIME. WALK HIM AT YOUR SIDE, BACK AND FORTH ACROSS YOUR YARD. AT THE END OF CERTAIN DISTANCES. 20-30 FEET, STOP AND PRAISE YOUR DOG. DO THIS SEVERAL TIMES FOR ABOUT A WEEK. THEN TAKE THE DOG ON A 1 OR 2 MILE WALK. LET HIM WANDER A LITTLE, THEN CALL HIM BACK TO YOU. AGAIN, PRAISE HIM. NOW BEFORE YOU START TO CONTINUE YOUR WALK, PAT YOUR

LEG AND INTRODUCE A WORD. SAY "WORK", "PULL", OR "PEANUT BUTTER". IT DOESN'T MATTER WHAT WORD YOU USE. THIS WILL BE THE WORD THAT YOU WANT THE DOG TO RESPOND TO. BUT, WHATEVER WORD YOU USE, STICK WITH IT. DON'T CHANGE COMMANDS. IT WILL ONLY CONFUSE THE DOG, AND BE LESS LIKELY TO IMPRINT IN THE DOGS HEAD. YOU ARE GOING TO USE THIS WORD HUNDREDS OF TIMES, UNTIL IT BECOMES SECOND NATURE TO THE DOG. AS YOUR DOG MOVES FORWARD WITH YOU, PAT YOUR LEG REPEATING THE COMMAND. THEN WITHOUT STOPPING YOUR WALK, PRAISE THE DOG. DO THIS SEVERAL TIMES, STOPPING AND STARTING. IF YOU ARE IN AN AREA WHERE THE LEASH MUST BE ON, THAT'S FINE. JUST REMEMBER THAT EACH TIME YOU STOP, YOU START UP AGAIN WITH YOUR COMMAND. REMEMBER, YOUR DOG IS IN A HARNESS, BUT NO WEIGHT IS BEING USED. WE ARE JUST GETTING HIM USE TO STARTING AND STOPPING WITH THE HARNESS ON. AT THE END OF SEVERAL WALKS, SAY A WEEKS WORTH, IT'S TIME TO GO BACK TO THE YARD AND PUT SOME WEIGHT ON. A GOOD TIME TO DO THIS IS AT FEEDING TIME. I DON'T FREE FEED MY WORKING PUPS. I USE FOOD TO HELP THE PUP UNDERSTAND HE'S DONE SOMETHING GOOD. THIS ALSO INSURES SOLID IMPRINTING. SIMPLY ACT LIKE YOU HAVE ALL WEEK. PUT THE HARNESS ON AND PLAY FOR A LITTLE BIT. GO OUT TO YOUR YARD ALL THE TIME BEING HAPPY AND POSITIVE. EVERYTHING SHOULD BE DONE IN SMALL STEPS, WITH THE END GOAL BEING A WEIGHT PULL TEAM. HAVE YOUR LIGHT WINDOW WEIGHT, OR TIRE, OR MILK JUG AT ONE END OF YOUR YARD. IT SHOULD BE A VERY LITTLE WEIGHT, 5-10 LBS. IS PLENTY. THERE IS A GOOD CHANCE THAT IF YOUR DOG HAS HAD FUN DURING YOUR LAST WEEK OF WORK, HE'LL RUN TO YOU LIKE THERE IS NOTHING ON IT. YOU DO NOT WANT TO SCARE HIM AT THIS POINT. IT IS CRITICAL YOU GO EASY THE NEXT MONTH OR SO. ATTACH THE WEIGHT TO THE HARNESS, KEEPING YOUR DOG AT YOUR SIDE. GIVE YOUR COMMAND AND MOVE FORWARD SLOWLY. AT THE SAME TIME PATTING YOUR LEG. JUST THE WAY YOU DID THE WEEK PRIOR. IT IS NORMAL FOR YOUR PUP TO LOOK BEHIND HIM, OR TO SPEED UP A LITTLE.

REASSURE HIM AND USE YOUR COMMAND AGAIN. WALK YOUR 20-30 FEET. STOP, PRAISE HIM AND GIVE HIM A PIECE OF FOOD. IF THE PUP DOES NOT MOVE WITH THE LIGHT WEIGHT ON, PUT THE LEASH ON THE COLLAR AND GIVE HIM A LIGHT TUG. "WORK, GOOD BOY WORK." DON'T GET UPSET IF THE DOG ACTS SCARED OR TRIES TO PULL AWAY. JUST TAKE IT SLOW AND REASSURE HIM THAT EVERYTHING IS OK.

