

JEROME B. ROBINSON GUNDOGS

Psych Out Your Dog

SPORTS AFIELD

The psychology of canine behavior is an abundantly documented science, but, surprisingly, dog trainers seem to be generally unaware of the advantages of training according to how a dog's mind really works.

Most of our accepted dog-training techniques are based on force, the threat of punishment for disobedience and the offering of reward for correct response. Yet, psychological studies have proved that dogs are more directly stimulated by sound than by pain, and that they can be trained much more effectively by stimulating their auditory sense than by threatening them with punishment.

Work done by Dr. Dare Miller of the Canine Behavior Institute, Santa Monica, California, proves beyond doubt that dogs can be fully trained in both field and obedience lessons more quickly, and without punishment, by reaching a dog's learning mechanism through the sense of hearing. Miller is the developer of the Dog Master System, a complete course in dog training that relies on the use of a sensitive tuning fork capable of emitting a high-pitched sound that actually interrupts a dog's thought process and enables the trainer to fill the gap with a spoken command.

Years ago Miller noted that while work done with dogs formed the basis for understanding most human psychological patterns, no one was relating the work back to dogs

themselves. He found that common dog-training practices were obsolete when viewed in light of our knowledge of canine motivation.

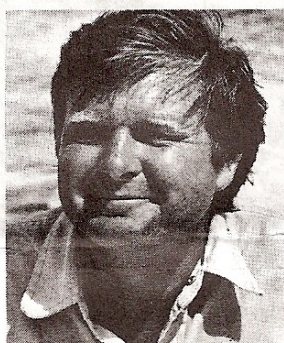
Operators of large kennels, he feels, have been overexposed to groups of dogs and often lose awareness of the dog/master relationship, having grown numb to the common family situation in which a dog becomes more human-like than dog-like in its behavior.

His book, *The Secret of Canine Communication* (1966), is a pioneer work that gained wide acceptance among veterinarians and other psychologists but is basically unknown among dog trainers.

In it Miller establishes the basis for the revolutionary training technique which is sold as the Dog Master System.

Do you remember the controversy over subliminal persuasion back in the 1950s? At that time it was shown that humans could be persuaded to buy popcorn and soda when instructed by messages flashed on a movie screen at a rate slightly faster than the human eye could consciously register. The practice was deemed unfair and outlawed in 1957, but the principle lives on in Miller's Dog Master System.

Subliminal persuasion works on humans because we are sight-oriented; we believe what we see. Dogs, on the other hand, rely most on their sense of hearing, so Miller embarked on a



search for a method to subliminally persuade dogs by auditory suggestion. He determined that a dog's hearing reaches an upper limit of 34,000 cycles per second. Then he developed a tuning fork of special alloys that when sounded produces an audible vibration of 34,200 cycles per second, just above the dog's ability to consciously hear, but still within the dog's subconscious hearing range.

Like man, the dog is a grouping and packing animal and will follow an individual who establishes himself as a leader. The dog will naturally copy what the leader does; run, bark, fight, if his leader is another dog, or learn to be calm in the house and to try to earn the reward of affection by doing what pleases his master when the leader is a man.

Miller discovered that the surest way a man can establish himself as a dog's leader is by interrupting the dog's thought process whenever the dog behaves in an unsuitable manner.

Using the Dog Master instrument and working in a confined space without distraction, Miller can consistently establish a student-teacher relationship with any dog in no more than a minute or two.

He rhythmically sounds the Dog Master while standing still and saying nothing. Within a minute or so the dog stops running about investigating everything and sits down, copying the motionless man who has estab-

lished his power by interrupting the dog's thought process to the extent that the dog forgets what he was doing and turns to the man for leadership. When he sits he is praised by his leader. Without a leash, a word or the threat of punishment, the dog has learned in less than two minutes that he earns affection when he copies his leader's behavior.

Miller's complete dog-training methods, as described in the 320-page booklet and tape-recorded lessons (sold with the Dog Master System), rely heavily on the use of the subliminal sound device in each situation where the trainer wants to erase the dog's thought and replace it with a display of leadership or a spoken command.

It is a revolutionary training method and, because the subliminal sound produced by the instrument cannot be heard by human ears, there is a tendency to call the thing a hoax. I, too, was skeptical, so I traveled to California to interview Miller and see his method demonstrated. After seeing him bring two untrained German short-haired pointers under his control in less than two minutes, my skepticism vanished and I started to learn.

In his Dog Master System book and related tape recordings, Miller explains the psychology of canine behavior in a way anyone can understand, and with this better understanding of why dogs do what they do all dog-training methods can be made more effective.

For example, Miller notes that anyone can teach a dog the meaning of "No!" But how do you teach a dog "Never"? You can make a dog stop whatever he is doing by shouting *no* and threatening him with punishment, but how long will it be before he tries it again? Only a matter of time.

Miller approaches this problem by another route. He achieves *lasting* learning rather

continued

YOUR CHOICE OF SEVERAL DOG-MASTER SYSTEM® KITS

The complete four instrument DOG-MASTER SYSTEM Kit is the best way to go. You get the best possible start with the full kit, rather than with one of the lesser; one, two or three instrument kits. Dr. Miller uses all four instruments when conditioning a dog in the beginning: "The method is a conditioning sequence of four. That's why using four instruments is better, if not absolutely necessary. With four instruments there is less interruption and greater permanency. With fewer instruments there is, of course, more and more interruption.

Later, when your dog is fully conditioned, you can control him better under one condition or another by using just the right instrument:

Continued on the Other Side



Misbehavior in the field—as this Brittany demonstrates—results from physical, rather than psychological, training.

than *temporary* learning by conditioning a dog to respond identically in all situations regardless of whether the trainer is there to give a command.

He does this by using what he calls the Mysterious Four Prin-

ciple. This is simply a matter of conditioning a dog to an automatic learned response in at least four different locations and situations. Since Miller trains without a leash or choke collar, the dog is not dependent on his

trainer's threat of force but instead is receptive to acquiring new habits that become his normal behavior once the conditioning has been achieved in four or more locations.

Common training practices demanding the use of a leash, checkcord, choke collar, etc., are far from the most effective way to train dogs, according to Miller. He notes that dogs react with an opposition reflex. If you push down on a dog, he pushes up—and he *thinks* up. Pull on his leash and he pulls back the other way, and *thinks* the other way. Clearly this is not the most direct way to communicate with the dog. "When you use only a leash, physically pushing and pulling on your dog to get him to do something, you overly impress the dog with the need for your presence. Soon he cannot wait to misbehave in your absence because he knows you can't reach him," Miller says.

Psychologists have proved that dogs have an overpowering tendency to copy the behavior of those around them (monkey see, monkey do). Knowing this is one of the most important

aspects of dog training: Your dog will tend to behave as you do. If you leap for the door or phone when someone calls, so will your dog. If you act aggressive or fearful toward strangers, your dog will mimic you by barking or possibly even biting. In the field, if you panic when you get into birds, your dog will emulate you by flushing and chasing. By realizing that your behavior sets an example for the dog (just as it does for your children) you can avoid many canine embarrassments.

Housebreaking the dog, teaching him to come, sit and heel, are lastingly learned in a few minutes using the Dog Master System. A broadened understanding of canine psychology that results from studying the system teaches you to correct a dog's anxiety behavior before it leads to troublesome habits such as digging, chasing or biting.

Miller's system will teach any dog owner how to establish a mental control over his dog far exceeding the degree of control we can derive from threat of punishment. SA