

Gundogs

Training and Hunting

Throughout history man and dog have combined their natural skills of woodcraft and scent trailing to capture food. Ivory carvings with hunting themes bear witness to its existence in ancient Egypt, around 4400 B.C. Earlier still, however - around 10,000 to 5,000 B.C - a hunting dog is believed to have accompanied hunters as they pursued game, using spears and throwing sticks as weapons

Bucher & Lucerne - *The Book of Hunting*

A well-trained gundog has the potential to make stalking sambar much more productive. Detecting an animal which smells as much as a sambar is hardly a challenge for a dog that is capable of smelling a quail in long grass from 50 to 80 metres. Wallowing stags stink so badly that at times even humans can smell them from a short distance, and any upwind are easily smelled by a gundog from at least 500m, and in optimum scenting conditions perhaps from as far away as a kilometre. And whilst sitting and glassing, often a dog will hear, see or smell a deer long before you are aware of it, adding to your detection system. Nevertheless, a gundog is by no means a 'silver bullet'. You will only benefit from one if you know how to hunt sambar in the first place, have trained it correctly and give it plenty of sambar hunting experience.

This chapter is not intended to be a comprehensive treatise on raising and training a gundog. For that you should read one of the many books available on this subject which provide comprehensive and sound advice. Back in 1975 when training my Weimaraner for hunting duck, rabbit and quail - but not deer - I relied almost entirely on *Gundogs for Field or Trial* by Roy Burnell. This comprehensive volume of over 400pp, written by a man highly respected in this field, is an excellent book on how to train utility gundogs but unfortunately it is out of print. However, neither this, nor any book make any reference whatsoever to training gundogs specifically for hunting sambar. The

ideal dog and its training for hunting red deer in the Scottish highlands bears scant relevance to the type of dog and training required for hunting sambar in Victoria's Great Forested Mountains. It is this deficiency in the literature that this chapter is designed to fill.

Legal Breeds

In Victoria, the Department of Sustainability and Environment has approved a number of gundog breeds for stalking sambar deer which are published, together with other legal requirements, in the *Victorian Hunting Guide*. This guide is issued to all holders of a licence to hunt deer in Victoria. The Wildlife Regulations state that when hunting sambar the dog must wear a collar with a tag clearly detailing the name, address and telephone number of its owner. Non-approved breeds cannot be used and heavy fines exist for breaching the regulations.

Right: *My English Pointer Jack demonstrated strong hunting instinct from the moment I obtained him at 12 weeks of age. My family socialised with him and I immediately gave him obedience training for 15 minutes on most days. On this particular morning when he was 8 months old, I led him onto fresh sambar tracks which followed a game trail across a face. The deer had moved downwind so Jack scent-trailed with his nose in its slots. He led me past rub trees, including this well rubbed wild cherry, and through fresh beds but I called it a day when the trail disappeared into a dogwood thicket.*