I MUST REEMPHASIZE, THIS IS A KEY TIME IN YOUR PULL DOG TRAINING. YOU MUST DO EVERYTHING IN A SYSTEMATIC, STEP BY STEP SLOW PROCESS. ALWAYS KEEPING PATIENT. IF YOU FORCE YOUR DOG NOW, YOU

MIGHT END UP WITH A DOG THAT WILL PULL, BUT TOTALLY OUT OF FEAR. IF YOUR FIRST WEEK OF NO WEIGHT HARNESS WALKING HAS GONE WELL, YOUR DOG WILL PROBABLY PULL THE LIGHT DRAG WEIGHT EASILY. YOUR NATURAL INCLINATION WILL BE TO ADD MORE WEIGHT TO "SEE WHAT HE CAN DO." DON'T BE DUMB. THE WHOLE IDEAS HERE IS THAT IF YOU SLOWLY BUILD YOUR DOG UP IN WEIGHT HE WILL NEVER QUIT WITH A WEIGHT HE CAN PHYSICALLY PULL. DON'T DO ANY MORE THAN ABOUT 10 OR SO BACK AND FOURTHS ACROSS THE YARD. REMEMBER, ONLY USE THE COMMAND WORD. DON'T TALK IN SENTENCES. WHEN YOU COME TO THE STOP (20-30 FT.), GIVE THE DOG A TREAT AND VERBAL PRAISE. THE EARLY TRAINING TREATS ENCOURAGE THE BEHAVIOR AND IMPRINT THE COMMAND IN THE DOG. LATER, YOU WILL BE ABLE TO WEAN THE PUP OR DOG OFF TREATS WITH NO PROBLEM. AGAIN, DO THIS FOR A WEEK OR SO AT FEEDING TIME. NEVER MORE THAN DOUBLING THE WEIGHT YOU STARTED WITH. GO SLOW. BE PATIENT. MAKE IT FUN. AT THE END OF YOUR TRAINING SESSION FEED THE DOG HIS NORMAL MEAL. YOU WILL BE ASTOUNDED HOW QUICK THE PROGRESS IS. AFTER THE FIRST WEEK OF BACK AND FOURTHS, THE LIGHT DRAG WEIGHT SHOULD NOT BE THAT NOTICEABLE TO YOUR PUP.

NOW IT IS TIME TO START GOING ON YOUR WALKS AGAIN. I DID NOT MENTION THIS EARLIER BUT NEVER DRAG WEIGHT YOUR DOG ON CEMENT OR PAVEMENT. FIND A GRASS OR DIRT FIELD. THE COURSE I USE IS FULL OF LOW HILLS AND DIPS, WHICH IS GREAT FOR CONDITIONING. ON YOUR WALKS, YOU SHOULD BE USING A VERY LIGHT WEIGHT. IF YOU HAVE DOUBLED YOUR WEIGHT ON YOUR BACK AND FOURTHS, GO BACK DOWN TO YOUR BEGINNING WEIGHT FOR YOU WALKS. YOU WANT TO HAVE YOUR PUP KEEP UP WITH YOU. DON'T GO MORE THAN 1/2 MILE YOUR FIRST FEW WALKS, AND MAKE SURE IT'S NOT TOO HOT OUT. YOU CAN ALSO DO YOUR BACK AND FOURTHS ON YOUR WALK, ALWAYS USING YOUR COMMAND. YOU CAN ALSO PLAY A GAME OF SIT AND STAY. BACK AWAY 20 FEET, GIVE THE COMMAND, AND GIVE HIM A TREAT WHEN HE COMES TO YOU.

WHAT WE HAVE DONE IN THE PAST FEW WEEKS IS TWOFOLD. WE STARTED TO TEACH OUR DOGS TO PULL ON COMMAND, AND TO CONDITION THEM INTO PULLING DOGS. BUILD YOUR DOG UP SLOWLY ON HIS BACK AND FOURTHS AND HIS WALKS. KEEP IT FUN. DON'T BE IMPATIENT, OR TRY TOO MUCH TOO SOON. I LIKE TO DRAG WEIGHT EVERY OTHER DAY FOR OUT OF SHAPE DOGS OR PUPPIES. BUT, EXPERIENCED DOGS IN COMPETITION I WILL WORK DAILY. WORK YOUR DOG CONSISTENTLY, AND YOU WILL HAVE A CHAMP. THIS IS HOW I DID IT.

WEIGHT PULL TRAINING

PART II

BY

MARK LANDERS

JUST TO RECAP WHERE WE LEFT OFF. IF YOU HAVE KEPT YOUR PATIENCE YOU SHOULD BE SEEING SOME GOOD RESULTS WITH YOUR "BACK AND FOURTHS" AND YOUR DRAG WEIGHT WALKS. AS I WRITE THIS ARTICLE, I MYSELF HAVE BEEN WORKING SEVERAL "NEW DOGS" WITH GOOD RESULTS.

