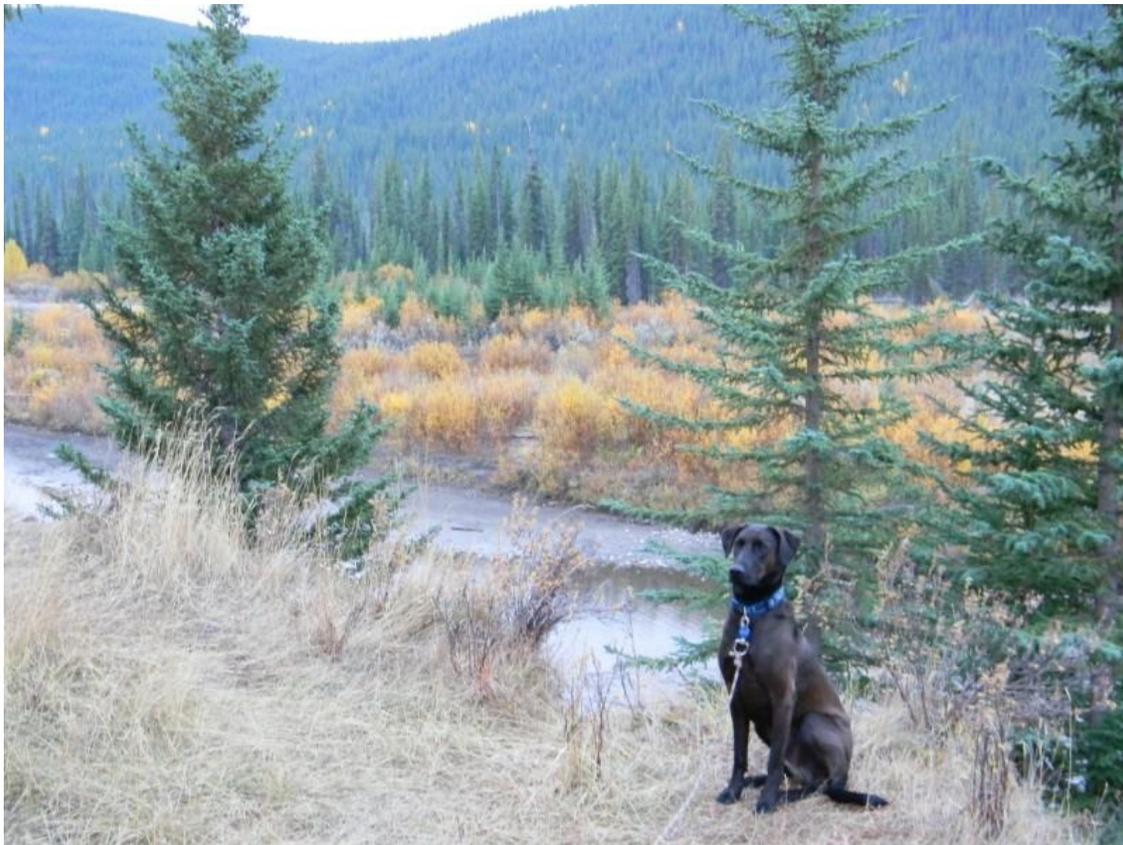


## BECAUSE I LOVE MY DOG RIDING IN THE BACK COUNTRY



**MEET GRIZ!** Griz is a lovely combination of black/chocolate lab and golden retriever. My husband and I named him based on his coloring which echoes the rich brown of a grizzly bear. It wasn't until after we took him along with us riding and we started loudly calling commands, "Griz-Heel!" "Griz-Come here!" "Griz-Don't do that!" that we realized the humor in the wild name we had given our domesticated animal. Oops!

I love my dog and I love riding so it is only natural that I combine these two things that I get so much enjoyment from. However, last week when we were in the field, a band of coyotes noticed Griz and they tried to surround him. His recall was good so I was able to call him back. It took a few minutes but all was good and we were able to ride home safely.

Luckily this incident transpired at home, within our safe boundaries. However, would this have ended differently if it happened at Yahatinda, Hummingbird, or any of the other places I love to go riding? This raised the question of whether or not I should bring Griz with me when I head out on my riding adventures. This is a tough decision for me. On one hand I know how much he absolutely loves to come riding with me at home so I would feel bad to leave him behind, even

though we have a house sitter or he would go to my son's place. On the other hand I could bring him because I have a gate and can make a nice kennel for him in the back of my trailer. He would have lots of fresh air, food and water and he would be fine. If I were to bring him I would want him to come on the trails with me and what's wrong with that? He could run in and out of the bush, just like at home, and enjoy the beautiful scenery and all that this new environment has to offer. However, there are more elements to consider when we are away from home. There is wildlife out there. I have seen them and they are beautiful but what if he runs into a bear and it chases him back to us on the trail? Or what if he sees a deer and chases it over the falls? I have heard of this happening as recently as a few weeks ago and I would feel terrible if my dog was responsible for scaring another animal to death.



