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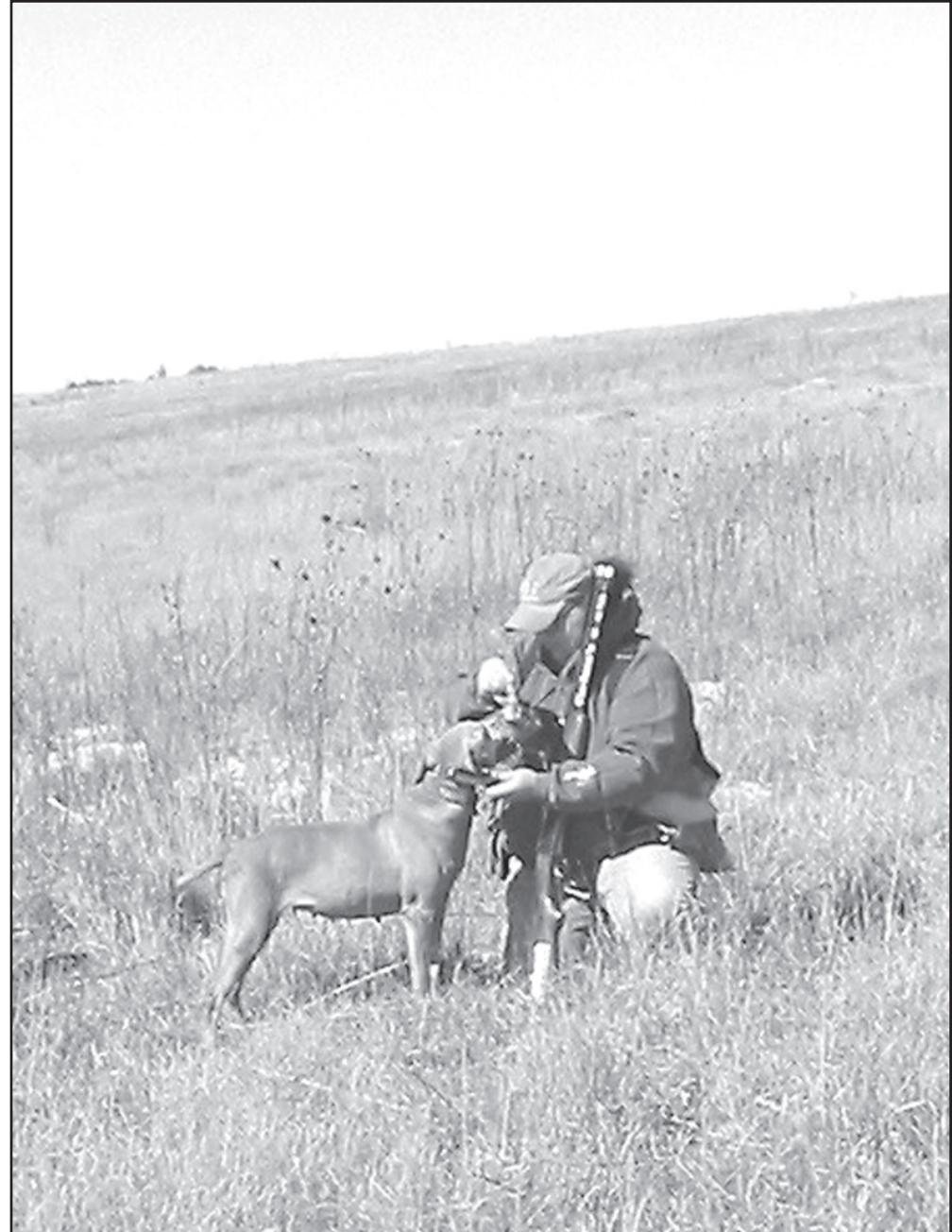
Lunch 11 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

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Training her dog was Crystal Ludowese.

— Photo courtesy of Rex Murray

Dogs provide man and help in field

They say dogs are man's best friend. This may be true, but when it comes to hunting, dogs may be man's best weapon.

The hunting dog has proven to be a reliable partner for many hunters who head out into the wilderness in search of game each year. But dogs have to be trained in order to know what to do when they are taken huntin.

