

BIRD DOG TRAINING SURVEY SUMMARY

February 12, 2024

The department initiated two surveys to determine the participation in the first year of the bird dog training season. One survey was part of the routine upland game bird telephone survey where upland game bird hunters were asked if they participated in training bird dogs, and the other was an email invitation to holders of bird dog training licenses to participate in an online survey of the activities. The results presented here are preliminary and have not been corrected for nonresponse biases.

In 2023, the department sold 314 resident and 110 nonresident bird dog training licenses. A telephone survey of upland game bird hunters (110,775 resident and 42,075 nonresident licenses issued) indicated that about 8.3% of residents and 9.2% of nonresidents identified that they trained bird dogs during the last year. The number of dog training licenses issued was likely an underestimate of the number of individuals that intended to train bird dogs during the first year (some hunters may not have known they needed it in year one) and the phone survey likely represented an overestimate because hunters may not have clearly understood that a bird dog training season existed (in other words, they considered themselves to be training during the upland bird hunting season). Of the hunters contacted by phone, about half of the residents (48.1%) and the nonresidents (57.7%) trained bird dogs on private land exclusively, whereas 31.1% of residents and 24.4% of nonresidents trained exclusively on public land. The remaining 18.9% of residents and 17.9% of nonresidents trained equally on public and private land. Resident bird dog trainers made use of public land to a greater extent than did nonresident bird dog trainers.

Based on the online survey, of those residents that purchased the dog training license, 39.5% actually participated in some type of training on wild birds, and 1.7% participated in commercial training. For nonresidents that purchased the license, 41.8% participated in any type of training and 3.6% participated in commercial training. The majority of residents and nonresidents that purchased the licenses did not participate in training bird dogs. Resident response rate to the online survey was 80% and nonresident response rate was 71%.

Resident respondents trained a total of 22 dogs commercially for 180 days (8.3 days/dog), whereas they trained 166 dogs for 1,579 days (9.4 days/dog) recreationally. Nonresidents trained a total of 22 dogs commercially for 35 days (1.6 days/dog), whereas they trained 79 dogs for 213 days (2.7 days/dog) recreationally. Nonresidents seem to spend fewer days/dog training dogs than do residents, and commercial trainers seem to spend fewer days/dog than do recreational trainers.

Commercial respondents were few in number, but they reported training on public and private relatively equally for both resident and nonresident trainers. About half of all recreational trainers trained exclusively on public land regardless of residency. About 20-30% of recreational trainers trained on private land exclusively, with the remainder spending time equally in public and private lands.

Nonresident trainers spent a disproportionate amount of time in Region 6 (only 2 total commercial trainers, but over half (13) of recreational trainers trained in Region 6. Resident commercial trainers seemed to focus in Regions 1 and 4 (only 3 total), but resident recreational trainers spent

time in Regions 3 (22), 4 (20), 5 (17), 6 (10), and 7 (4). Resident recreational trainers participated in these regions to a far greater extent than did any other category of dog trainer.

Residents trained dogs primarily on gray partridge (30%), sharptailed grouse (27.2%), and pheasant (23.9%), but also trained on mountain grouse (10.6%) and sage-grouse (5.6%) to a lesser amount. Nonresidents trained dogs primarily on sharptailed grouse (44%) and gray partridge (32%), but also trained on pheasants (12%), mountain grouse (8%), and sage-grouse (4%) to a lesser extent. Overall, nonresidents participation comprised only 10.8% of the reported numbers and 12.4% of the days training according to responses to the online survey of licensed trainers.