


Little Things Add Up to *Success* in the Grouse Woods

Photos provided by Purina

 *Preparing bird dogs for the rigors of competition or multiple-day hunts requires being knowledgeable about the little things that can make a difference in their performance. Sporting dogs are tremendous athletes. Successful trainers are those who take these little things to heart and build them into their training program. Using these conditioning and nutrition tips, you can help your dog gain a competitive advantage in the grouse woods this hunting season.*



PRIMING YOUR BIRD DOG FOR PERFORMANCE

Nutritionally priming a dog for performance in the woods can help boost his athleticism. Feeding a high-protein/high-fat performance dog food year-round is optimal because it metabolically primes dogs to use that fuel for exercise.

The harder dogs work, the greater their fat and protein metabolism. Fat is the preferred source of energy during exercise. A high-fat diet increases the number of mitochondria in muscle cells, which promotes burning fat for energy. Protein helps to support strong muscles and maintain the body-protein balance during hard work when exercise activates protein breakdown.

Ideally, sporting dogs should be fed a performance food that provides from 28 to 30 percent protein and from 18 to 20 percent fat, such as *Purina Pro Plan SPORT Advanced 28/18 Formula* and *Purina Pro Plan SPORT Performance 30/20 Formula*, to sustain their energy demand, says Purina Research Nutritionist Brian Zanghi, PhD.

“It’s best to feed a performance food year-round. Switching to a maintenance diet in the off-season is like metabolically detraining your dogs,” Zanghi says. “Maintenance foods deliver high levels of carbohydrate, which decrease the metabolic capacity to use fats, and ultimately result in reduced endurance. It’s best to reduce the portion fed in the off-season and monitor body condition to keep a dog fit and healthy.”



To help minimize a dog's protein breakdown and aid in muscle conditioning, feed a high-protein/high-fat nutritional supplement 30 minutes before taking your dog into the grouse and woodcock coverts. The *Purina Pro Plan SPORT PRiME* nutritional supplement bar, formulated to be nutrient and calorie dense, helps keep muscles strong during activity. It also helps nourish muscles before and during exercise when fed 30 minutes before the start of a workout. The low-carbohydrate content helps minimize digestion related to the release of insulin as insulin activates fat and carbohydrate storage and slows fat burning.

Healthy hydration also is essential for hardworking dogs afield. Grouse and woodcock hunters should take along ample water regardless of it being a dry or wet year. During a dry year, there may not be water holes where dogs can cool off, and sometimes swampy or stagnant water during a wet year introduces parasites or bacteria.

For every hour spent in the woods, give small amounts of water every 15 to 20 minutes to help maintain hydration. Water helps to cool the special cooling mechanism in the back of a dog's throat, which counters the current exchange and helps cool blood going into the brain. Saliva and foam impair the cooling system. At the end of an event, make sure a dog has access to water, but be sure to wait until panting slows down before allowing a dog to drink a large volume of water.

HELPING YOUR BIRD DOG RECOVER AND BOOST IMMUNITY

It is equally important to help your hardworking bird dog recover after a long day afield. Continue feeding a high-protein/high-fat performance dog food, increasing the amount fed during multiple-day hunts.

Maximize your bird dog's muscles' nutrient uptake 30 minutes after exercise by feeding a nutritional supplement, such as the *Purina Pro Plan SPORT ReFUEL* nutritional supplement bar. The ReFUEL bar is specially formulated to deliver a targeted portion size of rapidly digested carbohydrates to enable glucose to enter the bloodstream when fed within 30 minutes of the completion of exercise when muscles are maximized for sugar uptake and glycogen replenishment.



It's important to feed a complete and balanced high-performance dog food, such as *Purina Pro Plan SPORT Performance 30/20 Formula*, to sustain a hardworking bird dog's energy needs in the grouse woods. Visit proplan.com/dogs/platforms/sport to learn more about the *Purina Pro Plan SPORT* nutritional platform and how quality nutrition is vital to a sporting dog's success. Then, share how *Purina Pro Plan* brand dog food has helped your canine athlete gain a performance edge by writing a review at proplan.com/reviews.



Constant travel and long, tough days afield also can take a toll on a dog's digestive system. Just as a dog needs food to sustain his energy needs, his immune system also must be fed. *Purina Pro Plan Veterinary Diets FortiFlora* canine nutritional supplement contains a special strain of probiotic, *Enterococcus faecium* SF68, that has been proven to promote intestinal health and balance. Prescribed by veterinarians, *FortiFlora* may help manage the stress of travel or unfamiliar environments that can disrupt a sporting dog's digestive system. The supplement contains guaranteed amounts of live active cultures and has been shown to be safe, stable and effective in restoring normal intestinal health and balance.

CREATING STRESS-FREE TRAVEL

Traveling isn't restful for dogs that require a high level of athleticism for optimal performance, so it's important to train your dog how to travel and handle stress well. Practice by introducing puppies to travel, taking them on short rides in your truck once or twice a week, such as when you run errands. They should be acclimated to being around other dogs and new places. Practice feeding them in the box on the truck or on a tie-out chain. This training also helps you identify dogs that don't travel well and devise strategies for them to cope.

While traveling, allow extra time to stop and air out your dog. When stopping for the night, choose a quiet place free of distractions so your dog can log some quality sleep. Try to park away from other trucks where it is not busy. Make sure your dog has soft, dry bedding so he can rest comfortably.

In order to diminish impaired performance while on the road, feed your dog one meal per day, a minimum of 10 to 12 hours before exercise, such as the night before a hunt. Eating creates an insulin spike that inhibits its ability to use fat, the most important energy fuel. Hardworking dogs should not be fed before exercise, as complete digestion takes from 20 to 24 hours and doing so could result in the retention of fecal matter in the colon that could compromise performance by adding extra weight. Exercise alters the gastrointestinal transit time and can change nutrient digestion and absorption resulting in a decrease of blood flow, and therefore oxygen, to the gut. 🐾