

Adventures in Wildlife Recovery



By Diane Richardson

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Diane Richardson has been "in" Rottweilers since 1985 and Shiba Inu since 1995. She has taught families how to train their dogs since 1989 and taught competition Rally Obedience since 2005. Additionally, she first worked in, and then managed, boarding kennels and pet resorts from late 1989 to mid-2006. Diane has had articles published in various dog publications, has written several articles for the Rottweiler Quarterly, is a monthly correspondent for Front & Finish magazine, and has written a small book, "Life With Bea," from which she donates a portion of the proceeds to bone cancer and sub aortic stenosis research.

Wildlife Recovery Dogs are also known as Leashed Tracking Dogs and Blood Tracking Dogs. Regardless of what they are called, the goal is the same: to attempt to recover wounded deer, moose or bear that hunters cannot recover themselves.

We have waited several years for the use of a dog to recover wounded game to become legal in NH. In between training for her tracking titles, my Rottweiler girl Bea (U-CD B Mine vd Frolikind zu Frontier CD, RE, TD, TT, CGC) also trained as much as we legally could for the day when the new law was passed to allow the use of recovery dogs.

Finally, in 2007 that day came. However, we decided to wait to become NH State licensed Leashed Tracking Dog handlers until Bea was done with her human tracking tests. Unfortunately, I failed us in her first TDX (Tracking Dog Excellent) test in early 2007, and then we failed to get into another test in the fall of 2007. Sadly, Bea was taken from us by bone cancer in February 2008.

Luckily for us, all was not lost as Bea's three-year-old daughter, Annie (Frontier Komotion RN), also showed aptitude for this task. Late in the fall of 2008, we decided to allow her to give the job a try. We ended up taking only three calls. None of them turned out to be mortally wounded deer (all three will live to see another year), but Annie performed very well, especially considering she is not one of the typical small- to medium-sized breeds used for this task. Wire Haired Dachshunds and Bavarian Mountain Bloodhounds also known as the Bayerische Gebirgsschweisshund are the most commonly used breeds for wildlife recovery work.

For More Information on Blood Tracking
Tracking Dogs For Finding Wounded Deer
by John Jeanneney
<http://www.born-to-track.com>
<http://www.deersearch.org>
<http://www.unitedbloodtrackers.org/>



Diane Richardson & Frontier Komotion, RN - "Annie"

Excerpts from our work log

11/9/2008

We arrived home this evening and found a desperate voicemail from a guy that shot a deer and could not find it. This is Annie's first call since we became licensed, though she is still actually in training. I told the hunter that Annie is still in training and that I made no guarantees, BUT we were willing to come out if he wanted us to. He most surely did!

We got out to the site and started tracking at about 7:45, 12 hours after the deer had been shot. We started not at the site of the shot, but several yards down the trail at a bloody spot. Annie tracked very well to the end of blood and then spent several minutes casting about. She then locked on a track, followed it, lost it, found it, lost it. This repeated for a while and then she found more blood!

She found a teensy bit more blood a bit farther on and then lost the track again. Found it again and followed it to a mud puddle where she dug up some more blood and then we lost the track entirely.

We circled about and eventually a ways farther on, Annie locked on a track and dragged me about 300 yards to the edge of a field. It was late, and Annie was pooped out, so we came home and will go back out tomorrow and restart the track again.



The man was quite impressed with Annie, as was my husband, Rob. I was happy with her performance, but sad we did not get the deer. A first track AND in the pitch dark; she did very well and worked her darn heart out! Annie NEVER quit.

11/10/2008

Went out again this morning at 6:30 (almost 24 hours post shot) and got to see the point of impact. The shot and subsequent events were not how they were initially described, and we could tell the deer was likely not mortally wounded. All signs pointed for it to be an above-the-spine shot which stuns, but is not at all fatal.

We restarted the track from the beginning, and Annie tracked very well and exactly as last night, but got lots farther. We followed the deer to where it crossed a road with no sign of stopping to lay down. We quit after 2 hours and feel confident that the deer will live to see many more days.

Annie was upset at not finding the deer so we stopped at the taxidermist and got a hide for her. We will lay her a track later so she can "find" her deer. She did exceptionally well, was an excellent ambassador for the Rottweiler breed, and the hunter was grateful for her efforts, patting and hugging her in thanks for trying!

11/11/2008

Today we did lay Annie a track with the hide. Hubby diluted an ounce or two of blood in 10 ounces of water, made a fine occasional blood trail, and periodically dragged or touched the hide to the ground.

The track was just 150 yards long and two hours old, but it was good practice and Annie got to find her "deer" at the end which made her HAPPY.

11/14/2008

We only went (in the dark and with a light rain falling) because it sounded like a sure thing and was just 7 1/2 hours post shot, though it had been raining steadily and the animal was said to be a monster deer.

The hunter said he hit the deer in the shoulder. However, the deer went straight up over some nasty rocks and boulders with no trouble, and with no blood sign or physical impairment.

The point of impact had some hair and ONE drop of blood. There was a small bone chip and light blood about 50 yards in (bone chips from shoulder exit wounds

are normally at the shot site itself) for about 25 yards, and then nothing until a couple of blood splotches and then a bloody bed about 100 yards from the hit site. There was no blood to speak of after the bed.

Annie tracked fabulously from the point of impact, up over the boulders and straight up to where the six hunters had milled about at last blood. The area was so rucked up that instead of waiting for Annie to puzzle it out, I had them take me to the bed.

She tracked great off the bed, but this deer was NOT acting seriously hit at all. NO blood on the bushes at all, and very, very little on the ground. This deer went to amazing places and up amazing inclines. He then swam through a large pool and on the other side there was some blood on a hemlock, but then no blood at all. The deer went in a large circle downhill, then looped back uphill towards the bed area, then made another larger loop. He wanted to be on that high point of land. He did hesitate in one place where at first I thought he laid down, but then decided he just stood still. Annie said there may have been some blood in the dirt there. The darn animal was probably watching the search!

After 2 1/2 hours of tracking, and two falls by me resulting in a smashed knee and no sign of the deer, or blood, or that he ever bedded up again, we gave it up. It was midnight.

My husband and I decided that, based upon all the evidence, the deer most likely sustained a totally non-fatal and survivable elbow or leg hit, plus MAYBE a brisket crease (skin wound).

Calls like these discourage me: discouraged that we can't perform miracles and discouraged that people misinterpret the shot entirely.

11/24/2008

Had another of those calls last night. Undead, never-going-to-die deer; shot was misinterpreted. I was VERY proud of my girl though. She tried and tried and tried and never gave up. We lost the track many times (undead non-bleeding deer have a way of doing that, it seems). We circled around and went along the edge of a small clearing to try to cut his path. Annie air-scented him and dragged me 100 YARDS through thick trees to a dried bed with some, but not much, blood. We would never have found it without Annie, because it was about 400 yards from the direction in which the hunters last saw the deer going.

This was seven hours post hit and the blood looked to be long since dried, so maybe five to six hours old. No signs of any disablement and not a drop more blood. The deer had left town. Based upon initial evidence and an in-depth interview with the hunter regarding shot distance, shot setup, gun caliber, bullet type and powder load, this was a definite leg muscle hit which is non-fatal. This was more than three hours of tracking in the dark, and we were all beat, so we hung it up. The hunters were quite impressed with Annie's find and we were proud. Still wish we could get a truly dead or dying deer call, but oh, well.

