

# **Training for the Totverweiser**

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An obedient dog with a strong desire to please and a good rapport between man and dog will make totverweiser training much more enjoyable and successful. A dog should be force broke to retrieve prior to beginning totverweiser training. Training in other aspects of the VGP should also be well under way prior to starting totverweiser training.

The equipment needed for totverweiser training are a blood tracking collar, a bringsel, a dummy bringsel, the training table, a rug or towel and a deer or deer dummy. The bringsel is a leather tab that is six to eight inches long and 5/8" to 1" wide. It should have a small snap at one end to allow it to be put on and removed from the blood tracking collar. The dummy bringsel can be made out of anything (except leather) that has a little weight and good "swing action" when placed on the blood tracking collar. It should be eight to ten inches long. A piece of 220V appliance wire works well. It can be easily bent and unbent to get it off and on the blood tracking collar. It also has a good swinging action.

During the early phases of training a rug or towel is used as the object the dog finds. This is used because it is less distracting than the deer and allows the dog to concentrate on the "find the buck" and "take me back" commands. As the dog masters the commands, the deer is brought into the training program.

A real deer or a deer hide dummy can be used. There are advantages to both. The deer is the real thing and has the most smell and the bulk. However, it can be difficult to store and handle. A deer hide dummy is easy to transport and store, but lacks the smell and bulk.

A good compromise is to use a green deer hide wrapped around a five gallon bucket. This is much easier to store than a real deer, yet still has the strong deer smell. The bucket also gives this dummy bulk. It is much lighter than the deer and has a handle, making it easy to transport.

It is advisable to let the dog wear the blood tracking collar and dummy bringsel for short periods of time prior to beginning totverweiser training. This allows the dog to get used to the strange object hitting his chest. The dog will quickly learn to ignore this annoyance. Prior to beginning each training session put the blood tracking collar on the dog with the dummy bringsel attached. During all training phases, always have the dummy bringsel attached to the collar when the leather bringsel is not being used.

Training begins on the training table. It is identical to the force broke to retrieve training, with the ear pinch and requiring the dog to sit prior to giving the bringsel. The difference is that the dog is being taught to perform on a new command for a specific item, the bringsel.

Using the ear pinch, hold the bringsel in front of the dog and give the command "find the buck". The dog that has been force broke to retrieve quickly learns this new command. Have the dog sit and take the bringsel out. Use the release command from retrieving when taking the bringsel from the dog. Identical to retrieving training, slowly stretch the distance the dog must travel to the length of the table and move the bringsel from your hand to the training table.

When the dog has learned this new command start using a rug or towel to teach the dog the "take me back" command. The training table is still being used for this new command. Put the rug a few feet in front of the dog. Place the bringsel on the rug where the dog can see it. Give the command "find the buck". The dog should pick up the bringsel and come back to you. When the dog sits give the command "take me back".

The "take me back" command will be new and confusing to the dog. Be patient. The dog's confusion comes from the retrieving training when he learned that when he came back from the retrieve he was not to move until you took the game from him. Encourage the dog to move ahead of you and to associate the "take me back" command with the rug. You may have to pull lightly on the collar or literally push your dog from behind to go back to the rug at first. Do not be overly aggressive if this is required. When the dog sits at the rug take the bringsel. Do not allow the dog to drop the bringsel before the release command has been given.

The next step is to teach the dog to stay at the rug until he finds the bringsel. Training is still on the table. Place a fold in the rug and place the bringsel just out of sight under the fold, leaving a fraction of an inch of the bringsel sticking out. **DO NOT** make this overly difficult for the dog. You are teaching the dog to stay at the rug until it finds the bringsel and you want him to succeed. Let the dog see you hide the bringsel under the fold so he knows it is there.

Give the "find the buck" command. The dog will be confused when it does not see the bringsel immediately. Talk to the dog and encourage him to keep looking for the bringsel with the "find the buck" command. Do not let the dog leave the rug without finding the bringsel. It may be necessary to go to the rug and point at the spot the bringsel is hidden, while giving the "find the buck" command, until the dog finds the bringsel.

When it appears the dog is going to find the bringsel, go back to the end of the table and wait for the dog to come to you. Give the "take me back" command, take the bringsel and praise the dog. When the dog is staying at the rug looking for the bringsel without your encouragement, then start hiding the bringsel without the dog seeing you do it.

Next, move the training to the ground. Identical to force break to retrieve training you may have to repeat some of the earlier phases of training to ensure the dog understands what is expected of him.

If it has not been done already, this is also the time to introduce the dog to the deer, without the bringsel. Do not let the dog play with the deer, mouth it or try to retrieve it. Simply let the dog get used to the sight and smell of this new piece of game.

Gradually lengthen the distance you send the dog to find the bringsel until it is the length of your back yard. As training progresses start using the deer instead of the rug. Identical to training with the rug, start out with the bringsel placed in open sight on top of the deer. Then

start hiding the bringsel under the edge of the deer where the dog must work to find it. As in previous training, do not make it too difficult for the dog to find the bringsel. Do not let the dog pick up or play with the deer.

