



# The pup is growing up!

**As Emrys heads into adulthood, Lez Graham is working on all fronts to move his training on – from his behaviour with other dogs to improving his marked retrieves in a variety of cover**

Every day's a school day when you live with a pack of dogs isn't it? As Emrys emerges into full blown adulthood, it's been an interesting time in the Graham household.

Dog behaviour is something that has fascinated me for years and I love just sitting and watching the dogs interact – unfortunately, like most animals (ourselves included) once they become aware of being watched their behaviour changes.

At 14 months, Emrys is still quite immature at times, and unless he makes a concerted play at raising his status, or I bring a younger dog in, he's likely to stay that way for another year or so, due to our other dogs being much older than him.

Spud and Emrys are fine providing Dante isn't around; as far as Spud is concerned Dante is his, and he can get quite guarding over him. Emrys is doing what most young adult males do and is pushing his luck, and winding Spud up, and so I'm having to keep an eye on them to make sure a lip curl from Spud doesn't escalate into a fight, as there are times when Spud's lip curl triggers the 'zoomies', with Emrys rushing seriously close to Spud's snapping mouth.

There have also been a couple of three-way 'Mexican standoffs' in the office which I managed to watch on my phone over my shoulder; the latest was Emrys getting nose to nose with Dante

and Dante freezing so as not to cause conflict, and Spud freezing and glaring at Emrys for getting so close to Dante.

Honestly, it's been like a schoolyard in the office at times, but the different displays of dominance and rank signalling is so interesting and something everyone with more than a couple of dogs gets to be lucky enough to observe.

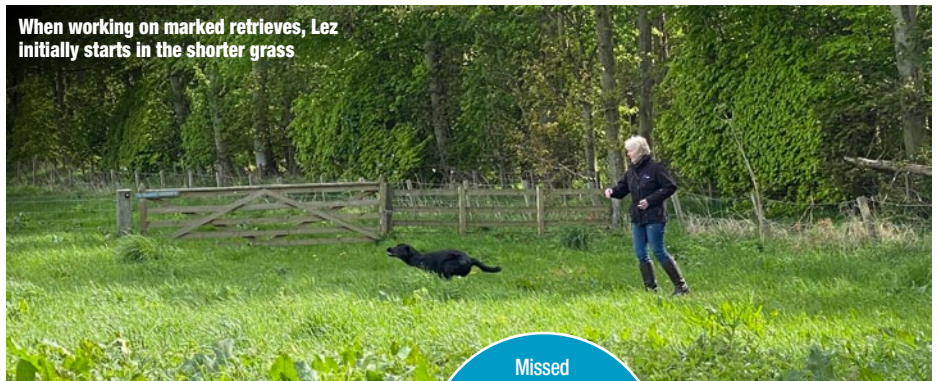
## Planning for the future

Earlier in the month, we took Emrys through to the Royal (Dick) School of Veterinary Studies to get his eyes checked. Although I don't know if I'm going to breed from Emrys or not, getting him

### LEZ'S TOP TIP

Although trainer hopping isn't a great thing to do as it can leave you and your dog confused and demoralised, it may take you a few attempts to find one that really suits you, your dog, and your training style. Take some time to do a bit of research and have a chat to them before booking a place on a course or a one to one... and remember, a great trainer should be able to explain why you're doing something, as well as how to train it, and not just have you go through the motions.

When working on marked retrieves, Lez initially starts in the shorter grass



Missed the start of Emrys's diary? Head to [magsdirect.co.uk](http://magsdirect.co.uk) for previous issues of Sporting Shooter.

Emrys wasn't the only one who struggled to pinpoint the mark in the dense deep greenery



PICTURES: LEZ GRAHAM

**ABOUT LEZ GRAHAM**

Lez Graham is author of The Pet Gundog series and a canine behaviourist and gundog trainer. Focused on training the next generation, she runs the Accredited Pet Gundog Instructor programme, which is now its sixth year.

Every book in The Pet Gundog series comes with one-year access to The Pet Gundog Online training app (£19.99, amazon.co.uk)

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health tested now is key as if the results aren't spot on, then the decision is made for me.

It was very strange handing him over in the car park to the vet nurse; even though most vets are back to normal in Scotland post-lockdown, the Royal Dick, being a teaching hospital, have kept the restrictions in place. Needless to say, his eyes are perfect, which is awesome... so that's one set of tests down. Two to go.

We also headed across to the Scottish Borders again to do some more training with Joe Hipwell of Sealpin Gundogs, which was great fun. One of the fields is pretty much covered in dock leaves of various heights at the minute, and as it's not something that I have close to home to train in we headed into that.

Starting in the shorter area, Joe set us up for a couple of straightforward marked retrieves which Emrys had no problem with. However, within a short period of time, it highlighted that I'd fallen into the trap that many of us do when training on our own – not sufficiently varying the distance of marked retrieves. I've made a concerted effort to vary the distances of my memory retrieves, and thought I had with the marks too, but once Joe started throwing for us it quickly became clear

**'I've made an effort to vary the distances of my retrieves, but once Joe started throwing it was clear that I hadn't varied them enough!'**



Joe Hipwell took Lez and Emrys into a variety of cover to help mix up the training

that I hadn't varied them enough. One for the homework book methinks.

We then headed over to the other side of the field where the dock leaves were taller and denser, to do some split retrieves and a bit of hunting. It was so interesting working Emrys in a different type of cover. We have fields of white grass near me and I tend to do most of the

hunting in that as well as the 'bluebell type' grasses in the woods; however, these lush verdant leaves were something else for my young dog and he struggled at times to pinpoint where the dummy had landed. I have to admit that Emrys wasn't the only one who struggled with it, so we've both got to work on our marking before we head back down to play. ■



The first time training moved out to this area of dense dock leaves really challenged Emrys