

Other Issues



Hunting with rabbit dogs can present other issues that you may not have thought of, but you need to be aware of.

- If you take your dogs to hunt a public hunting area, such as a state game lands or a state park, you may find other hunters there with their dogs. At first you might think that there's plenty of room for you both to hunt, but you'll quickly find that this can turn into a real mess. When the other hunter's dogs start a rabbit, your dogs will want to run to them and join the chase or if yours start, his will want to join yours. The best thing might be to not release your dogs there at all, if you notice a vehicle in the parking area with an empty dog box on it.
- By and large, the single biggest threat to a good hunting dog is the automobile. Many fine dogs have been killed by vehicles, so remember when selecting a hunting location to avoid those areas with nearby roads.
- It is unlawful to hunt within an area closer than 150 yards of an occupied building. This "safety zone" might be properly avoided by the hunters, but trust me, rabbits and dogs won't understand. Have your leashes ready in case you need to pull your beagles off a chase that enters a safety zone.
- I once took a young hunter with me and when the rabbit appeared in front of us he immediately threw his shotgun to his shoulder and fired, killing the rabbit. It all happened so quickly that I wasn't sure if the dogs were hit or not. Always remember, **it's only a rabbit**. Safety is paramount! Don't rush a shot and keep your muzzle pointed in a safe direction, away from other hunters and away from the dogs at all times.
- If your hunt is successful, you will have game to clean. You need to get used to that idea. If you don't want to clean the game and prepare it for the table, then don't shoot it. If you know you don't want the rabbits, you should make arrangements with someone ahead of time to take them. I have a few acquaintances who have asked for rabbits and I always skin and clean the rabbits before giving them away. No one wants a dead rabbit just dropped off at their house. One of the people I give rabbits to is an elderly lady who lives alone. She allows me to hunt on her property and is always very grateful when I appear with a couple of cleaned rabbits for her.
- Always ask permission before hunting on private property. I know this sounds obvious, but you would be surprised how many complaints are called in each year by people who see strangers hunting on their property.
- Along with all their other needed shots, get your dogs inoculated for Lyme disease. Deer ticks are abundant now throughout the state and many transmit Lyme. I learned this the hard way, when several years ago, my best dog contracted Lyme and as a result was out of service for quite awhile. My vet finally brought him back around, but he missed most of the hunting season that year. Of course, you also

can get Lyme disease, so always check for ticks after each hunt.

- You may eventually want to hunt the varying or snowshoe hare. Believe me, they are a challenge! In Pennsylvania, hares only live in a few areas and the season and bag limits are very limited. Again, check the digest for the latest regulations. One of the biggest differences between hunting hares and rabbits is that the hare will tend to run much farther before returning and it will not "hole up" like a rabbit will. Dogs should be in top shape (and so should you) before going on a hare hunt.