

Gundog Phrases and Words

Below are some terms you may hear or need to use when involved in Gundog training and handling. Please note people may use completely different commands – it is what works for each dog and handler. The list is not exhaustive.

Back - a verbal command commonly used to indicate to your dog to proceed in a straight line until finding a dummy/bird. Often associated with 'blind retrieves' rather than 'marked retrieves'.

Beating - on a Shoot day, walking in a line with other 'Beaters' and their dogs over land, under the direction of a 'Gamekeeper' with the aim of 'flushing' game birds out over the 'Guns' who are standing at their 'pegs' waiting to shoot.

Biddable - a dog displaying intelligence, skill and an openness to learning.

Blind retrieve - a dummy/bird retrieve where the dog has no

idea of its whereabouts and requires direction from the 'handler'.

Cold game - dead 'game' such as pheasant, duck, partridge etc., which is cold stored and used for retrieving practice.

Cover - Vegetation, such as shrubs, crops etc. serving as protective concealment for wild animals.

Creep/creeping - a term used to describe a 'gundog' that is becoming gradually unsteady by virtue of it creeping forward at the 'sit'.

Dead - a verbal command given to a dog to release the held retrieved dummy/bird.

Drive - A Driven Shoot is typically broken down into 'Drives'. Specific areas on the land that where 'beaters' systematically beat 'game' towards a line of waiting 'Guns'. A Shoot may comprise of one or more 'Drives'. Six separate 'Drives' with a break between each one is a common number per day.

Driven Shoot - an organised Shoot where gamebirds are 'driven' over a waiting line of 'Guns' by 'beaters' and their dogs.

Dummy - often made of canvas type material, used for gundog retrieving.

Eyewipe – an unused chance to find and retrieve 'game' whilst that same 'game' is picked by another dog, or in the case of a 'Field Trial'; another dog, by the Judges or by order of the Judges.

Field Trial - a competition where gundogs compete against one another. Field Trials are held on live 'game' that is shot for the purpose of that Field Trial. They mirror, as closely as possible, a day's shooting. Field Trials can compose of one or more Stakes - Novice, All Age and Open, which reflects the experience and/or Awards the dog has won.

First dog down - 'Field Trial' term used to describe a not used chance to find and retrieve a supposedly wounded item of 'game'.

Flush - a gundog that actually 'flushes'/finds game, typically hiding in 'cover' for the 'Gun'/hunter to shoot.

FTAW - stands for 'Field Trial Award Winner' where a dog that has won an award at a Field Trial e.g. Certificate of Merit (COM) or higher but not actually won the Trial.

FTW - Stands for 'Field Trial Winner'. A dog that has actually been placed first/won a 'Field Trial'.

FTCh - Stands for 'Field Trial Champion'. A dog that has won at least three days' worth of Field Trial 'Open Stakes'.

Game - any bird or ground animal legally hunted for sport, such as pheasant, partridge, grouse, rabbit or hare.

Game bag - a bag, usually of leather or canvas, for carrying 'game'.

Gamekeeper - a person employed to take care of 'game' and wildlife.

Get in - a verbal command given to a gundog typically meaning to 'get in' a body of water.

Get on - as per the command 'back', commonly used to tell your dog to proceed in a straight line until it finds a dummy/bird.

Get out - a verbal command given to a gundog meaning to go either left or right depending on the arm direction of the 'handler'.

Go back - as per the verbal command 'back', commonly used to indicate to your dog to proceed in a straight line until finding a dummy/bird. Often associated with 'blind retrieves' rather than 'marked retrieves'.

Grouse Shooting - Grouse shooting involves birds being 'driven' above 'Guns' by 'beaters', so they can be easily targeted by the Guns, which are located in butts (a shooting hide hidden behind a turf or stone wall). The grouse season officially starts on August 12th of every year and ends on November 30th in Northern Ireland and December

10th in England, Scotland and Wales.

Gundog - any dog that has been trained to help a hunter.

Guns - members of a Shooting Party i.e. those actually carrying guns and subsequently shooting game on the shoot day.

Gun shyness - a dog that is scared of loud noises, in particular the sound of gunfire.

Handler - a broad term relating to anyone in charge of a gundog.

Hard mouth - a dog that regularly punctures/damages game during a retrieve. Considered to be a major fault in gundogs.

Hi lost - a verbal command given to a gundog meaning to 'hunt there'.

Long line - a very long, often 9m or more, training lead. Used to assist with recall or help with 'steadiness' issues.

Marked retrieve - 'game' or 'dummy' that has fallen and has been 'marked' i.e. actually seen by the 'gundog'.

Memory back/retrieve - 'game' or 'dummy' that was placed in view of a 'gundog' but a significant amount of time and distance has elapsed before the dog is actually sent for the retrieve.

Out - a verbal command given to a gundog meaning to go either left or right depending on the arm direction given by the 'handler'.

Over - a verbal command meaning to 'jump' or 'get over' any obstacle be that a body of water; a fence; ditch or fallen tree etc.

Peg - typically a numbered wooden stake driven into the ground to indicate the spot where a 'Gun' must stand during a Shoot 'Drive'.

Peg dog - a dog that sits next to a 'peg' and it's 'handler', the 'Gun' during a Shoot and retrieves the Gun's shot game on command. Such a dog should be 'steady'.

Pheasant Shooting - common throughout the UK, Pheasant Shooting usually involves birds being 'driven' above a line of

waiting 'Guns' by 'beaters'.

Alternatively, pheasant shooting can also involve the birds being 'flushed' by dogs or even by man as in the case of a 'Rough Shoot'. The season officially starts on October 1st of every year and ends on January 30th in Northern Ireland and February 1st in England, Scotland and Wales.

Picking up - on a Shoot day, a handler and his/her dog who stands well behind the line of Guns and systematically retrieves the dead or injured 'game'.

Pricked - a bird that has been shot and potentially injured but not killed.

Running in - when a dog leaves a 'handler' without permission with the intention to retrieve a dummy/bird.

Rough Shoot - an informal Shoot whereby one Gun or more walks through an estate/private land and shoots at 'game' as they rise or run before them.

Runner - a shot and injured bird that runs along the ground and requires 'picking up' immediately by a dog so that it can be humanely dispatched.

Run-off - an additional gundog test at a 'Field Trial' or 'Working Test' used when the Judges have been unable to separate two, or sometimes more, dogs for an award.

Slip lead - chosen lead of most gundog 'handlers'. Usually made of rope or leather, a slip lead is a combination of both a dog lead and a dog collar allowing quick control/quick release of the dog.

Soft mouth - a dog that will pick up and hold 'game' softly but firmly on the retrieve, meaning that he/she will not puncture or damage it.

Steady/steadiness - a dog that sits still when a bird or other game rises or even a dummy thrown; as a gun is fired.

There - a verbal command given to a gundog meaning to 'hunt there'.

Under - a verbal command given to a gundog meaning to get under a gap in a fence etc. rather than jump or 'get over' it.

Working Test - a competition at which gundogs compete in turn, against one another. Held usually in spring and summer by gundog clubs where they use canvas dummies rather than 'game'. A Working Test may comprise of three or more actual tests during the day - each one designed to test the gundogs hunting, retrieving, steadiness and handling skills. Each test is marked out of a total score of 20. The gundog accumulating the highest score overall for that day, wins.