

BORN TO RETRIEVE (by Ron Jackson)

If you already own a Labrador Retriever, you are lucky enough to have one of the finest hunting companions available. If you are looking for an ever-faithful, never-tiring courageous and intelligent partner, then you couldn't go past a Labrador. When your best shoes go missing, or he's chasing the cat, just try to remember, as his name suggests - this dog was born to work. He lives to retrieve. A few minutes a day, training your Labrador to do the work for which he was designed, could save a lot of headaches. He does all the things he's not supposed to do because he's bored. He wants to chase and fetch to please you.

HOW TO GO ABOUT IT: Choose a ball or a particular toy (should you be considering continuing the training to hunting or trialing standard, you should use a prepared dummy) and always put the article away and use it only for his special play. Throw the article out a short distance at first and encourage the dog to retrieve it and return it to you. Never chase him – if you do, that will become the game and you will soon tire of that. He'll soon learn that if he doesn't bring it back, you can't throw it again for him. The most important thing is lots of positive encouragement and no scolding. He will look forward to his game each day and I'm sure he will be less destructive around the house, as you will be developing his natural instincts and giving him something constructive to think about. Increase the distance and degree of difficulty as he progresses. Change the venue; take him to the beach or the park. He'll love you for it.

Whether you choose to keep this as a game or carry it a step further, is entirely up to you but I feel sure that if you get a glimpse of what your dog can really do with a minimum amount of training, it will astound you. If you wish to develop this wonderful talent further - to compete in the competitions that are available, or to aid in conservation by having a shooting companion who will rarely ever fail to return with the fallen game, the Labrador Retriever Club of Qld Inc has members very experienced in the training and trialing of Labradors, who are more than willing to advise and assist anyone who is interested in this field of endeavour.

