

## So you've got a pet gundog?

Congratulations, you are no doubt the proud owner of a highly intelligent, high energy working dog.

A gundog was originally used, and then bred, to either find live game, to retrieve game that was shot, or both. The gundog group is generally split between Retrievers, Hunting Retrievers and Hunting Pointing Retrievers (HPRs).

The Retrievers will include breeds like the Labrador retrievers, Golden retrievers, Chesapeake Bay retrievers, Flatcoat retrievers... you get the idea. These are, as the name implies, the dogs that bring back the spoils, although they can be used to flush, retrieving is what's 'in their blood'.

Hunting Retrievers, for example Springer spaniels, Cocker spaniels etc, hunt to find live game to flush, put it up to be shot and then bring it back for the table. Although the Hunting Retriever can be used to pick up, they're more often than not thought of as beaters dogs and can get into smaller places to put up game; natural at quartering you'll see them running back and forwards ahead of you on walks totally 'in their noses' doing what comes naturally.



Hunting Pointing Retrievers(HPRs) include German Short-haired Pointers, Vizlas, Weimaraners and so on. For me it's the HPRs that's different to every other gundog as you can't train 'the point'; they either have it or they don't. The HPRs will find the game and 'point' at it, on command put it up to be shot and then bring it back, the great all rounder.

Not all gundog breeds are trained as gundogs and I would be surprised if as many as half were. Why? Well because they make such good family pets and families these days tend not to go out and shoot their lunch, preferring to go to Waitrose or Sainsbury's instead.



The Gundog is a superb companion; easy going, reasonably easy to train, fun, powerful, outgoing and biddable.... that's when their energy is channelled. Leave them to their own devices and you'll get a large-ish dog that creates its own fun, for example being chased around the garden with your sexy undies in its mouth when mother-in-law comes to visit; outgoing as in it runs up to everyone and covers them in slobber and muddy paw-prints; powerful, yes, they can pull a fully grown man down the street and not break into a sweat; is biddable with everyone except you... sound familiar?

Dogs have worked alongside man since before records began and the gundog is one of the few breeds that are purposefully still being bred to do so. Show type, working type... that's a working dog you've got sharing your living room.

Do yourself and your dog a favour and start training it to do what it has been bred to do. Why? Well, it will help to fulfil your dog's needs as not only will he be getting lots of exercise but he'll be using his brain; you will be spending time with your dog, building your relationship on trust, discipline and leadership; you'll have a well mannered, obedient dog... and if that isn't enough, you'll have a dog that you can get to bring you the remote control for the telly!

New classes will be starting in Marlborough in January. Contact Lez Graham at [www.thepetgundog.co.uk](http://www.thepetgundog.co.uk) for more information.