

THE WORKING DACHSHUND BLOOD TRACKING

by Chantal Cormier

The more I learn about dachshunds the more fascinated I am to discover how versatile they are as a hunting breed. Unfortunately we have very few opportunities to see first hand what the breed was developed for originally here in North America, either underground as an earthdog, in the field chasing rabbits, or as a tracking dog for finding wounded game.



Photo : John Jeanneney

But chances are if you breed dachshunds, especially wirehaired dachshunds, and have a website, you have received one or more requests for “hunting” dachshunds. That’s because tracking wounded big games with leashed dogs, what is called blood tracking or deer search in parts of the United States, has now been legalized in many of the Eastern states and in parts of Canada, and is gaining popularity. While many breeds of dogs can be used for tracking wounded animals, dachshunds in general, and wirehaired dachshunds in particular, are the most widely used dogs in the east.

When a hunter loses track of a wounded animal, either for lack of blood or other visual signs, leashed dogs specially trained for blood tracking can be called upon to find deer, bears, and even moose (in Canada) that would otherwise never be recovered. Working over rough terrains and sometimes over long distances, the dogs follow the scent of blood but also pick up many other scents from the wounded animal.

In his book “Tracking Dogs for Finding Wounded Deer” John Jeanneney of New York, a wirehaired dachshund breeder himself, says of the breed :

“For the Northeast, where I live, and for the Midwest, I truly believe that they [dachshunds] are best suited as blood trackers for most people.”

He goes on explaining that while the dachshund has a good nose, it is biddability, it’s intelligence and attitude,

the fact that it relates better to people than other breeds, not having been bred as pack hounds that makes the breed a more suitable blood tracker. Jeanneney also mentions that dachshunds are small and adaptable, easy to transport and come in small sizes.

In Europe, hounds have been used to recover wounded game for at least a 100 years and are an integral part of hunting, so much so that in some countries using blood trackers has become the rule rather than the exception.

In the United States, groups such as Deer Search Inc. and United Blood Trackers offer game recovery services with trained tracking dogs and handlers.

In Canada, blood tracking with leashed dogs is now permitted in Quebec and is bound to become more popular. Just last month there was an article about it in a Quebec hunting magazine and efforts are underway to set up a provincial organization. In British Columbia, where blood tracking have been practised for some years, such an organization called Canadian Game Trackers was founded in 2006.

Regulations vary depending on the state or province and are either very simple or quite elaborate. New York state for example has extensive regulations which require handler certification and a special state tracking licence, while in Quebec and some other states, the only regulation is that the dog is leashed and that no one in the search party is carrying a firearm.

Most people involved in blood tracking choose to work with European lines because of their working tradition. But if you are tempted to give it a try with your North American show or pet dachshund, don’t let that stop you. In the words of Jeanneney :

“In dachshunds, as with other breeds, don’t get so caught up in generalities that you miss the qualities of the individual dog. My advice would be that if you are starting from scratch in dachshunds for blood tracking, your best bet is to first investigate the blood trackers from European background. This is no 100% guarantee of success. Good blood tracking potential is where you find it.”

Blood tracking resources :

Jeanneney, John – Tracking Dogs for Finding Wounded Deer, Teckel Time, NY, 2006, 350 p.

On the web :

Deer Search Inc. : www.deersearch.org

United Blood Trackers : www.unitedbloodtrackers.org

Born-To-Track : www.born-to-track.com

Canadian Game Trackers : www.canadiangametrackers.com