



Marking Chart by Danny Farmer & Judy Aycock

I. Beginning Marking

A. Puppy Marks

1. Something he can easily see and carry
2. Start with a very short distance and 2 or 3 throws ONLY
3. Once pup returns from 20-30 yards introduce a gunner (Keep throws Low)
4. Start with angle in throws so returning to handler is shorter
5. When 4 is successful change angle of throw working up to a right angle and an angle-back throw. All done on bare ground or very short cover. Adjust throws and distance to meet needs of your pup.
6. Always use praise and above all build his confidence.

B. Marking Drill

1. If pup has trouble hunting, repeat the mark a number of times by moving the bumper just slightly to a different spot but still close to the original throw.
2. This drill tries to help a dog develop a sense of the area of the fall and to develop a habit of looking around close to where he thinks the bumper has fallen. Again we are trying to develop confidence in the pup to stay around the area.

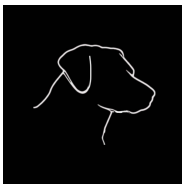
II. Walking Singles

A. One gunner throwing a series of singles as he moves across a field.

1. Go out a distance comfortable to the dog- if the gunner throws a mark to the left and the dog is successful the gunner should move to the right and throw the next mark to the left as well. Basically move in the opposite direction of the throw.
2. Have gunner vary the angle of throws-some angle backs, some flat, some angle in , and some hard back.
3. Advance the pup by making marks more difficult. Ex: increase distance, terrain obstacles(cover, roads, ditches). Always remember to simplify if your dog is having trouble. Don't let failure become a habit, have the gunner ready to help by yelling hey hey and or yelling and throwing another bumper. Attitude is the key to a good marking dog.

III. Two Gunners in the Field *(only when pup is successful walking singles)*

1. At first have two gunners quite far away from each other.
2. Once the dog is comfortable with multiple gunners you can move the gunners closer together and different distances from the handler. Again be guided by your success rate.
3. Some of the concepts we want to introduce are:
Hip Pockets, Converging Marks, Long Bird tight behind short gunner, sometimes throw long bird first, sometimes short bird first. Going past short fall to longer bird- both thrown in same direction. Throw the short bird first then the long bird. Similar to hip pocket but much greater distance between guns. Try to work on just one concept at a time, keeping in mind that you should repeat and/or simplify if the dog does not have a high rate of success. As the dog gets the idea of one concept , move on to the next concept. Be sure to work these tests both directions to the right one day then the left the next , or vice versa. Keep success high, keep enthusiasm high, and remember attitude and confidence are keys to a good marking dog.

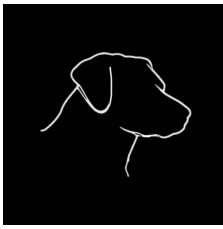


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IV. Beginning Doubles

The next step in advancing the dog's marking ability is to introduce him to multiple marks, starting with doubles. At this point the dog should be comfortable with walking singles and have had singles with two guns in the field in various configurations. Our philosophy which differs from some others is that doubles should not be started until the dog is through his "basics" program. This means the dog should be force fetched, introduced to the collar, forced on back, through the double T and forced on water. He should be familiar with casting and lining wagon wheel and should have started cold blinds. We feel very strongly that it is important to have the tools in place to be able to easily and quickly deal with the normal issues that arise when doubles are started. Some of these issues include not going on the second bird, leaving the hunt of one mark and going to the other mark (switching), leaving the area of the second mark and returning to the first bird retrieved (returning to an old fall), going directly back to the first bird (go bird). Other issues that might come up include popping (stopping on the way to a bird or stopping while hunting and waiting for directions from the handler), creeping or moving on line as handler moves to show second bird to dog or as dog is being lined to get second bird, dropping the first bird retrieved in anticipation of getting the second bird, etc.

We have never found that waiting to start doubles until after the dog has finished basics has hindered their ability to develop a good memory. Starting doubles too early, on the other hand, can lead to creating bad habits, especially movement on line. Only after the dog is comfortable with getting two birds should you make the doubles more difficult. The most important issues at this stage are not allowing any movement on line and getting the dog to stay focused on each mark. Do not call for the second bird quickly. Let the dog really concentrate on the memory bird. If you develop these two traits, no movement on line and staying focused on the mark it will pay big dividends in the future. Remember keep your first doubles simple and don't be anxious to start doubles before your dog has the necessary tools to deal with potential problems. If you follow these simple guidelines your dog's attitude will remain positive and that is the key to a good marking dog.



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V. Introducing Retired Guns

Once the dog has had enough marks to know something about how to hunt and an idea of marking you can start retiring the gun by just having the gun step behind a tree, hay bale, holding blind etc. Have the gun retire very close to where he was standing to throw the bird so that he can easily step out and help the dog if needed. The gun should retire as soon as he throws the bird. Do this on both long and short marks. When starting to introduce retired guns (this will be on singles) send the dog before the gun steps out of sight. As the dog becomes comfortable with no visible gunner you can start holding the dog for a couple of seconds before sending him. If you start retiring guns early in the dog's training I think you will find they are not bothered by them. If you have problems remember to simplify and always keep the dog's attitude positive.

VI. Cheating Singles

1. Simple Cheating Marks
2. Simple Water Marks
3. Advanced Cheating Marks
4. Advanced Water Marks

VII. Beginning Triples

VIII. Interrupted Set-Ups

IX. Advance to more complex Marking concepts (Land & Water) *Including Wind & Terrain*

“Do I want to challenge the dog or have success? That will determine my setups.” Danny Farmer