Let's take this one step further, what if Griz went into the bush and never came back? He is well trained, however, new and exciting things might distract him and cause him to lose his sense of direction and unintentionally cause him to not come back home- he could be lost forever.



This easily could have been the end of Gracie's story.

"Gracie" was originally separated from her owners somewhere along #752 (Prairie Creek Road) near the Swan Lake turn off. From there she somehow managed to travel to the Cut Off Creek area, then over to Seven Mile Flats. She was gone a long three weeks and she travelled many miles. When we found her it took us almost three days of spending time with her until she would trust us enough to touch her. She is truly one amazing dog and we were so happy that her story ended happily

I can't bear (pun intended) the thought of my Griz lost in the bush feeling so scared and having to fight the elements of nature on his own like Gracie did. What if he wasn't so lucky?

So if I choose to bring Griz and he stays in the trailer we can play and have fun after our ride. It's a great option but, what do I do when I am busy in the camp visiting, making supper, or playing with the grandkids? Undoubtedly he will want to wander to the next camp or dig large holes trying to get to the gophers or go exploring. What will the neighbours think? I'm sure they will welcome him with arms wide open and love him as much as I do! **No, I don't think they will.** I think it is more likely that they will say "**Who's frickin' dog is this?**" And they have every right to this objection.

***The guidelines state: "Dogs are the responsibility of the owners and the owner will be held accountable in the event that they create an accident. Consequently, they are expected to be under full control at all times, or on a leash. Note that Provincial and Federal Park legislation requires a leash or confinement. Fines may be issued."***

Let's break this down.

***“Dogs are the responsibility of the owners and the owner will be held accountable in the event that they create an accident.”***

So, if my dog were to jump out of the bush, whether it be on the trail or in the campground, and scare a horse, which causes someone to fall and get hurt, I could be sued. If my dog were to scare a horse that is tied in its camp and cause the horse to become injured, legal action could be taken. If kids were riding by and my dog were to cause one of them to fall from their horse and get hurt, I could be legally responsible. If any of these scenarios were to come to pass, it would be devastating to me, not just legally or financially but morally, and I would not forgive myself- and all of this because I love my dog.

Next, ***“...Dogs are expected to be under full control at all times or on a leash. Note that Provincial and Federal park legislation requires a leash or confinement. Fines may be issued.”***

What does under full control actually mean? When riding the trails, your dog should be in front, behind, or directly beside you at all times. They should not be in and out of the bush where they can bring out unwanted wildlife and/or spook oncoming horses. Same applies if you are hiking. When I hike with Griz I like to keep him on a 25 foot leash so I am certain he can't run off after something. In camp they should be within the boundary of your camp only and not wandering the campsite or popping out from behind a bush or vehicle to see who is coming down the road. These expectations create a safe environment for everyone.



Above right I have Griz on a 25ft rope in order to make sure he stays within the boundaries I have given him.

Above left two dogs are highline while their owners are in camp to allow them to move to see their owners and get food water and shade.



On the left a kennel was made in the back of the trailer allowing lots of fresh air for the dogs while the owners are out riding

So, in the end, we all have to weigh the pros and cons for ourselves as to whether or not we will bring our dog to ride in the great outdoors with us. If your choice is to bring your dog with you, below you will find some training tips from Tyson Hainsworth, Dog Trainer and owner of Dog Squad.

## **RIDING IN THE BACK COUNTRY WITH YOUR DOG TYSON HAINSWORTH**

Bringing a dog with you riding in the back country can make for a really fun outing so long as your dog is trained well. A good rule of thumb is to pretend that no one likes your dog and your dog is an inconvenience to anyone else out there. Keep your dog to yourself and away from other riders and horses unless they ask to engage your dog and you choose to allow them. Your dog should have near perfect recall in which you can instruct them not to chase any wildlife. Any of the times we have been out riding we found everyone's dogs to be very well behaved. Many of these dogs are coming from farms and understand the rules already.

If your dog is not so well trained there are some things you can do to get your dog ready and well behaved. It would take me a couple hours to go into full detail on everything but here are some quick tips.

1. Long line recall - This is how you start a dog with recall training. Use a 50 foot rope and a harness on the dog where you can connect onto the chest of the dog. Hooking onto the chest helps to spin the dog back toward you if they are running after something. Hooking onto the back of

a harness means they can pull you really hard. You then say your dog's name and a command you want that will mean to follow you. We often use "this way" (come will mean sit in front of you). Start in low distractions. As your dog turns to follow you 3 times quickly that means they understand at that level. You are then ready to progress to a higher level of distraction.

Key tip: Just because the dog can recall with no distraction does not mean they will recall in all situations. This is why many people yell at their dog. They think the dog is being stubborn when usually they have not been trained in that distraction. No need to yell commands when they are well trained. In order to know if you can call a dog off a distraction, you have to practice with that distraction. So you try your best to find all kinds of distractions to practice with your long line. This would include horses, other dogs and any wildlife you can practice with off to the side.