BEFORE GOING INTO THE CARTING OF YOUR DOG, LET ME TALK A LITTLE ABOUT AN IMPORTANT SUBJECT - GOOD SOCIALIZATION, AS IT RELATES TO YOUR PULL DOG TRAINING. WITH SPECIAL EMPHASIS ON YOUR PUPPY OR YOUNG DOG. YOU NEED TO BE GOING TO DIFFERENT PLACES TO PULL YOUR DOG. YOU SEE, THE DOG THAT HAS SPENT SEVERAL MONTHS PULLING IN HIS YARD OR TURF, WITH NO DISTRACTIONS, LOOKS GREAT. BUT, TAKE HIM IN FRONT OF A HUNDRED PEOPLE AND A BUNCH OF STRANGE DOGS AND YOU MAY THINK ALL YOUR HOURS OF TRAINING HAVE BEEN A WASTE OF TIME!

THE KEY HERE IS AGAIN, SMALL STEPS. TRY GOING TO YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD PARK OR SCHOOL. SOMEWHERE THAT HAS A NATURAL SURFACE (GRASS, DIRT). PRACTICE YOUR BACK AND FOURTHS. MAKE SURE THERE IS NOT TOO MUCH EXCITEMENT AT FIRST. A PARK IS GOOD ON A WEEKDAY, WHEN THERE IS NOT MUCH GOING ON. AT THIS TIME YOU SHOULD BE ABLE TO CORRECT ANY MAJOR PROBLEMS THAT YOUR DOG MIGHT BE HAVING. AGAIN, TAKE IT SLOW AND EASY. USE LIGHTER LOADS THAN YOU WOULD IN YOUR YARD. THIS WILL HELP BUILD YOUR DOG'S CONFIDENCE IN THE NEW ENVIRONMENT. KEEP YOUR LEASH ON THE DOG, OR AT LEAST IN YOUR HAND!

ONE MORE THING THAT DOES NOT RELATE TO TRAINING, BUT MIGHT HELP YOU. PEOPLE IN PUBLIC TEND TO BE VERY PASSIONATE ABOUT THINGS, ESPECIALLY ANIMALS. IF THEY HAVE NEVER SEEN A DOG WEIGHT PULL, THEY MAY THINK YOU ARE "KILLING" YOUR POOR DOG. THESE ARE THE SAME PEOPLE WHO KEEP THEIR DOGS CHAINED IN THE BACKYARD. EXCEPT TO FEED THEM AND KICK THEM OUT OF THE LAWNMOWER'S PATH, THEY DO NOTHING WITH THEM. PATIENCE AND COMMUNICATION IS THE KEY HERE. JUST EXPLAIN WHAT YOU AND YOUR DOG ARE TRAINING FOR. YOU WILL PROBABLY STILL GET SOME NEGATIVE REACTIONS. BUT, AS LONG AS YOU ARE NOT DRAGGING YOUR DOG AROUND BY HIS NECK, THE PERSON WITH AVERAGE INTELLIGENCE WILL SEE THAT THE DOG IS 'DOING SOMETHING OF IT'S OWN FREE WILL, AND HAVING FUN!

ONE ADVANTAGE I HAVE HERE IN COLORADO IS THAT THERE ARE SEVERAL NOVICE AND AMATEUR PULLS. YOU CAN MAKE THESE PULLS MORE OF A LEARNING EXPERIENCE THAN A REAL COMPETITION. I ALSO HAVE FRIENDS WITH CART SYSTEMS SET UP. WE TAKE TURNS GOING BACK AND FORTH TO EACH OTHERS HOUSE TO PULL.

CART TRAINING THE FIRST THING WE SHOULD TALK ABOUT IS A CART! SOMETHING AS SIMPLE AS A CHILD'S WAGON MIGHT DO. IF YOU ARE SERIOUS AND PLAN A FUTURE IN WEIGHT PULLING, YOU NEED TO INVEST IN A DECENT CART OR TRACK SYSTEM. THE CART I HAD MADE IS 3 FEET BY 6 FEET, WITH RUBBER BOAT TRAILER TIRES. EACH AXLE IS TESTED TO 2,000 LBS, GIVING ME AN 8,000 LB MAXIMUM LOAD, WHICH IS WAY MORE THAN ANY DOG WILL EVER PULL ON A RUBBER TIRED CART. I WENT WITH PAINTED STEEL SO IT CAN TAKE THE WEATHER, BUT GOOD TREATED WOOD SHOULD WORK FINE. THERE ARE PULL HOOKS ON BOTH ENDS, SO IT CAN PULL IN EITHER DIRECTION. I CHOSE A WHEELED CART OVER A RAIL SYSTEM. I DID THIS BECAUSE THERE ARE MORE IWPA PULLS IN COLORADO THAN THERE ARE ADBA. (IWPA PULLS ON WHEELS; ADBA ON RAILS). ALSO, YOU DON'T NEED AS MUCH WEIGHT FOR A WHEELED CART AS YOU DO WITH A RAIL SYSTEM.

