

Super: Pooch still your best bet when fighting geese

By TONY RZADZKI

Nothing works better than a well-trained dog in chasing geese off a golf course. Nothing!

Make sure you read the key words in that past sentence "well-trained." You need a dog that will: a) ride on a golf cart, b) sit still when approaching golfers, c) not bark around golfers, d) sit quietly on a cart or leash if you need to talk to someone, check a green, or go in the clubhouse for a cup of coffee. You need a dog that will mind your commands when she is working (chasing geese) and a dog that is determined to get the job done.

In my mind, there is no dog better suited for this type of work than a Labrador retriever. I've read about the border collie and I also believe that a Chihuahua could spook geese as well as a Great Dane. But a water dog, bred for swimming, will go out on that lake and chase a goose off its greatest sense of security—the water. To me this is essential in controlling geese.

The best method I have found when chasing geese out of a lake, especially a larger lake, is to use two dogs. One will spook the geese to the far side of the lake. They usually swim there. If she is by herself, oftentimes it is difficult to flush them out and this takes a lot of time. If you can start one dog at the near side of the lake where the geese are located, then drop the other one in at the far side of the lake where the geese are heading. Duck your head or make sure you have a rainsuit on, because they'll soon be bombing you as they take off.

Not to worry about a dog "catching" a goose. It is almost impossible. I've seen geese intentionally swim slowly in circles just six feet or less in front of my dog for a half an hour at a time. Jeez, I thought my dog would die of exhaustion. But she wouldn't quit until I was hoarse from screaming at her and she finally scrambled up the bank. That gander swam away waddling its tail, taking a dump, and rejoining his new family of goslings and mother.

The dogs can't catch them on land either. A goose's eyesight is very keen. They see you at 200 yards, and a guardian goose is always watching. They fly well before you can get near enough to them to get caught. Another phenomenon I have discovered is that sometimes, when I don't have my dogs, the geese recognize me on my cart, especially the resident geese. Many times they flee when I don't have the dogs tagging along.

Chalk one up for our side!
A goose, aside from its nasty characteristics, is a marvelous animal. I am continually amazed at its tenacity, beauty in flight, wariness of predators, and survival instincts.

Another thing I have discovered is that dogs are a great public-relations tool. People love dogs and to see them perform. Nothing beats watching a dog in full stride dive into a lake. A great Labrador doesn't look beautiful until her chest is heaving, pink tongue lolling out, eyes alert for action, and her coat soaking wet from working the water. God, I love that. These past two summers I had the opportunity to train two chocolate lab puppies. Talk about a PR tool! Golfers flock around your cart

and conversations are immediate.

One other thing that a dog can do for you, once it is trained, is reduce stress. Early in the morning, making the rounds, breathing in the fresh air, and watching the dog work... some days it makes me feel that everything is right with the world and the responsibilities that I am charged with.

Some days — we all experience them — things just don't go well. Everyone has bad days. Then that goofy dog might just chase away an aerosol salesman. Maybe she might just sit with her head on your lap, golden eyes sheepishly looking at you and saying "I'm your friend, your best companion.

Everything will be all right soon."

You scratch her on her head and smile to yourself: "Yeah, everything will be all right."

From this bounty of knowledge, what have we learned? For now, the goose is here to stay. Our best solution at this time, I believe, is to use a combination of the better tactics that I described above. One thing is for sure: Whatever methods that you should decide to use, be persistent, as persistent as that gander was with my dog. These geese are now living in what they may consider their heaven, and they won't give up paradise any easier than we would. Good luck!

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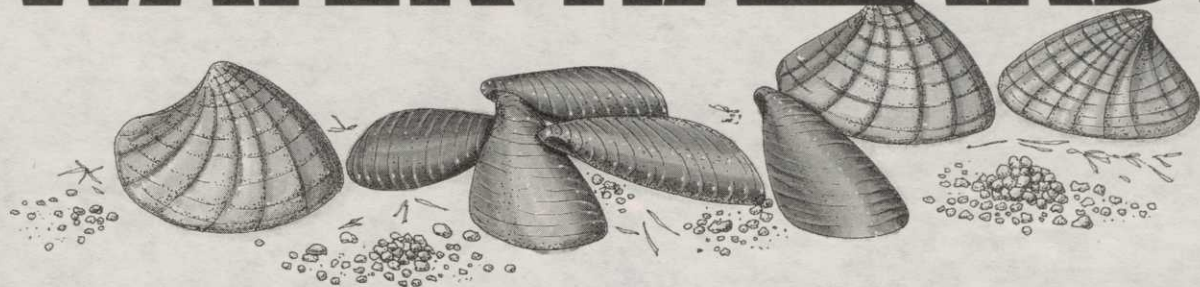
If you turn to page 41, you'll see a new addition to our regular product feature: The Product Forum. Basically, it's a new product page devoted entirely to the subject of our product feature. It will run every month from now on.

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