Do not let the dog run back to the deer during the "take me back" when ground training starts. If you have to, work the dog on a rope so you can pick it up and control his speed on the way back to the deer. Use a pinch collar sparingly if needed. The dog is expected to guide you at a moderate pace back to the deer. Most dogs, in their desire to please, will start running back to the deer. Teach the dog to walk back at a moderate pace.

As the dog's training progresses, start incorporating the bringsel into your blood track training. Begin by leaving the bringsel on top of the deer in plain sight. When you reach the deer at the end of the blood track give the "find the buck" command and encourage the dog to find the bringsel. When he finds it give the "take me back" command and take the bringsel from him.

Immediately hide the bringsel under the edge of the deer. Let the dog see you do this. Take the dog 10 meters up the blood track and give the "find the buck" command. The dog should now perform as it did in the yard and take you back to the deer. Repeat again at 20 meters. Three or four repetitions is plenty at each of these training sessions. Reward the dog with meat each time it goes to the deer and guides you back successfully. As you give the dog the meat repeat "blood, find the buck, take me back" with a lot of praise in your voice.

An added note, meat is not used as a reward during the yard training. Yard training is for the purpose of obedience and an extra reward is not merited. A meat reward is for a job well done in the field.

Gradually lengthen the distance that you back track up the blood trail to send the dog on the totverweiser, eventually reaching 100 meters. Always repeat it a couple of times. Make sure the dog guides you back at a walk. Use the blood tracking lead to control the pace if needed.

The training up to this point is to ensure the dog associates the blood track with the deer, goes all the way to the deer to find the bringsel, stays at the deer until the bringsel is found and guides you back to the deer. The dummy bringsel has always been on the blood tracking collar and the bringsel has been at the deer.

When the dog is performing the totverweiser and blood tracking satisfactorily, start laying 50 to 100 meter blood tracks solely for the purpose of tracking to the deer on the "find the buck" command. The track should be 1 hour old. Try to place the track and deer where you can see the dog work. You do not want the dog to start searching for the deer and you must be in a position to correct the dog if it is not tracking. Do not forget to hide the bringsel under the deer when placing the deer at the end of the blood track.

At the blood bed give the dog the "find the buck" command. Let the dog track freely to the deer. Perform the "take me back" portion. Gradually lengthen the distance of this track to 200 meters. Always repeat a couple of times on the same track and use a meat reward each time.

When the dog is tracking to the deer off lead, without any problems, it is time to start using the bringsel on the collar. You must now teach the dog to flip the bringsel into his mouth after he reaches the deer. Do not overdo this part of the training, however. Your dog will

quickly learn that it does not have to go to the deer to "find" the bringsel. This is a habit that once learned is difficult to overcome and will set your training schedule back considerably.

When first using the leather bringsel go back to the yard, using the deer. Put out the deer, in the dog's sight, but do not put the bringsel out. Instead, stick it in your back pocket. Release the dog with the "find the buck" command. The dog will go to the deer and be unable to find the bringsel. He may try to bring the deer instead. Do not let this happen! When the dog comes back grab him by the collar and give a harsh "find the buck" command. Drag him back to the deer. At the same time take the bringsel out of your pocket and place it under the deer, without the dog seeing you do it. Give the "find the buck" command again and point at the bringsel. When the dog picks up the bringsel walk back to the release point and wait for the dog to come to you. Give lots of praise. Have the dog take you back to the deer and praise him again.

Immediately go back to the release point. Take off the dummy bringsel and put the real bringsel on the collar. Never have both bringsels on the collar at the same time. Give the "find the buck" command. The dog now has it in his head what happens when he comes back without the bringsel. When the dog reaches the deer he will smell the bringsel but have a hard time finding it. Give some encouragement to the dog if you have to. He will dance and back up trying to get the bringsel in his mouth. He will eventually succeed. When he takes you back praise him well. Repeat a couple more times. If the dog tries to get the bringsel without going to the deer then go back to hiding the bringsel at the deer. Practice until the dog understands that it must go all the way to the to find the bringsel.

Next training session lay a 50 meter blood track where you can see the dog's entire performance. Put the bringsel on the collar and give the "find the buck" command. The dog should perform without any problem. Repeat a few more times at 100 meters and 200 meters, with the real bringsel on the collar during the next few weeks. At each of these - training sessions mix up the regimen with the dummy bringsel on the collar, hiding the bringsel at the deer, and placing the bringsel on the blood tracking collar so the dog is not anticipating where the bringsel is placed.

You are now prepared for the VGP test.

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### **About the author**

Tom Moore is an experienced Drahthaar trainer, handler and breeder. Tom has trained two Prize I dogs with Totverweiser. His first dog scored a 4 in all testing categories and received a score of 332 point. His second dog received a VGP score of 317 points at 18 months of age.

Tom is an active breeder, his kennel is v.d. Shawnee. He can be reached at:

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