

# TRAINING A DOG FOR HGH

## THE TRAFFIC

By Ulf Kintzel

When moving a flock of sheep on public roads to a new location, it naturally occurs that there is traffic. It is the shepherd's duty to make sufficient room to let traffic pass. This is not an easy task considering the ever increasing volume and speed of traffic today.

I'd like to add a little personal remark at this point: I grew up in the countryside in East Germany with a population density comparable to Montana with very little traffic. Those days I was looking forward to meeting cars on the road when moving sheep just for the sake of practice. Nowadays I try to avoid traffic whenever I can.

When a car is approaching, the dog needs to move the flock over to the right-hand side of the road by moving in between the car and the flock in order to make sufficient room for the car to pass. The dog must not split any sheep off the flock, since those animals are at risk of running into the vehicle and damaging it or becoming injured as a result.

In order to work in traffic, the dog should have absolutely no fear of a car, truck, tractor, etc. and should also have no desire to chase or attack vehicles. Unfortunately, that is not always the case. The dog also needs to have solid nerves since there is sometimes very little room between car and flock. Weak nerved dogs have the tendency to either refuse to go along the flock in between the livestock and the car or try to go around the other side of the car. In either case the shepherd will not be able to let a car pass.

Also, there is a big difference between traffic approaching from the front of the flock and traffic approaching from the rear. The traffic from the front will proceed one way or another since vehicle and flock are moving in opposite directions. The traffic from the rear is the bigger difficulty.

In order to teach the dog to work in traffic, one can begin simply by parking a vehicle close to the border the dog is working while the sheep are grazing and are stationary. Of course, the car will be parked outside and not inside the graze so that the dog remains between car and flock. Next, the car should be parked with a running engine; and following that exercise, one can begin moving the car up and down along the border. Using this training technique, the dog becomes accustomed to a car as something that's just there and not at all unusual.

The next thing the dog needs to learn is that he may not move around the car. I like to start by putting the car on the border the dog is working. Now the dog must break the border and has two choices: either move into the graze in between the car and the flock, or to go around the other side of the vehicle. I encourage the dog to correctly move in between the car and the flock by calling him in a nice manner and then guiding the dog

along the car. If the dog makes an attempt to go around the vehicle I give it a very strong recall and immediately encourage the dog once it moves correctly. Should I not succeed with the firm recall, I quickly move around the opposite side of the car and force the dog back. Again, I immediately encourage the dog when it starts moving correctly between the car and the flock.

The command I use when I want the dog to move between the car and the sheep is “*Komm rein*” (Come in). This command is always given in a supportive and friendly way, not in a firm manner.

After such training it is time to take the traffic work “on the road.” A farm road would be suitable. Again, I start with a parked vehicle, eliminating the necessity of a second person to drive the car.

By now the dog should already be very familiar with moving the flock. (Trying to simultaneously teach the dog to move the sheep and work in traffic won’t be successful). Now I basically repeat the same steps with the car as described above (parked car; parked car with running engine; moving vehicle). The difference is that the sheep are now led on the road and not grazing in the pasture.

The more solidly the traffic exercises are taught, the more difficult the training gets. The car will be moved closer and closer against the flock so that the dog must make room for the car to pass.

Last but not least, I would like to add a suggestion for those who must actually move sheep on public roads as opposed to those who only herd sheep for sport. Real life is different than sport. Unlike the instructed driver during an HGH trial, the drivers on public roads often aren’t familiar with sheep and the shepherd must always be on the alert for potential risks.

I always let a car approach and slow down first before I make an attempt to make room for the car to proceed so that there is no confusion about when, where and how the driver may proceed past the flock. I never make room as the vehicle approaches, because by doing so some drivers will sustain a high speed while moving past the flock and put sheep and dog at high risk. I also provide additional security when moving on a public road by employing two escorts: one driving a vehicle ahead of me and the flock, and the other following directly behind. These escorts secure dangerous places and intersections with a red flag and/or warning flashers turned on.



Real work in a real life situation: Anton vom Quasliner Moor is making room for the truck to pass.