

# Hunter's Air Scent Training



Handler Bob gives Hunter the command to search.

In a search as an Air Scent Dog my handler Bob takes off my leash and gives me the command, "Hunter, Search!" I go back and forth sniffing the air to pick up the scent of a human. Sometimes I'm moving so fast I lose Bob, but he trusts me and listens for my bark alert.

When I get a scent, I move to where it is coming from. When I find someone, I give my bark alert and stay with the person until my handler comes. Sometimes, if Bob is far behind, I go back to have him follow me. He says, "Show me, Hunter" and I refind the person with Bob following me.

So how did I learn my bark alert? When I was just a puppy I was trained to bark on command. It was hard learning to alert at the right time, but after lots of training I got it right. That was the first part of my SAR Dog training. Learning to search was next.

To start learning how to search, another handler holds me while Bob runs into the wind and hides with my green tennis ball - that's my favorite toy. Then the handler holding me commands, "Search!" I run to Bob - of course, I know where he is because I saw him hide. Then it's party time. Bob gives me the speak command so I can learn my bark alert. I get lots of praise and play ball. It's a fun game for me. As I get better, the distance apart gets longer and later I don't know where Bob is hiding.

When I was ready, I worked on a "blind search." That's when someone hides, but I don't know who it is and I don't get to see where the volunteer hides. Bob starts me and commands, "Hunter, Search!" It's my job to find the person. When I do, I give my bark alert, return to Bob if I don't see him right behind me, have him follow me and refind the person. Both Bob and the volunteer hiding give me treats, praise and Bob gives me my green tennis ball.

Bob and I practice the searches in all kinds of places and all kinds of weather. As we practice, Bob learns how to tell I picked up a scent and I learn how to tell my handler I found someone and to show him to the person hiding. To me, it's all like a game, but I know how important this work is when a real search is needed.



Hunter gives his bark alert after finding a hiding volunteer during training.

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