

Nose Work: For Dogs Who Just Want to Have Fun!



Pictured are a few different types of metal containers, Q-tips, three different scents and a container with magnets so it may be hidden by attaching it to cars or other metal objects.



Above: Food and/or odor can be hidden in any of the articles shown here. The dog walks around sniffing the items until he found the scent and then alerts the handler.

Right: Monique has caught the hidden scent.



Nose Work is a slam-dunk for our hounds. Finally there is a new sport that our PBGVs can excel at using their biggest asset: their noses.

K9 Nose Work is a fast-growing sport that is popping up in many areas. It is fun for both the dogs and their handlers. Any breed and any age dog can participate. This sport is even open to shy or aggressive dogs since it is done individually.

Our first encounter with K9 Nose Work was when a class in our area was offered. I had no idea what was involved, but it sounded like it would be fun. We entered a room that was scattered with 10 boxes about the size of shoe boxes. We watched as each dog searched the boxes for the hidden treasure: FOOD. Monique, age 12 and with a pronounced limp, forgot her age and enthusiastically searched the boxes until she found the food reward. The food is only hidden in one special food box so the other boxes don't get contaminated with the scent. It is important to make it very easy in the beginning so the dogs learn what to do to get the reward. If Monique seemed to be having difficulty or was getting frustrated trying to locate the reward, I was told to help her find it. The boxes were re-scattered for each new search, but the food reward was still only in the one box. It is unbelievable how much fun this is for both dogs and their handlers.

We were encouraged to practice this at home and in different locations until our dogs fully understood that when they located the food they got a reward. The food rewards were always something especially



Marcel finds the scent hidden in the hat and, at right, is rewarded with chicken.



delicious. We learned it is important to continue to use boxes and food for quite a long time to ensure a solid foundation is laid. Patience was needed not to charge too fast into the next step before our dogs fully understood the game.

We found that each dog had a unique way of telling its owner that it had found food. Monique sniffed at the box then looked at me and then at the box. Marcel just stuffed his whole head inside the box when he found it. Another dog in the class sat down next to the box. We were told to watch for the unique signals that our dog was sending when they found the scent. Some dogs started wagging their tails while others would rotate their ears in a certain way. We usually practiced with our dogs on a leash so we could guide them in the direction of the scent if they were having difficulty or getting distracted with something else. We could help our dogs by allowing them to take the lead if they seemed to be following their nose, but sometimes we led them around the boxes slowly so they could get a better scent. Often, just circling the boxes in the opposite direction would help the dog be successful. We found that wind, a circulating fan or an open window could change the direction of the scent. Walking in different directions sometimes made it easier for our dogs to locate where it was.

After practicing many times with a high rate of success, the boxes were still spread around, but in addition, other hiding places were introduced. Instead of hiding the food in the box, we hid it in something else such as a dog bed, a bowl, inside a bag or on a shelf. Once our dog was successfully finding the food in different items, we tried putting the food *continued on next page*

Below: Monique has found the odor hidden in the small tin, alerts that she has found it and is rewarded immediately with chicken.



Monique has again located the hidden scent, this time in the tote bag.



Juliet is helping Monique locate the odor by walking around the containers with Monique on leash. Sometimes reversing the direction can help the dog get the scent.

Nose continued from page 29 a little higher or lower so our dog learned it is not always going to be on the same level. Sometimes the food was hidden in the open, but then we tried hiding the food inside something with the lid shut. If our dog had difficulty after introducing a new step, we went back a step to provide success. It was emphasized that we do not want to frustrate our dogs by moving too fast or making something too difficult. This game is supposed to be fun and motivating.

Eventually, the first scent, birch, was introduced and hidden with the food. A small amount of the birch scent

was put on a Q-tip and then put in a tiny vented container. This pairing allows the dogs to learn that the odor is signifying that food will be there too. Sometimes we went back to just hiding the odor with food in the boxes to let our dog know that we are still playing the same game. Eventually, after several weeks of pairing the odor and food, we graduated to hiding the odor alone and then immediately rewarded with food at the source of the odor. Some people reward with toys instead of food if that is a stronger motivator, although I can't imagine any respectable PBGV to take toys over food!

Recently, my husband Robert and I went on a picnic in the wine country near where we live. Monique and Marcel came along and got to practice searching for the birch scent on the picnic grounds. They totally enjoyed themselves.