WEIGHTS FOR WEIGHT ON MY CART, I USE TRACTION SAND BAGS. THE KIND YOU PUT IN YOUR TRUNK IN THE WINTER TIME. THEY COME IN 50 LB AND 70 LB BAGS. THE BAGS THEMSELVES ARE MADE OF A THICK PLASTIC AND ARE PRETTY DURABLE. I WOULD STILL SUGGEST YOU COVER THEM OR STORE THEM OUT OF THE WEATHER. I'VE HAD MINE FOR 4 YEARS NOW AND ONLY LOSE ONE PERIODICALLY WHEN A SEAM BREAKS.

PULLING SURFACE - AS FAR AS SURFACES GO, I LIKE TO PULL ON CARPET. THE HOUSE I JUST SOLD HAD AN UNFINISHED BASEMENT, SO I LAID CARPET OVER THE CEMENT AND PULLED ON THAT. MY WIFE AND I HAVE RECENTLY BOUGHT A NEW PLACE WITH 3 ACRES AS TO EXPAND MY KENNELS. I NOW HAVE NO BASEMENT, SO I'VE LAID A STRIP OF CONCRETE IN FRONT OF MY GARAGE. I CAN PULL 20 FEET IN MY GARAGE AND ANOTHER 20 FEET OUT. THE DISTANCE YOU NEED TO PULL IN COMPETITION IS 16 FEET, BUT IN TRAINING I ALWAYS HAVE MY DOGS PULL THE CART 20-30 FEET. I HAVE A PIECE OF SHORT SHAG CARPET, 10 X 40 FEET. I JUST ROLL IT OUT OVER THE CEMENT. I LIKE THE SHAG TO BE AS SHORT AS POSSIBLE, EVEN SLIPPERY. THIS TEACHES THE DOG TO DIG. IF YOU GO FROM SHORT TO LONG SHAG AT

COMPETITION TIME, NO BIG DEAL. THE BETTER FOR YOU. GOING FROM LONG TO SHORT SHAG COULD BE DISASTROUS!

IF YOU ARE GOING TO TRAIN ON CARPET, I RECOMMEND YOU LET YOUR DOG GET THE FEEL OF THE NEW SURFACE. LET HIM DO HIS BACK AND FOURTHS WITH DRAG WEIGHTS ON THE CARPET. I SOMETIMES TAKE AS MUCH AS A WEEK TO INTRODUCE A PUPPY TO CARPET. REMEMBER, TAKE EVERYTHING STEP BY STEP.

AFTER SEVERAL DAYS OF BACK AND FOURTHS ON THE CARPET, IT IS TIME TO DROP THE DRAG WEIGHTS AND HOOK UP THE CART. YOU NEED TO HAVE ANOTHER PERSON HELP YOU BY HOLDING THE CART. THE LAST THING YOU NEED NOW IS TO HAVE THE CART SMASHING INTO YOUR SYSTEMATICALLY TRAINED DOG, AND SCARING THE BEJESUS OUT OF HIM! MAKE SURE THE CART HANDLER IS INFORMED ON WHAT TO DO. A DOG CAPABLE OF DRAGGING 50 LBS FOR A MILE CAN FLY WITH MOST UNLOADED CARTS.

WE ARE NOT TESTING HIS STRENGTH HERE, MERELY GETTING HIM FAMILIAR WITH THE CART. I RECOMMEND YOU PUT A LEASH ON YOUR DOG AND STAND WITH HIM AT YOUR SIDE. GIVE HIM HIS COMMAND AND WALK FORWARD. IF HE BOLTS OR TRIES TO TURN AROUND, JUST REASSURE HIM BY CONTROLLING HIM WITH THE LEASH, AND GIVING A LOT OF PRAISE. I ALSO TREAT HIM WITH A PIECE OF FOOD. IF EVERYTHING HAS BEEN LAID OUT PROPERLY IN YOUR TRAINING, THE CART SHOULD BE NO BIG PROBLEM. BUT DO GO SLOW! I WOULD NOT TRY TO HAVE HIM PULL THE CART WITH YOU TOO FAR AWAY. KEEP HIM AT YOUR SIDE FOR SEVERAL DAYS, OR AT LEAST UNTIL HE STOPS LOOKING BEHIND HIM TO SEE WHAT'S THERE.

