

Training Clinics

Many new NAVHDA members don't know what to expect when they go to their first training clinic. Our clinics are designed to help handlers and dogs from novice to advanced. Trainers and experienced handlers will direct a variety of activities that address the many skills your dog needs to be a successful versatile hunter, whether or not you plan to test your dog in the NAVHDA program.

Click on the questions below to see answers to the most commonly asked questions. You can have as many or as few questions open as you want at any time. If there is a question you don't see below, email us. We may add your question to this page for others to see.

How does the day go?

First you will sign in and pay for the birds your dog(s) will train with that day. We usually begin around 9:00. Handlers (that's you) will be divided up according to the skill or test level you're training your dog for – Natural Ability or Utility Test. The person in charge of training for the day will then explain what the day's activities will be, which usually means starting with some basic obedience and control exercises followed by field work with birds and, depending on the weather and availability, water work with ducks.

It's important to remember that training takes time! Since turns in the field or water are based on the sign-up's first come, first served basis, after the group work, there will be waiting time. While you wait, you have a great opportunity to continue training. Throw marks for retrieves, practice the heeling course, teach your dog patience watching others dogs, etc. And don't be shy – ask another handler to help you by steadying your dog or setting up blind retrieves or creating distractions, then do the same in return.

Can I go on the grounds myself?

The Mingo Sportsman's club requires that a club member be present with guests at all times. Several members of the Buckeye Chapter are also members of Mingo Sportsman's Club. We will be there to accompany guests to the different training venues

What should I bring?

For your dog, bring plenty of water, a short lead and whatever basic hunting/training gear you use – check cord, choke chain, e-collar, whistle, etc. It's a good idea to bring your dog's kennel crate and/or a tie-out stake. The chapter has equipment available, such as dummies, training platforms, blinds, a bird launcher, training table, and heeling course stakes.

For you, bring sunscreen, bug spray, snacks, folding chair, and drinks. At some of our clinics and test days, a barbeque lunch will be available for a donation of \$5 for adults and kids eat free. You'll be advised ahead of time if there will be a bbq. If so, we'll ask everyone to contribute either a side dish or dessert. If the clinic is scheduled for late spring or summer, you might want to bring a tarp or sun shelter. The fields where we train have little or no shade, so keeping cool (both you and your dog) is always a challenge. Check the weather. Rain gear may be needed. We train in rain or shine. The fields are often damp or muddy, too, so having some kind of waterproof footwear is a good idea.

Can my children attend the clinic with me?

Absolutely! We encourage chapter youth to participate, whether it is helping plant birds, being much needed "go-fers," or just having fun petting, playing and helping to socialize puppies.

What do the birds cost?

That varies year to year. The chapter, as a rule, charges \$1 over our cost per bird to cover bird losses, and miscellaneous clinic expenses. Approximate costs are \$4.50 for quail, \$6.50 for Chukars, \$12 for pheasants, and \$12 for mallards. These costs are subject to change without notice.

Can I purchase birds to take home for training?

At the end of the day, birds that aren't used or that are recaptured can be brought home, and if we have extra birds at the end of the day, you can purchase them, as well. This is done on a first come, first serve basis. Remember, you must have a Propagation License and hunting license to legally possess gamebirds.

How long does the clinic last?

As long as it takes. Our goal is to make sure every handler gets the information and experience he or she needs. We'll go until dark if necessary.

What does the clinic cost?

The Buckeye Chapter offers the clinic for a \$10 training day fee to all Buckeye Chapter NAVHDA members. Participants who are not members of Buckeye Chapter NAVHDA will be charged \$25, which, at the end of the day, can be credited to a membership if the participant so chooses. These fees help offset the cost of grounds rental on each training day

Can I bring more than one dog?

Yes, but particularly with dogs at the Natural Ability level, it's often best to plan on working with just one throughout the day. If you bring other dogs along, there is plenty of time and a place where they can be exercised.

My dog hasn't trained with other dogs. Will this be a problem?

If it is, we'll help. Many dogs get very excited seeing all the other dogs, and this distraction can work to our advantage by giving us an opportunity to teach them to focus on their handler. Whether it's keeping the young dog on a training platform while he gets used to the other dogs walking around him or teaching a "leave it" command when he pulls towards another dog, there are many strategies to get him used to the group. When the dogs work with the birds, in the field or the water, they will be working individually, unless training to honor another dog.

What if my dog is in heat?

Because of the distraction for male dogs which can be very disruptive to training, we ask that bitches in heat train last. Please keep your dog aside (staked or crated) until it's your turn for the field or water work, but be sure to let the folks in charge of training know you're waiting. That way we can be sure your dog will get equal time.