2. Respect - Once you have practiced with your long line around a distraction the dog will either be good and respect your command or they won't. You essentially have 2 options from there:
  1. Become more exciting than the distraction. Have a favorite toy, some reward trainers have high value treats. Maybe a dog likes your attention better than anything else. Herding and Retrieving dogs have some of the higher desire to please so they do better. If your dog doesn't have much desire to please then you are pretty well left with the second option:
  2. Consequence - Have a consequence for not listening. We call this Bank Robber Principle. If they all of a sudden told you there was no consequence for robbing a bank you may think, "I could walk into any bank, get \$10 million dollars, buy a yacht or whatever I want?" I would say most people would choose that option. But the option of getting shot or sent to jail is a pretty terrible option. That is why there is consequence for robbing the bank. So try as you might to be the best thing out there, some dogs just like chasing animals or running after the scent of an animal better. For this you add consequence. Remote training collars have come a long ways since they first came out. They used to be full blast or nothing. I was actually going to make a video showing why people should never use them and thought I better research the subject. Then we came across some trainers that used them in a way that never hurt or terrified the dogs and got amazing results. We now use this for Bank Robber Principle in regards to recall if a person cannot be better than a distraction and still want their dog to have a really good quality life such as riding with them in the back country.

I would suggest seeking the help of a knowledgeable trainer for this but here are some of the quick tips:

1. Get a collar with 100 levels so it can be very finely tuned. 10 levels or less often jumps the consequence too high at each level for many dogs. Dogtra is a brand we use however there are others out there. You also want waterproof and rechargeable battery otherwise you will spend a small fortune on batteries.
2. Put it on the dog for 5 days before using it, take it off at night time. You want the dog to learn this is a regular collar and has nothing to do with any correction. You want to get to the point you no longer need to use this. Associate this collar to the things your dog likes so they enjoy having the collar put on.
3. Put it on the left or right side of the neck. That is where the big muscle groups are so it can twitch the muscle. You want to twitch the muscle, not fry the dog.
4. On day 5 you will turn the collar on and take the dog to a quiet spot with some good smells. Start at level 2, press nick and then go up 2 at a time. What you are looking for is the dog may look up, around, shake their head or rub by their neck. You are not looking for a yelp or cry or terrified running away. The dog needs to learn cause and effect at a low level so they can process what is going on without terrifying the dog.
5. With your long line if you say "this way" and the dog doesn't respond right away you press the nick at the level you found to get their attention and then tug the rope to make them come back to you. With repetition the dog will learn they all mean the same thing. The key to not terrifying the dog is to use the rope. Otherwise most people will use a really high level in hopes that it hurts enough the dog runs back toward you. This can cause a whole host of problems.

As they listen you can then jump to a higher level of distraction. Just practice with your rope saying "this way" and tug. See how the dog does. If they choose to ignore you can then use the remote collar. The key is to use the rope with the remote.

6. Management - Once the dog listens like a dream around all distractions and you haven't pressed the button in a few days you want to keep the collar on for a good 2-3 months after to ensure the habit is set. If they make a mistake it resets to Day 1. Many people think the dog has learned, take the collar off and then the dog doesn't listen. They put the collar on and quickly the dog becomes "collar smart" and learns to only listen when it is on. You want to get to the point you no longer need the

collar for the dog. The key is keeping it on a few months after which you no longer seem to need it.

Important Tip: The rope is what trains recall, the remote collar is the consequence. You use the rope by itself around a distraction to give the dog a chance to be exposed to the distraction and learn to listen to you. The rope ensures the dog cannot get this wrong. As they have seen the distraction enough they will either listen or they won't. If they won't and you cannot become more exciting than the distraction then the remote collar puts enough consequence on chasing the distraction.

Used properly it can be an excellent training tool and give you that final polish on your training to have an extremely well trained dog. Your dog's quality of life will go way up because you trust your dog and you can take them more places. Otherwise they will fall into a very large category of poorly trained dogs these days that are stuck at home bored out of their mind.

## Summary

Training is broken into 3 components:

1. Commands - This is the easy part. A dog will learn their commands very quickly in no distractions. This shouldn't take more than 3 days for almost any command to be learned.
2. Distractions and Distance - This is the biggest area of training. The dog needs a chance to be exposed to the distraction and learn to listen. The long line is a great too for training here.
3. Respect - Finally the dog will either respect your command and listen or they won't. If they don't then you add the right amount of consequence and they quickly default to good behaviour because you have already taught them what is expected of them, they just think there is no downside to not listening to you.

This is a very simplified version. If you have any questions you are welcome to contact us and schedule training. We have helped many people achieve their dream dog so they can take them to the back country with full control. So if you need any help with a happy dog that is very well behaved let us know.



Tyler Hainsworth