WHEN THE DOG STARTS TO PULL JUST BY HIS COMMAND, TAKE THE LEASH OFF. STAY AT HIS SIDE AND GIVE HIM A LOT OF PRAISE. THE CART PULLS DIFFERENTLY THAN THE DRAG WEIGHTS, SO IF YOUR DOG'S STYLE APPEARS TO REGRESS SOME, DON'T WORRY. BY KEEPING THE WEIGHT LIGHT, HE SHOULD PULL THE CART LIKE A CHAMP AFTER A VERY SHORT TIME. GO NO MORE THAN 10-15 PULLS. THE FIRST FEW DAYS ALWAYS KEEP IT FUN. A LOT OF PRAISE AND TREATS. MAKE SURE HE PULLS THE CART 20-30 FEET EACH TIME. IF HE CAN PULL THE CART IN BOTH DIRECTIONS, EVEN BETTER.

YOUR ATTACHMENTS TO THE CART, YOUR TRAILERS, SHOULD BE 2 1/2 3 1/2 FEET LONG. I LIKE TO START MY DOG AT THE END OF THE LINE. NO SLACK. A GOOD WHEELED CART DOES NOT NEED A BOUNCE START. HE SHOULD LEAN INTO THE WEIGHT AND USE HIS STRENGTH TO START IT.

AS FAR AS WEIGHT INCREMENTS GO, IT ALL DEPENDS ON HOW EASY YOUR DOG PULLS THE EMPTY CART. IT IS STILL IMPORTANT TO GO EASY WITH THE WEIGHT. THE FIRST FEW WEEKS OF CART TRAINING YOU CAN PULL EVERY DAY, 10-15 PULLS. JUST LETTING YOUR DOG GET THE FEEL OF IT.

ONCE THE DOG IS PULLING THE CART, A SCHEDULE OF ONCE OR TWICE A WEEK IS ADVISABLE. INCREASE WEIGHT IN SMALL INCREMENTS. SAY YOUR DOG PULLS THE CART WITH GREAT EASE, ADD 140 LBS AND LET HIM PULL IT TWICE. READ YOUR DOG'S EFFORT. EASY, HARD? GO UP LIKE THIS 4 OR 5 TIMES. MAKE SURE YOU KNOW YOUR DOG'S PERSONAL BEST AND DON'T EXCEED IT BY A WIDE MARGIN.

LET ME STOP HERE AND SAY, YOU SHOULD STILL BE WORKING YOUR DOG ON HIS DRAG WEIGHTS AT LEAST 2-3 TIMES A WEEK. DRAG AT LEAST 1/2 TO 1 MILE. ADD WEIGHT NOT TO EXCEED OVER 25% OF THE DOG'S BODY WEIGHT.

HERE IS AN EXAMPLE OF A CART WORKOUT

50% OF MAX 4 TIMES - 30 SECONDS BETWEEN PULLS

70% OF MAX 4 TIMES - 60 SECONDS BETWEEN PULLS

80% OF MAX 4 TIMES - 2 MINUTES BETWEEN PULLS

85-90% OF MAX 2 TIMES 2-3 MINUTES BETWEEN PULLS

NEVER PULL A MAXIMUM LOAD MORE THAN EVERY 3-4 WEEKS. A COOL DOWN OF 4-6 PULL, 50% OF MAX CAN BE USED.

MAKE YOUR DOG'S PULL TIME FUN. USE YOUR TREATS AND PRAISE. YOU CAN NOW START WEANING HIM OFF TREATS BY GIVING ONE EVERY OTHER PULL, EVERY THIRD PULL, EVERY FOURTH AND SO ON. BE PATIENT AND TRY NOT TO GET MAD. YOUR BUDDY WILL SENSE IT! HAVE FUN.

THE FORMER AND THIS ARTICLE HAVE BEEN GENERAL. I'VE TRIED TO EXPLAIN THE WAY I TRAIN BY DOGS. IT HAS BEEN GENERAL TO SAY THE LEAST, BUT I HOPE INFORMATIVE.

YOU AND YOUR DOG PULLING HEAVY WEIGHTS AS A TEAM TAKES DEDICATION AND WORK. THE PUBLIC WILL LOOK AT YOU AND YOUR BULLDOG IN A POSITIVE WAY!