

# **Mantrailers: Bloodhounds Used in Wildlife Law Enforcement**

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*Abstract:* Bloodhounds used as mantrailers can be an invaluable instrument in wildlife law enforcement. The human body consists of approximately 60 trillion cells which are constantly dying and being sloughed off at the rate of about 50 million cells per second. These dead cells are acted on by bacteria which causes them to give off a gaseous odor. Each odor is slightly different, creating a unique, individual, human odor which may determine the fate of a wildlife law violator.

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Bloodhounds have been used as trackers as early as the sixteenth century. These early predecessors of the modern bloodhound were used to hunt mainly poachers and sheep thieves. The testimony of the animals was so highly regarded that they were given the legal right to follow a trail anywhere, including private homes. A man who refused to allow a trailing bloodhound to enter his home was assumed to be involved in the crime. The hounds were considered to be a great deterrent to crime, as lawbreakers naturally had a greater fear of being trailed to their homes in the morning than they did of being caught at the scene by watchmen in the dark of night.

Modern day bloodhounds used as mantrailers can be an effective tool in the wildlife officer's arsenal against lawbreakers. The first step in beginning a mantrailing team is choosing a dog handler. A handler must be dedicated. That is, they will need more than a sporadic "work when I can" attitude. Just as the dog must be in good physical condition and be properly trained, so must the handler. A person who is not in good physical condition will not be able to keep up with a dog on a long, hard trail. Consequently a good "find" may be lost and your reputation as a handler, as well as the reputations of all bloodhounds and their handlers may suffer.

Finding a bloodhound can be a challenge in itself. My dog, "Dawg," was donated to me by Fort Pillow State Prison in Tennessee. Prisons provide an excellent source for obtaining a dog and may save a department hundreds of dollars in purchasing costs.

Choosing your bloodhound should not be a task taken lightly. Take time to

make a good choice. Observe the litter of pups on several occasions. Note which pup is the most active and aggressive of the litter. The sex of the dog is not important, however, pedigree is. Be sure your dog is AKC registered. Courts may require that the dog be registered when using probably cause or evidence discovered through use of the dog.

Training a bloodhound is a process that begins the day you get the pup and continues until the death of the dog. Your bloodhound cannot be a hobby for you, nor can it be a leisure activity when you "have nothing else to do." A rigorous training schedule must be established and followed diligently to produce both a good mantrailing bloodhound and handler. There are several different methods of training bloodhounds; however, each handler will develop his own training style.

Briefly, some of the training methods that I used are as follows: I began by allowing my pup to chase me, right at my feet, throughout the house and yard. The distance increased eventually. The next step was to hide partially behind an object, in slight view of the pup while someone held him. Then the pup was released. When the pup was released and he found me, praise was given to him. These are the basics that I used in all my training. The distances should become greater until you are completely out of the dog's sight. This will require him to use his nose to find you. Things such as scent articles, subject identification, older trails, different environments, backtracks, scent discrimination, and multiple subject tracks will be encountered later in training. Training should not become a tiring task for the dog. The bloodhound should perceive it as a fun game.

The potentials for use of a bloodhound in wildlife law enforcement are limited only by the creativity of the wildlife officer that handles the dog. During the past 19 months, my bloodhound has been utilized in the investigations of several wildlife violations. "Dawg's" success rate on actual case tracks is 55.5%. This figure is not a fair assessment of his ability. Several of the tracks pursued ended up with a suspect in custody before the track was finished. Some tracks ended when the suspect escaped in an automobile, making it impossible to continue. If these tracks were counted as "finds," the success rate would be 88%.

Here are 2 examples of "Dawg" being used successfully in wildlife law enforcement:

#### Case 1

On 25 November 1989, wildlife officers and the supervisor from Area 12, located in Southwest Tennessee, had organized a spotlight enforcement detail. This detail consisted of 4 ground units and a fixed-wing aircraft. During the operation a vehicle was spotted shining fields in rural Hardeman County. The officer in the aircraft advised the ground units, and they moved in. When the ground units approached the suspects, a high speed pursuit followed. It ended when the suspects' car turned down a dead end road. All 5 occupants of the vehicle disappeared into the woods. My bloodhound "Dawg" arrived on the scene 2 hours later. He was scented on the suspects' car seat and was commanded to "find him." Approximately 45 minutes later "Dawg" was licking the face of 1 of the suspects, who was lying

on his back in a thicket. Subsequent investigation led to the arrest and conviction of 5 poachers. The poachers were convicted of 12 counts, paid \$1,500 in fines and court costs, and had their 30-06 rifle confiscated.

## Case 2

On 23 September 1990, at approximately 0700 hours, I received a call from a sportsman. He advised me that a white-tailed deer had been shot on his property about 30 minutes prior to his call. Officer Brain Thompson went to the eastern end of the search area in an attempt to locate the poacher. The sportsman and I, along with "Dawg," went to the location where the deer had been found. Upon arrival we discovered that the deer had been moved. "Dawg" was scented on the human scent where the deer had been and was commended to "find him." "Dawg" tracked the poacher to where he had dragged the deer. The deer had been partially butchered and covered with leaves. "Dawg" tracked the poacher beyond the deer to a location where it appeared that the man had mounted an All Terrain Vehicle (ATV). "Dawg" then tracked the poacher through a maze of trails. We had been tracking the man about 2.4 km when "Dawg" broke out into the backyard of a house, led me to and by an ATV parked in the yard, and pulled me to the open backdoor of the house. At that point, "Dawg" put his feet on the screen door and barked. Looking inside I could see the suspect processing the deer meat. Subsequent arrest, conviction, and confiscation of equipment were made. This would have been another unsolved case without the aid of a bloodhound. My bloodhound has helped to solve several other wildlife cases that otherwise would have remained a mystery.

Once a bloodhound is available, several other uses of the bloodhound may be utilized. When persons attempt to conceal game in the excess of their bag limit, a bloodhound can be used to lead you to the hunter's stash. Some poachers have started using drop guns. When the pressure is on, they will hide their gun and exit the woods, posing as a non-hunter. A bloodhound can track the trail back to the gun. Of an area has been reported as being baited, after the hunter has gone into the woods, the dog can be scented on the hunter's vehicle and he will lead you to the hunter and possibly his bait. The possibilities for uses in wildlife law enforcement are endless.

Each year it seems as if public relations and public awareness are moved a notch higher on a wildlife officer's priority list. With the limited time an officer has to devote to these responsibilities, a dog with a face "that only a mother could love" can be a great asset. In my community, support and awareness was at an all time high when "Dawg" aided in the capture of 2 dangerous prisoners who had escaped and been at large in the county for 2 days. Persons that would usually sneer at the game warden were complimenting the dog and wanting to know more about the agency. The news media, (television and newspaper), gave excellent publicity after each find that "Dawg" made. Local businesses donated dog food and a neighboring county donated communications equipment. Organizations such as Boy Scouts of America, schools, rescue squads, etc., asked for personal appearances. These appearances included distribution of information about my agency, as well as infor-

mation about "Dawg." "Dawg" has become a catalyst in an information and education effort between the agency and the community.

My bloodhound "Dawg," is made available to any law enforcement agency that requests him. To date, we have assisted 12 state, county, and city law enforcement agencies. This service is on an as needed basis 24 hours a day and accounts for many sleepless nights. While assisting other law enforcement agencies, "Dawg" has found runaway children, armed robbers, escaped prisoners, car thieves, burglars, and criminals of various backgrounds. All of these successful finds enhance "Dawg's" credibility, the use of evidence discovered by "Dawg," and the use of bloodhounds by wildlife officers in the future as a means of "making the case."