

Training Your Dog for Lure Coursing

Starting puppies on the lure is easier, of course, than starting adolescents or adults, but owners don't always have the luxury of starting out with babies. A point to remember is when introducing the lure toy to dogs of any age; always accompany fur or fabric lure strips with white plastic strips so the dog will always associate the plastic with the fun activities. In lure coursing most of the lures are white plastic garbage bags. The visual experience of something running away is what most dogs want to chase, the scent and the material have little to do with the dog's excitement of the chase.

Many of you are probably familiar with the use of the horse training lunge whip with a toy tied to the end. The lure toy (fur or fabric and/or plastic strips) are fastened to the end of the lash of the long fiberglass whip, and the whip held like a fishing pole then you go "trolling" for dogs. The trick is not to overdo this "game." Some dogs begin to think all they have to do is run in a 12' diameter circle around you, and that's it! Alternate the lure toy game with other "chasing" games. Tie a tennis ball inside a white bag or white cloth, leaving the ball shape as the "head," and the ends of the bag or cloth as the tail you can throw it quite far, and teach the dogs to move away from you to go for the lure. Your main goal is to have them chase it.

Once the dog is chasing the lure toy, it's time to use a lure machine to start the dog doing short sprints, and gradually increasing the distance until the dog can handle a 200-yard sprint without panting. It is a learning process, and it might not happen all at once. Be patient. The best edge you can give your dog is to have him in hard, fit condition if he's not in condition, he's going to either (1) slow up, (2) stop chasing, or (3) try to cut corners because he becomes exhausted so quickly. He'll take the path of least resistance. He must be focused, first, before you try adding competition to the game.

At the end of the run you will need to catch your dog. If your dog plays keep away and does not have a good recall then it wastes valuable time on the field and other dogs are waiting. A good recall can save your dog's life and give you peace of mind. It is worth looking into our **Recall Games Class** if you want to improve your recall. That said, if this is your first time on the lure course and you want to give it a try and if you think you have a reasonable recall, then give it a try. If your dog is difficult to catch, then go home and work on your recall and come again to the next Lure Coursing Play Day.

If your dog already hunts varmints and critters, he may not be at all interested in the artificial lure this is normal, and you may not ever get him interested in the artificial lure. He already knows the difference between hunting and a game, and may choose not to play the game. Don't get discouraged he's already doing the job. That's the instinct you should strive for!