



CONSERVATION DOGS OF HAWAII

Dog-handler team candidates for CDH are required to have a minimum of 1 year of experience with scent work, including a well-rounded understanding of odor dynamics, target odor imprinting, and indication training. Dogs must be highly food- or toy-motivated, and be temperamentally stable and confident, including being comfortable with strangers, other dogs, new environments and loud noises. Certain projects require the dog to have minimal or no prey drive towards live animals. Dogs and their handlers should be physically fit enough to conduct up to 2 hours of field work in a variety of terrain and weather conditions. Meeting the above criteria does not guarantee that a dog-handler team will be accepted into our program, however if you and your dog pass an assessment test, we will try to match you up with suitable projects as they become available.

Below are resources to help you and your dog get started on scent work.

TRAINING METHODOLOGY

Due to the environmental challenges associated with conservation field work and conservation-related target odors, it is recommended that a “direct reward” method is used rather than “indirect reward.”

A direct reward method develops the dog’s hunt drive by initially allowing the dog to hunt the environment for its primary reward (food or toy), eventually paired with target odor. A final response (indication or alert) is deferred until the later stages, after the dog has become sufficiently motivated to find the target odor and has developed good odor-sourcing skills. The dog is rewarded “at source,” so that he or she becomes conditioned to stay at the target odor after the find.

An indirect reward method teaches the target odor and a final response to the dog first in controlled environments using scent racks and containers, then asks the dog to hunt for and alert on the target odor in later stages. In an indirect reward method, a dog is typically marked (clicked) for offering the final response at source (target odor), then the handler rewards the dog away from source. While this may work for some high drive dogs, many pet dogs will find this method too obedience-intensive and/or the dogs will not learn effective odor-sourcing skills, resulting in unwanted side effects.

More details are available on the following podcast “Direct vs Indirect Detection Protocols”:

<http://controlledaggressionpodcast.com/2019/04/036-direct-v-indirect-detection-protocols/>

“Match to Sample” training is not recommended either, where the handler allows the dog to sniff a novel item, then hides that item for the dog to find.

IN PERSON SCENT WORK CLASSES

Depending on which island you’re on, there may be an instructor that teaches scent work (or nose work) classes. In-person classes are a great way to learn, as the instructor can give you coaching and guidance specific to you and your dog.

Oahu



CONSERVATION DOGS OF HAWAII

Marie Selarque of Prodog Hawaii

Certified Professional Dog Trainer

<https://prodoghawaii.com/>

Ginger Reyes of Ginger Snaps Training

gingersnapstraining@gmail.com

Elle Nakamura of Akamai Dog Training

<https://www.akamaidogtraining.com/>

Big Island

Mary Clarose of Hilo Obedience Club

AKC Scent Work Judge

https://www.apps.akc.org/apps/club_search/index_master.cfm?club_id=914

Teri Rolph of Pawsitive Pals Plus

Certified Nose Work Instructor with National Association of Canine Scent Work

<https://www.pawsitivepalsplus.com/>

ONLINE SCENT WORK RESOURCES

If you cannot attend an in-person class in your area, the following resources will help you get started:

The Parker Videos - How One Dog Got Started in K9 Nose Work

This instructional documentary shows how one dog got started on scent work. You have the option to purchase a physical DVD or to watch it online.

- Go to the following website: <https://www.dogwise.com>
- Search for “The Parker Videos.” Both DVD and Streaming options will appear.

Scent Work University Online Course

Additionally, you may attend a 6-week online course that will take you through the foundation skills with the same methodology that is taught in the Parker Videos:

<https://www.scentworku.com/foundation-sniffing-program/Introduction-to-Scent-Work>

- Or visit www.ScentWorkU.com
- Navigate to Train Your Dog → Online Courses → Foundation Sniffing Program → Introduction to Scent Work
- You will have the option to attend as a Watcher or Auditor if you prefer not to submit homework assignments.



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- Please use the promo code KYOKOTHANKS to get a 10% discount.

It is recommended that you have your dog search for food/treats or toy rather than a target odor during this introductory phase, as there are important skills to learn and assessments to make that are more easily done with food or toy, including:

- Determine if your dog is motivated to search for food or toy (if not, your dog will most likely not be motivated to search for a target odor)
- Determine what food or toy rewards are the most motivating for your dog
- Teach your dog to search independently, without handler help, through self-rewarding on food or toy
- Teach your dog to navigate around obstacles to find their food or toy reward
- Build your dog's focus around environmental distractions through self-reward

Beyond the Introduction to Scent Work course, you may choose to take courses such as Advanced Skills with Primary, Introduction to Birch (learn how to imprint your dog on a target odor), Reading Your Dog, Skill Building for Elevated Hides, and more. The target odors used in these classes are standardized across multiple sport scent work organizations for competition purposes. However you may replace the target odor with something else if desired. It's recommended that you start with an "easy" odor first, i.e. something that is obvious to the dog and is not commonly found in the environment.

Examples of potential target odors:

- Spice such as cumin, but not something common like pepper
- Essential oil such as tea tree or frankincense, but not something common like lavender or eucalyptus

Puppies will ideally search for primary reward (food, toy) until they get past their fear periods, otherwise they may inadvertently develop a negative association with the target odor.