

June Newsletter  
Wildrose Kennels  
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## **Balance in Training Ingredient - Cyclical Training**

After a brief interruption due to our discussion about the Wildrose Retriever Trial held in March and the training preparations for such an event, we will now return to our previously scheduled series, "Balance In Training." Part I, "The Process," published in March, 2002, can be reviewed by visiting [www.uklabs.com](http://www.uklabs.com), Training Newsletter archives. As a brief review, consider retriever training as a process rather than a program with the process being a never-ending cycle of planning, teaching, revisiting established skills and evaluation. Programs are linear and rigid. Processes are flexible and are cyclical. A well-rounded hunter retriever is best developed through a process which ensures consistent repetition and balance in format.

In nature all things move in cycles. Animals learn best when training methods are structured in a cyclical format rather than a continuum. The term I use to describe the Wildrose process is "looping" which is effectively structuring each training session in a cyclical format with the beginning tying into the end.

The daily training session should begin with the brief re-visiting of formally entrenched skills, moving to the new skills being taught and concluding with familiar skills. By beginning and ending daily sessions with familiar skills, confidence is instilled in the young dog at the onset and conclusion of the training activity. The dog begins and ends each session under control, quiet, steady and obedient. The familiar skills serve as bookends supporting the new learning of less familiar skills. The sessions are encased in positive success: obedience, steadiness drills, new skills, counter skills (to be discussed next issue), steadiness, and obedience.

On a broader scale, a cyclical process is used to progressively move forward in the dog's development by continuously re-evaluating progress and re-visiting previously run exercises/drills to assure retention. Again we utilize a loop as we re-visit previously mastered skills.

In cyclical training structures, each action is connected to the next to effectively construct a causal relationship, a naturally progressive link to the next activity, response or action. The cues, instruction, or commands of the handler cause a reaction in the dog, which should stimulate memory and association thereby resulting in another action. Causal relationships, properly linked and thoroughly taught, become the building blocks of successful training.

Cyclical training also involves the continuous assessment of results. It takes time but there is no way to speed train a gundog and no way to shortcut the process if

you want excellence in the field. Leave holes in the training and they will show up later. Using a cyclical format each day, dogs will respond to the repetition and to the confidence of beginning and ending with familiarity.

As an added bonus, fundamental gundog skills will be consistently revisited and further entrenched. Drilling the fundamentals never hurts. Look what it did for Vince Lombardi.