

Hunt Test Terminology

For someone new to the sport of Labrador Retriever Hunt Training the terminology can be overwhelming. The commands and signals are different from Obedience or Agility and the dogs are working at significantly farther distances.

Have you ever gone to event and wondered what other people were telling their dogs? Does it sound like gibberish when someone talks about their dog "Creeping" "Isn't that what happens at 2am when my dog is trying to crawl under the covers?" or Recast "I think that's a fishing term." Well, all shall be revealed, or at least part of it, there are even more terms than listed here, but these will get you out into the field without feeling left out.

Labrador Retriever Hunt Training & Test Terminology:

Airing : or Air Your Dog. A brief period before a test or training exercise to allow the dog to relieve itself, warm up, and get a feel for its surroundings.

Blind: A retrieve where a dog did not or is not allowed to see the fall and will need direction from the handler. (see fall, holding blind)

Break: also Breaking. The moment a dog violates SIT by moving toward a retrieve before being given a command. (see controlled break)

Bring to the Line: Act of handler walking dog at heel from the blind to a sit at heel, on either side of the handler. (see line)

Bumper: (or dummy) Retrieving object made of plastic or soft canvas. Typically has a throwing rope attached and is used in training for durability. There are three sizes, puppy, regular, & large. Different colors are used by advanced dogs to make marking more challenging. (see marking)

Call Back: Term used in hunt tests to inform which participants are allowed to continue on to the next series. (see series)

Cast: also casting. Signal by handler using arm or hand in a specific direction to change the route to a mark while the dog is on a retrieve. (see Handling Commands, Back, Over)

Cheating: Term for when a dog violates standard, reasonable lines on a retrieve, i.e. Runs along the bank on a water retrieve or avoids running through cover.

Controlled Break : Dog makes an attempt to break or breaks by leaving the handler's side before being sent but is quickly controlled by the handler without force by using a verbal command. (see sent)

Refusal: When a dog refuses to follow the command given by a handler.

Cover: Vegetation concealing a mark from the dog.

Creeping: Not to be confused with Breaking. When a dog moves its body away from the handler in the direction of a mark before it is sent. (see sent)

Dead Bird: Bird which is deceased at the time it is used for a mark.

Dog: not animal. Term used by a Hunt Test judge to signal a handler when they may send their dog on a mark. (see judge, mark)

Duck Call: Type of whistle/call used to simulate a duck mating call. Mallard, wood duck, etc.

Dummy: (see Bumper)

Fall: The location of the mark once it has hit the ground. (see mark)

Flat Collar: Collar which is either quick clip or buckle made of nylon, leather or synthetic. Not braided, rolled, pinch prong, or choke.

Flyer: also Live Flyer. A live bird shot for a retrieve.

Gunner: Person either shooting, throwing, launching ducks or dummies for retrieves.

Gun Station: Area, typically behind a blind from which a Flyer is thrown & shot. (see blind)

Gun Shy: A dog unable to work due to fear of loud noises.

Hard Mouth: Act of dog utilizing too much pressure to hold a bumper or bird causing damage to object.

Holding Blind: Device which conceals dog & handler while waiting their turn to run at a test or during training also, device which conceals gunners. (see gunners, blind)

Honor: Dog waiting at sit while another retrieves, when the retrieve is complete the sitting dog has honored.

Hunt Test: Event during which dogs are tested against a standard (AKC, NAHRA) by Judges using a scoring system. The dogs are not judged against each other. (See judge)

Judge: Appointed evaluator who selects marks for a hunt test & evaluates each dog against its level standard. (See hunt test)

Lead: also leash. Length of leather or nylon used to control a dog.

Line: The starting point from which a dog is sent on a retrieve. Can also be the direction a dog takes to its mark.

Long Line: Long length of lightweight lead (leash) used to help a handler guide dogs when learning to retrieve. Not a flexi-leash.

Mark: Term for bumper or bird thrown for retrieving where the dog is to see the object and its fall. (see fall)

No-Go: also balk, could be a refusal. When a dog sent by a handler on a retrieve does not go.

Poison Bird: An object which is purposely planted as a distraction to a dog sent for a blind mark and which cannot be retrieved until the blind is recovered.

Pop & Throw: Device used to launch bumpers or birds using slingshot, or catapult mechanisms. The pop results from the sound of a blank powder cartridge.

Popper Gun: Not a toy and still powerful enough to severely injure, a popper gun simulates the sound of live shot using blank or popper cartridges. The popper gun is fired when a bumper or bird is thrown as a mark.

Recast: Second attempt to send a dog on a mark, from the line position.

Send: When a handler commands the dog to a mark.

Series: A single test in a judged retrieving event. i.e. The 5-series consists of 5 individually judged tests or series. (see judge)

Single: A single mark thrown for retrieve.

Standard: Desired behavior formally established and considered when judging retrieves.

Walk-up: Act of a handler with dog at heel bringing the dog from the blind to a predetermined area where marks are thrown or shot. Not to be confused with bring to the line. (see bring to the line)

Basic Handling Command Terminology

Like all commands these are tailored to specific handler preference.

Back: Directional signal given to dog by handler. The handler arm & hand is raised vertically telling the dog to move in a direct line away from the handler. Most common on blind retrieves but can be used as a term to send the dog on a mark. (see blind retrieves)

Delivery Command: Used when obtaining an object a dog is holding, the dog is to deliver to handler without dropping. An example term to use is Give or Drop.

Heel: Dog at handler side, not pulling forward or backward. Heel can be either side when hunting or at hunt tests depending on mark type. Most handlers heel at the left side for consistency.

Here: the dog is to come immediately and either sit or enter a tight area around the handler. At a distance a whistle to signal Here is used.

Hold: Command to for dog not to release object until the handler gives release command.

Praise: Terminology used to verbally encourage the dog.

Over: Directional signal given to dog by handler. The handler's right or left arm & hand are raised horizontally from the waist telling the dog to move in the direction indicated by the arm. Most common on blind retrieves but can be used as a term to send the dog on a mark. (see blind retrieves)

Sit: Dog firmly planted in a seated ready position, feet underneath body, not leaving position except by handler command. At a distance a whistle sit requiring the dog to sit and give the handler attention when sounded.

Release Command: Used to signal the dog when it is no longer working and can relax.

Hunt Training Supplies

Basic supplies list for beginning retriever work

12-Bumpers

Whistle

Duck Call

Flat Collar, no tags attached

Long Line

Short length of hose, paint roller, or dowel - for Hold

Reward Treats

First Aid Kit

Other supplies should be based upon handler chosen training techniques. The PSLRA does not promote one training technique over another