

Working with dogs for deer.

by John Roberts

AUTHOR: NIELS SONDERGAARD
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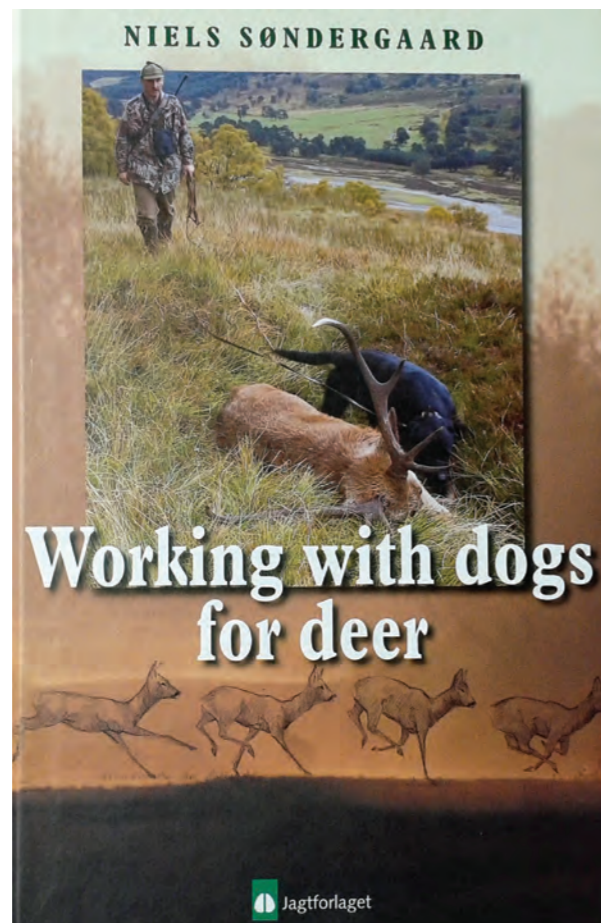
BOOK REVIEW

Towards the end of last year I was delighted to be asked to run a deer dog training course in the Eastern States. Unfortunately at that time I had several prior engagements which I couldn't change so with some regret I had to turn down this kind offer.

I learned later that the organisers had managed to procure the services of a Danish deer dog trainer – Niels Sondergaard who had published a book on the subject in 2006.

HEREWITH IS MY REVIEW
Initially I was a trifle overwhelmed by the content. I had expected a treatise on dog training and tracking techniques but I was to be pleasantly surprised. Having said that I will point out straight away that there are some uses of dogs which would be illegal in Australia and New Zealand. I'm referring to the use of deer dogs to track and kill wounded roe deer. We don't have any roe deer which obviates the need for further comment.

I particularly liked the attention the author paid to the suitability of dogs for the work. Obviously the system in Northern Europe leads to the availability of a wide range of bloodlines from practical working dogs.



TRAINING GUNDOGS FOR DEERHUNTING SEMINAR

Instructed by Niels Sondergaard is to be held on August 15 & 16 at Tumbarumba NSW
SEE ADVERTISEMENT P103.

The essence of a good tracking dog is fully explained and the requirements clearly laid out. You ignore it at your peril. Many and varied options for training in a wide range of circumstances are clearly explained and well illustrated. The selection of puppies is a valuable tool in picking your dog.

Equipment too is evaluated. For example I've always advocated the use of a tracking leash of 10 – 12 metres using 8mm braided cord. Niels points out that in some areas it can get tangled in undergrowth so in those circumstances he uses 1/2 inch webbing for leashes.

The use of tracking harnesses is also discussed and I agree with the author that harnesses help to reduce the incidence of shoulder, neck and back problems in later life.

A little further on in the book I was intrigued by the hunter's use of a "Hair Book" showing examples of hair from different parts of the deer's body. Obviously this will assist in determining the site of the wound.



NIELS AND OBAN PREPARING TO TRACK THROUGH A WHEAT CROP.

Rifles too are discussed and as usual every hunter seems to have their own opinion though in their case they have a much wider range of species to deal with.

I should point out that the range and variety of equipment used is relevant to the often differing types of terrain they are asked to deal with. Most will be working in unfamiliar country looking for injured deer at all times of the day or night. Training to track is a complex and varied exercise which the author has approached in a practical and forthright manner. But as he points out it requires dedication and hard work.

Charts abound showing detail that can be easily assimilated. The skeleton charts are also a useful aid. Overall a most interesting and informative book and a must for the beginner as well as the more experienced hunter. All the chapters are profusely illustrated with colour photographs.

There are a few aspects of the training programme which I feel might be superfluous. I'm referring to the use of cleated clamps on overshoes which aims to enhance the track both visually and scent wise. A variation on this theme requires the use of deer blood spread on deer cleaves, again to enhance the scent track. Obviously the system works considering the numbers of qualified dogs but it's a little too "belt and braces" for me.

Since 1974 Denmark has had a central registry for trained dogs and their handlers. The relevant legislation authorises the hunter upon request to track and despatch any deer or wild boar injured in a road accident or wounded by a hunter.

It even authorises the hunter to enter upon private land in pursuit of the animal. The statistics are quite impressive. For example in the year 1999/2000 callouts totalled over 6000. The number of registered dogs/hunters at that time totalled

just over 200. Statistics supplied show that a quarter of the wounded/injured animals were still mobile but only 15% were not found.

An aspect of the statistics which interested me showed that dogs on tracking leashes were used in over 4500 cases with a success rate of over 57% compared with less than 100 found by dogs who were free.

It goes without saying that a hunter with a well-trained dog will have a far higher success rate than the dogless hunter. The dogless hunter really doesn't know what he's missing.

This book is an easy read even for the novice. Any aspiring deer dog owner would do well to get a copy of this book.

MY COPY OF THIS ENLIGHTENING BOOK WAS PROVIDED BY ERROL MASON.

Copies are available from:
www.sambardeer.com