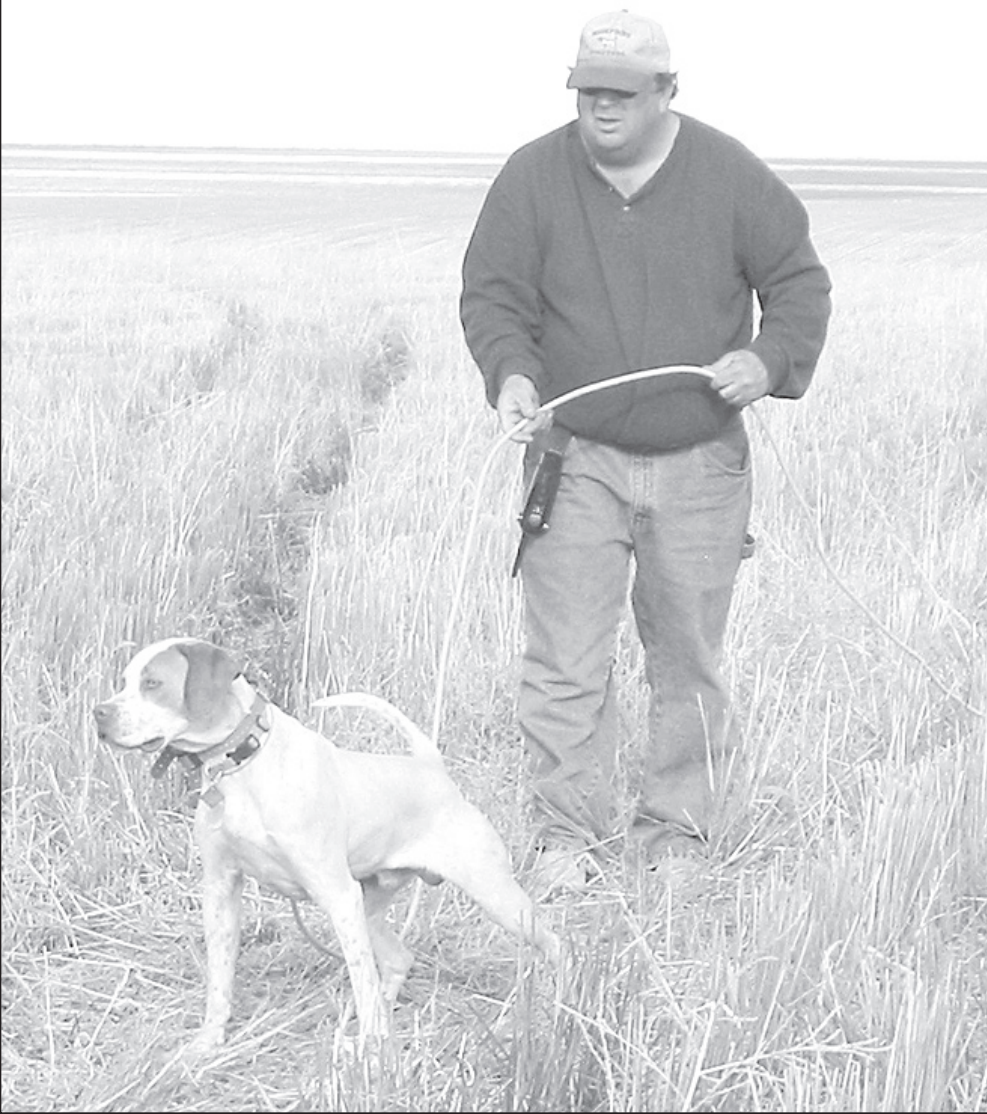
Goodland resident Rex Murray, professional dog trainer at Ringneck Country, said dogs are trained to be either flushing dogs or pointing dogs. He said flushing dogs include Labradors, Springer Spaniels and pointing dogs include German Short Hair's, Brittany's and Vizla's. Melvin Crow, professional dog trainer in Goodland said other flushing breeds include Newfoundlands and Golden Retrievers and other pointing breeds include Labradors, Weimaraners, English Setters and Irish setters.

Murray said he first gives flushing dogs basic obedience training where they are taught to

come, sit or stay. Both breeds have to be taught to get used to the sound of a gun, he said. After flushing dogs have become comfortable with hearing a gun go off, hunters should start putting them on birds.

Crow said pointing dogs should also be taught obedience training. He said pointing dogs should be should be given whoa training using a whoa-post. The whoa post is a stake that can be easily pushed into the ground. According to gundogsupply.com the post is used like a stop-ping device after the dog has gone into pointing position. The post allows the dog to move side to side but not forward. The post weighs less than two pounds, and can be used by hunters for start-stop drills.

The dogs should be taught to stop and point at the bird instead of flushing it out, Murrow said. He said hunters should make their dogs hold their point longer each time while their in training. Dogs should first be trained in their owner's yard, before they are taken out to the



Training hunting dogs is Rex Murray's business at Ringneck Country as well as a hobby. He is working Ace, an English pointer, for a customer in Dallas, Texas.

— Photo courtesy of Sandi Murray

with friendship during the hunt

field, said Crow.

Crow recommended people use a steady wing to shoot hunting technique to train dogs. According to huntingdogtrainer.net this technique means dogs are trained to find birds, hold point until their masters arrive, stay pointing through the flush, shoot and kill, and remain steady until the hunters release them to retrieve the bird.

Murray said both breeds should be taught not to get too far away from their masters. He said hunters should blow a whistle to keep hunting dogs from flushing game when the birds are out of shooting range. This allows hunters to get to a spot where they have a chance of hitting the bird.

Murray said all dog breeds must be taught how to retrieve. Teaching a dog to retrieve can be especially hard, if the dog was not given basic retrieving training when it was young, said Crow. He said this training can be as basic as throwing a ball and having the dog go fetch it.

Crow said it takes somewhere between 6 to 8 weeks to train a hunting dog. He said the difference between a good hunting dog and a great hunting dog is typically based on dog control and manners.

"It depends on whether their hunting for themselves or for the team," said Crow.

He said there is no recognizable difference between breeds when it comes to how fast it takes to train the dogs.

Crow said the amount of time it takes to train a dog depends on each individual dog.

"They are all individuals," he said.

Crow said one of his favorite parts about training dogs was that it allowed him to hunt every day. He had one other reason why he enjoyed training hunting dogs.

"Watching dogs progress in training," said Crow. "Taking a dog that knows nothing and turning it into a well-tuned machine."



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