

# Antlers and Rottweilers...

## What Is Up With That?



By Diane Richardson

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Rob Richardson and Itsy

I am sure you are wondering what antlers have to do with Rottweilers. Antlers are the skull ornamentation of the deer family (Moose, Elk, Red Deer, Mule Deer, Whitetail Deer, Caribou, etc.). They are made up of bone and are grown, shed and dropped naturally every year by the males (and females, too, in the case of Caribou and Reindeer). These shed antlers are of value as collectibles, and for making furniture, knives, and crafts and more. Very large sets are worth a good amount of money, and even the small sets can be worth a few dollars.

In the Western United States, these shed antlers are somewhat easy to find, especially on the plains. However, in other places, they can be very hard to spot. Some enterprising hunter types discovered that to dogs, antlers are just bones and that many dogs take fairly easily to being taught how to "hunt" for them. These dogs are called "Antler dogs" or "Shed hunting dogs." Most people use Labrador Retrievers, but not us!

My husband, Rob, is an avid Shed Hunter, and is the founding member of the NH Shed Hunter's Club. New England has Whitetail Deer and Moose, and is a VERY tough venue for searching for antlers because of the terrain, the fact that the animals are lower in numbers per acre, and because of the undergrowth. Prime time for antler hunting

here is around Christmas, and then again after the snow is no longer deep, but before "green up" when the trees and brush grow leaves. It is not uncommon to have waist-deep snow accumulated in the woods come February and March! There is also another hunting period in the fall. Fall antlers are often quite chewed up by rodents, bears and coyotes, unless you are lucky.

Rob decided that he needed an Antler Dog and since we have Rottweilers, that was the obvious choice for him. We chose a very driven and biddable pup for him from our "L" litter, born 2/08. This pup, named "Itsy," was taken out for one-on-one time with Rob starting at 5 weeks old, and given a very small antler to chew on and play with so that she would develop a fondness for them. At around 7 weeks old, Rob started to hide the antler in the furniture and under things, and encouraged Itsy to find it. At around 3 months old, Rob started taking Itsy outdoors for walks around the yard to "find" antlers he had planted for her.

Over several months' time, he worked with Itsy on and off, as well as teaching her to go hiking with him, stay near him and learn a good recall. This was also a time when she was familiarized with her "gear," which includes a collar with tags, a long line when needed, and a harness with a bell on it.

Itsy is still young, just 14 months old, and obviously still in training, but she has proven herself with some interesting finds thus far! She has found antlers, cow bones, pig bones, deer bones, and skulls of various animals. Remember, antlers are bones, and so any bone is a legitimate find.

"Green up" is starting here and the ticks are starting to get bad, so Rob and Itsy will soon have to take a few months off. But to date, the two of them have had a very good time, gotten lots of exercise, and have developed a very good relationship. Itsy also happens to be Rob's first Rottweiler that he has trained, and I think he has done a good job. They are a great team!



For articles on training puppies to find antlers, visit: <http://antlerdogs.com/news-articles.aspx>  
Click on "training antler dogs" to see a great many articles

For more information about the NH Shed Hunter's Club, visit [www.robrichardsonart.com/nhshedhuntersclub.html](http://www.robrichardsonart.com/nhshedhuntersclub.html)