



Nine years ago I was invited to meet with fellow Dalmatian owner, Annette Guillame, at Chatfield State Park south of Denver. She had volunteered to lay tracks for my two 8 month old puppies. We had such fun that day. The puppies immediately took to tracking, and I loved watching them have such a good time doing something that came naturally. It was one of those puppies that became the first Dalmatian Champion Tracker several years later. At 8 ½ years of age, tracking is still her favorite activity. Since then I have certified 2 other Dals and earned a TD on one. Sadly the other had cancer, and passed on before passing a test. I am now training my TD dog for his VST and TDX tests, and have recently started tracking another puppy. I have come to love tracking with my Dalmatians, and am delighted to say they all enjoy the sport.

It is my belief that any Dalmatian can track. While it is easier to start them as puppies, I've seen some good tracking dogs that started their tracking careers later in life. Dals have the energy and the intelligence to track. They are good at problem solving and they are creative. Most are food motivated. They love the small rewards that are received when they find an article on the track, and don't forget the jackpots with the glove at the end of the track.

I am fortunate to be a member of the Denver Foothills Tracking Association which is comprised of many individuals who are dedicated to the sport of tracking. We meet to lay tracks for one another each Tues. Those who work during the week meet on Saturdays. The members of this club host 10 tests per year and often work tracking tests for national specialties or breed clubs when their tests are held in the Denver area. There are several judges in our group as well as people who have tracked for many years. Finding a good group with whom to track makes training fun and a great learning experience at the same time. If you cannot find a tracking group in your area, start your own. Get some of your dog friends interested in tracking, and lay tracks for one another.

There are many tracking clubs in the United States. To learn if there is a club near you, search 'tracking clubs' on the AKC website.

To read the tracking regulations search 'tracking regulations' on the AKC website. It's advisable to read completely through the regulations to get a good idea of what tracking involves. Look at the question and answer page for tracking on the AKC website. While I don't agree with their advice to start a dog at 4 months of age (I like to start mine from the whelping box with scenting activities) nor do I agree that you should just do TD work initially (I start my pups on pavement as well as grass), there is good information on this page. The Dogwise website lists many good tracking books at <http://www.dogwise.com/Browse/SubCatList.cfm?SubCat=Tracking> .

If you receive the Events with the AKC Gazette, you can check to see if there are any tracking tests being given in your area. If so, go to a test to observe. It is fascinating to watch the dogs working their tracks. Better yet, contact the club giving the test and volunteer to work. There is always a need for workers. I worked my first test as a stake pounder on plotting day (done the day before the test.) I didn't need to know anything about plotting tracks, but gained valuable information listening to the judges as they planned each track.

There is also a tracking list on Smart Groups. You can learn about this list at: <http://www.smartgroups.com/groups/tracking>

Tracking is fun for the dogs and their handlers. It is my hope that as you search for and read through information on tracking, that you will try it with your Dalmatians. It is quite different from other dog sports as the dog is in charge, and the handler has to learn to read what the dog is doing. Give it a try. Happy tracking.

Tana Rugg, Monumental Dalmatians.