



By Rich Palmer  
Bureau of Wildlife Protection Director

## What Should I Be Doing This Month?

**J**ULY is a good time to get your bird dogs back out into the field for some exercise and training. Most of us have done little field work since training during the return woodcock migration in March, to ensure we did not disturb any nesting hens or newly hatched young birds during April, May and June. Other than some backyard retrieving drills, our dogs have had little training attention, taking a back seat to fishing and turkey seasons. While there is still some concern for late second nests or young birds, the vast majority of birds are hatched and many are capable of flight by July.

A greater concern when training dogs in July is preventing dogs from overheating, which can be fatal. The risk can be managed by training early in the morning when temperatures are lower, selecting training areas where there is immediate access to streams, rivers or ponds to cool the dog in before and after training drills. Keep drills short (10 to 15 minutes) to minimize the dog's run time, and provide rest periods in the shade between drills. In locations where natural water sources are not available, use a livestock oval trough filled with a couple of 20 pound bags of ice and some water to dunk the dogs in before and after a training run-in-the-field. Leave the dog in the water a few minutes after the run to accelerate the cooling process, and then provide a shaded area for the dog to rest until the next drill. If at any time during the exercise you observe the dog's hindquarters seem to wobble or the dog staggers, immediately end the drill, soak the dog in cold water and administer glucose in the back corner of the dogs mouth in the form of liquid or gel products made for diabetics, or plain honey from any grocery store, both store well in your training kit.

Finally, use discretion in deciding when to train. A cool morning with temperatures around 65 or 70 degrees will likely not present any heat exhaustion problems, but a midday training session in direct sun and 90 degrees can pose potentially fatal results. Dogs will develop some tolerance, but especially for dogs kept indoors in air conditioned homes, keep your first summer sessions short and follow the previous recommendations. On hotter days avoid field work altogether and stick to doing water retrieves, or simply take your dog for a walk in the woods along a shaded stream bottom. Most of all have fun interacting with your dog in the off-season.