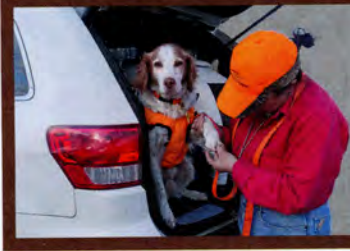


Sporting Dog Care

The Après-Hunt Checklist



by Glenn Zinkus

Our pointing dogs give their all during a day of hunting. They run the miles of a marathoner, explode with the sprints of a short-distance runner, and leap like a long-jumper, all in an environment similar to the toughest obstacle course thrown at a U.S. Marine recruit. This is further compounded during a hunting roadtrip, with multi-day hunts that tax every inch of our dogs. Without attentive care, a seemingly small issue can grow into a trip-ending ailment if not caught early while on these road trips. We ask for enormous efforts from our four-legged hunting partners, and they deserve the utmost attention and care from us.

My wife and I work together to inspect our dogs following every hunt using our après-hunt (“after the hunt”) checklist. We began this head-to-tail check of our dogs as a deliberate effort, but over the years this became an unconscious checklist that we work through at the tailgate after our hunt. We do this before we drive off in order to catch any issues early, starting our inspection at the rear of the dog and working forward. Here is our checklist along with a few preventative procedures:

1. We begin by rubbing and massaging our dogs to feel for any cuts, abrasions, seeds, or tangles all along their body. Often our dogs roll over with this attention, and we do a belly rub to inspect their stomach and chest area.
2. We have Brittanys, and their longer fur and feathering require attention. We brush our dogs to remove seeds, thorns, briars, and any other foreign objects caught in their coat, beginning with a course comb or brush to remove any of the nastiest briars first, then progressing to finer combs to remove smaller seeds. While brushing, we always look for ticks; a very fine comb brings ticks up to the surface. It’s rare for us to find embedded ticks when we do this on the tailgate immediately following the hunt. We pay special attention to the head and neck area – we find ticks work their way to this spot on our dogs more than any other.
3. Without question, the pointing dog nose is essential. But just as important are a dog’s paws. Healthy paws, free of injury, are essential for mobility. We inspect each paw, feeling around the pads and between the toes for roughness,

abrasion, thorns, seeds, and other sharp objects. During the paw inspection, we work our way up each leg, massaging their legs to help relax the dog and condition the muscles after a long hunting day.

4. With our older dogs, we gently work the legs by supporting the dog underneath the belly and chest, and gently lifting one leg at a time. Hold the leg as far up as the leg comfortably lifts, hold for several seconds, and then bring the leg down. We repeat this five times on each leg, all the while noting any tightness, soft tissue injuries, or joint issues by paying attention to our dog’s reaction.
5. Next we work around the head, specifically focusing on the ears, nose, and eyes.
 - **Ears:** Floppy ears can be vulnerable, and not just as a collection point for seeds and briars. We are attentive to the underside of the ear where there is exposed and tender skin. We look for any scratches or wounds created by brush, thorns, and fences. One of our Brittanys is susceptible to infections from field scratches on the underside of his ear; so we inspect, wash, disinfect, and treat any scratches with antibiotic ointment. If necessary, we seal any stubborn or recurring wounds with super glue.
 - **Nose:** A dog’s nose is a sensitive area, one that we want to guard and protect. When in cover such as grasslands, cattails, and any thick or dried vegetation, these environments are abrasive to a dog’s nose. If our dog’s nose has visible abrasions, we apply a small dab from a soft lip balm or a very light coating of Vaseline over the abrasion.
 - **Eyes:** A dog’s eyes are especially vulnerable during the early season when many hunting fields are filled with seeds. When we find seeds, we first work to flush these out of the dog’s eyes with gentle squirts of saline solution. After reinspection, any stubborn seeds are gently flushed again with saline. If we still observe seeds or other foreign objects in the eyes, we contact the local vet and seek immediate care.
6. Our final step at the tailgate, as a preventative measure at the end of a hunt day, is feeding our dogs a glycogen replacement drink to aid in muscle recovery.

*We inspect underneath
the ear for any wounds
that require care.*



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With all of the miles of crashing through brush; climbing hills, mountains, and canyon walls; and retrieving those spurred roosters, injuries inevitably happen. We prepare as best we can with two first-aid kits. The first is a small kit that can be easily carried in our vest, and the other, expanded kit is always in our hunt bag at our vehicle.

The basic supplies always in my vest include:

- Gauze.
- Vet Wrap – can be used to hold gauze, apply pressure for wounds.
- Duct tape – the uses for duct tape are only limited by one's imagination. This is an all-around adhesive that does anything from fabricating makeshift dog boots to acting as a crude suture in a pinch.
- Knife – for any number of uses.
- Pliers – or a multi-tool that provides a knife, scissors, and pliers.
- EMT Gel – wound dressing, antiseptic, collagen replacement. Does not hurt or sting dogs.
- Trauma pack-pressure bandage.

The full first-aid kit always with our tailgate hunting bag includes the above items, with additions of:

- Medical tape or first-aid tape.
- Scissors.
- Tweezers.
- Super glue – in a pinch, this can close up wounds and cuts.

- Saline – flush for eyes after the hunt; removes foreign objects and lubricates eyes; can also be used to flush wounds.
- Muzzle.
- Iodine.
- Hydrogen peroxide – small wound sterilization (dilute hydrogen peroxide first), skunk bath ingredient, and a good agent to induce vomiting if poisons are ingested.
- Brushes and combs.
- Antihistamine – Benadryl (25 mg); make sure there are no other active ingredients besides the antihistamine.
- Anti-inflammatory medicines – Rimadyl/Carprofen.
- Heating pad.
- Cold compress pack.
- Boots or something to cover the dog's paws.
- Human baby socks or dog specific alternative, such as PawFlex (we use these as an intermediate wrap around bandage on the paw, foot, toe).
- Tick comb/tick remover.
- Activated charcoal.
- Electrolyte/glycogen replacement.
- Antibacterial ointment.
- Q-Tips.
- Lip Balm/Vaseline.
- Thermometer.
- Extra water.
- Contact numbers for local area veterinarians.

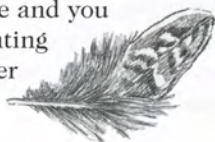


Yes, there are pheasants in this cover. But this type of cover requires post-hunt care in the form of eye inspections for seeds.

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In addition, there are a few supplies that we keep with our hunting bag and first-aid kit that fall into the preventative category. These inevitably help us with our post-hunt dog care. These include a hair preparation spray to help with grooming, such as horse's mane spray that helps to detangle hair and more easily remove seeds. We apply this all over the coat and rub it into our dog's fur prior to a hunt. One of our early preventatives includes appropriate paw pad preparation items, such as pad hardener before chukar country hunts, and Musher's Wax for winter hunts in snowy conditions. Note that the pad hardener preparation needs to be applied well before the hunt in order to be effective.

Our après-hunt checks are always evolving. We developed our list and tailgate routine more than 25 years ago with our first Brittany, and we continue to learn new things each season. We try to keep our checks streamlined and simple enough so that we are never tempted to take shortcuts and not fully inspect and evaluate potential problem areas, while at the same time, we are deliberate and thorough with our post-hunt check. Do the same and you can feel better that your pointing dog remains healthy and eager to hunt the next day.



During the previous day's hunt, our Brittany, Parker, got a small puncture wound that required cleaning and protection. Here he is ready to hunt again.



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