Monique gives her signal that she has found the odor after her search shown above. She looks at Juliet and knows she will get her food reward.



Max has located the food bag hidden in the wheel well of a car.

Photos of Max above and on page 31 are by Cindy Knowlton/Furry Fotos.

They didn't want to stop. Of course, they were rewarded with delicious food treats when they found the scent. It was quite a large area, but they easily found the birch odor. If they had any problem in locating a scent, I made sure to help them so every hunt ended in success.

K9 Nose Work started in southern California in 2006 and has been spreading to other areas rapidly. If there isn't a class or seminar happening soon in your area, there soon will be. We are lucky to live in California, so found ourselves on the ground floor of this new activity. Several PBGVs and their owners are participating in this sport in other states.

In Maryland, Judy Wickliffe became enthusiastic about doing Nose Work with her PBGVs, Max and Remy, after attending a workshop. "We were immediately hooked. It is such a positive experience — the dog is never wrong and you don't correct them. It is a real confidence builder for dogs of any age. It's a win-win situation for the dog and fascinating to watch. Different dogs have different styles, speeds and methods of searching. My PBGVs are fast and fearless at this. In one practice, the tin with the scent was placed on the second shelf of a huge shelving unit in a garage. The scent was traveling through the shelves and Max picked up the scent on the opposite side. Before we knew it, he had jumped up onto the shelf and was barging through tools stored there to find the tin holding the scent. It was like watching a hairy bulldozer at work." Judy reports that even her 10-year-old English cocker spaniel, who is deaf and partially blind, has been able to enjoy this sport.

Margaret and Kristina Kriek, who live in British Columbia, Canada, have enjoyed doing Nose Work with their PBGVs Twizzler and Mattie. They are still working with food and boxes, but have started pairing the food with odor. Margaret has started doing Nose Work with some of the shelter dogs at her work and finds that they love doing it too.

The National Association of Canine Scent Work (NACSW) is the official organization that certifies instructors, makes rules and awards titles for this new sport. You can find out more information about this sport and workshops at their Web site, www.NACSW.net. Another Web site, www.k9nosework.com, has information on upcoming workshops and where to buy some of the scent work supplies.

Many Nose Work participants just do it to have fun, but if you get really serious about this sport, you can choose to enter competitions. Go to www.NACSW.net for more information on competition scheduling.

Before entering a competition, dogs have to pass the Odor Recognition Test (ORT). The first scent that is tested is birch. After that, anise and cloves can be tested. Dogs have three minutes to find the odor hidden in one of 12 to 20 boxes. When the dog finds the odor, the handler must say, "Alert." The handler, of course, has no idea which box has the odor hidden in it. I was very surprised when Monique took only 16 seconds to find the odor. She came in first in time, but after all, she is a PBGV and her nose works very well. She was the oldest dog taking the test. Marcel, on the other hand, took about a minute and a half because he was having such a good time searching all the boxes first. Then he suddenly turned around and marched back to the box where he knew it was all along. Monique just touched the box and looked briefly back at me so I wasn't sure this was her signal, but luckily it was. Marcel put his entire nose and head inside the box so there was no question he had found what he was looking for.

K9 Nose Work competition awards titles: Nose Work 1, 2 and 3. Nose Work 1 is a four-part test. Dogs have to pass all four parts to be awarded the title. This is testing consistency and endurance. The four parts of the test are containers, vehicle search (up to three vehicles can be used), inside (up to 1,000 square feet) and outside (up to 1,000 square feet). We have not yet entered our first competition, but Monique, Marcel and I are having a great time practicing for it.

Even if competition is not in your plans, this is a sport that you can enjoy anytime, anywhere with your dog. Supplies are inexpensive, last a long time and will give you and your PBGV buddy hours of fun.

Watch for workshops and classes coming to your area. It is spreading quickly and there will soon be trainers and competitions throughout the United States. ■

PBGVCA members Juliet Franzen and her husband Robert reside in Nipomo, Calif. She can be reached by e-mail at monmarkai@gmail.com.

Find more information at these Nose Work Web sites:

www.NACSW.net www.k9nosework.com



1. Max is enthusiastically searching for food hidden in a cardboard box. 2. Max is checking out the boxes to locate the food. 3. Max has obviously located the hidden food. Note that the box is marked "food" to ensure that the food is only put in this box so the odor does not contaminate the other boxes.