

## Why Salukis can't do obedience

by Steve Hazelwood

Saluki people (and I am generalizing here) believe that sighthounds, and Salukis in particular, cannot sit and stay or walk to heel. They are correct in this assumption, but for the wrong reason. Saluki people believe their hounds will not follow their instructions so they do not bother to train them.

We have all been to puppy classes and watched the Golden Retrievers and the Border Collies ready for Utility at six months of age. They stand out in class and everyone "oohs" and "aahs" about these obedient dogs. Meanwhile the Saluki puppy owner is still trying to coax their puppy from under the chair or trying to catch it as it runs away from yet another Labrador.

This is the beginning and end of obedience training for most Salukis. Owners come away from class thinking their dogs just don't do obedience so they give up and perpetuate the myth that Salukis can't

do obedience. However, Salukis, like other "sensitive" breeds, often just need a different approach to formal obedience training.

Long ago we used to put a choke chain on our dogs and drag them around until they learned to follow our wishes. People still train this way, and there is nothing wrong with that, if that is what they want to do. Salukis, however, will respond a lot better to positive reinforcement. I am not going all crazy and saying everyone needs to get a clicker and a Karen Pryor book; what I am saying is be creative in your training. Pick a puppy class that is limited to five or six dogs, or find a school with a "small" dog class that will allow you to take your puppy.

Just because a class is 45 minutes to an hour long does not mean that your dog needs to work for 45 minutes to an hour. Salukis and a lot of other non-traditional

breeds cannot work for this length of time. Pick an exercise or two, work them, then give your dog a rest. Quality, not quantity, should be the watchword. Some old-school trainers will not like this, so thank them for their time and go find someone else. Don't be afraid to try various schools, drop in and see how big their classes are and how they treat owners and dogs. Are they open to various training methods or is everything cookie cutter?

Another venue for our hounds is Rally obedience. It is "obedience lite" and is a good way to have fun with your hound and train at the same time. If you have not seen Rally, stop by at the next show and see all the 'new' breeds playing in the ring.

Remember: "Training should be fun." If you are not enjoying training then for sure your dog won't.

See you in the obedience/Rally ring.



### 2010 PHOTO CONTEST

PHOTO: MARILYN LABRACHE BROWN

**portraits in nature** The four seasons provide a lovely backdrop for your dogs. (and provide great photos for our covers!)

**buddies** There's nothing like friendship. Send photos of your hound with their favourite four-legged friend – dog, cat or goat!

**caught in the act** Salukis have a knack for doing things they shouldn't. Let's see what mischief your dogs is capable of.

Send your high-res JPGs (minimum 300 dpi) to: [patty.milton@fireflynet.ca](mailto:patty.milton@fireflynet.ca)

**DEADLINE: APRIL 30TH, 2010**