

Welcome to San Diego NAVHDA

NAVHDA is a non-profit organization that educates people about training “versatile” hunting dogs in North America. The organization has 85 chapters across the United States and Canada that host sanctioned training days, hunt tests, seminars, youth events and other activities.

The organization is very welcoming of beginners and many of the people there doing the training are also fairly new. Everyone is there to learn and improve.

What to Expect at Your First San Diego NAVHDA Training Day

Every chapter is a little different, so email the person in charge and ask questions. In our case, training day information is listed on our website sandiegonavhda.com. Our training days typically start around 7:30 and wrap up around 1 p.m. You can attend one event without being a member, but after that you’re expected to join the San Diego chapter (about \$25 per year) and NAVHDA international.

About a week before the training day, an email will be sent out to all members in which they can rsvp their attendance and also indicate how many birds they would like to order. Replying to this email gets you on the roster for that training day.

What to bring to your first NAVHDA training day-

If you don’t have these items for your first day, don’t worry, there are plenty of people there to help you.

- *A lot of water* for yourself and your dog (two 1-gallon jugs minimum)
- A long rope or [check cord](#) (30 ft is good & gloves help)
- Cash or check to pay for the 2-4 birds you might use
- Blaze orange hat or vest for yourself – safety first!
- Leash, collar, crate or tie-out stake and a whistle
- Snacks, chair, hat, shade, ear plugs, sunscreen for yourself
- Good shoes/boots – you move around a lot!

How NAVHDA training days work

Usually we have between 10-25 handlers of all experience levels. Handlers check-in and then have a morning briefing to cover safety and the plan for the day. The more experienced members generally help out the newer members in the field. They set up training stations and we all rotate through, each of us practicing roughly the same thing at that dog's level. If there are visitors, new puppies or first-timers, we make a small group and start with basics such as introduction to birds and launchers. In subsequent sessions the dogs progress to gunfire and pointing.

The handlers are usually a mix of men and women and a variety of ages. Everyone is generally helpful and there to learn. Training days are most rewarding when you have a Volunteering Spirit, get in there and get your hands dirty, help out and figure out how things work.

Searching for planted birds

The goal at first is simply to get the dog interested in birds and to help him understand he was supposed to be looking for them.

On subsequent training days, for the dogs who are ready, we plant live birds in the field and allow the dogs to search (one at a time). The eventual goal of training (after hundreds of hours) is that the dogs will learn to point the bird, be steady until the bird is flushed and shot, and then retrieve the shot bird back to the handler.

Tracking and water retrieves

At most all NAVHDA training day, you will most likely work on searching, "steadiness" and retrieving on land.

You might also work on tracking or water retrieves. Tracking is where someone will drag a dead duck or pheasant several yards while your dog is out of sight. Then you bring your dog to the start of the track where a few feathers have been dropped. You release your dog and ideally he should use his nose to find the bird.

The water retrieves are what you'd expect. You'll work on introducing your dog to water, building confidence and excitement and hopefully retrieving bumpers or birds.

Take the training advice for what it's worth – pick and choose

You have to keep in mind that most NAVHDA members are not necessarily *professional* dog trainers. They are certainly experienced dog trainers and hunters and a few are breeders. But most do not make a living training dogs.

You will see a variety of training styles and opinions at a NAVHDA training day, and this is OK.

For example, some members use e-collars (shock collars) - Some don't. Certain trainers like to keep dogs on check cords. Others want to let their dog just be a dog and figure things out. You likely won't see many harnesses or treats.

You'll see a lot of "tough" guys on their knees praising their puppies with pats and giggles. Everyone is very proud.

Point being is, you have to be an advocate for your own dog, you know your dog best. Speak up if you want to try something a little different than what the "leader" is suggesting or if you prefer to skip a certain training drill. This is totally OK. At the same time, it's not the end of the world if you try a slightly different training approach than what you're used to. For the most part, these breeds are pretty resilient and go with the flow.

It's OK if you have no experience with hunting or training

- It's OK if you have never actually been hunting
- It's OK if your dog does not have experience
- All dogs (and handlers) have good days and not so good days – it's OK
- We're all a mess, at times.
- Dog work is very humbling. You work hard to see results.
- Everyone here was once a beginner

Is it too late to start training my dog for hunting?

- It's not too late to train a hunting dog if they have the drive and desire to do it. Drive and desire is different from dog to dog.
- It's not about age, it's about exposure, *lots and lots* of patience and coming up with a plan that works for you and your dog.
- Some dogs are more challenging than others.

Overall benefits of NAVHDA

- Learn about training your hunting dog
- Have fun with your dog & make friends
- Easy access to birds & launchers for training
- Exercise and enjoying nature
- Learn about the other versatile hunting dog breeds
- Talk dogs with like-minded people
- Get help from handlers/trainers with different experiences
- Observe the other handlers and dogs and learn
- Get feedback on issues with your dog

SAFETY! A large part of NAVHDA training involves loaded firearms, NAVHDA treats safety as the number one priority above all others, for ourselves and our dogs. Please expect frequent safety briefings and always wear blaze orange in the field. You will not be shooting on your first day, but when or if you do it is break-open shotguns only.

[Lindsay Stordahl](#) is the founder of That Mutt. She writes about dog training and behavior, healthy raw food for pets and running with dogs. I used an article she wrote about her NAVHDA experience as the foundation for this new member communication because I think she did a great job of explaining

both the technical aspects of what NAVHDA and also the culture of the organization. Thanks Lindsay & Remy!!

Recognized Versatile Hunting Dog Breeds

The North American Versatile Hunting Dog Association defines the versatile dog as one *“that is bred and trained to dependably hunt and point game, to retrieve on both land and water, and to track wounded game on both land and water.”* ~ **NAVHDA Aims, Programs, Test Rules**

NAVHDA currently recognizes 30 different breeds of versatile hunting dogs. While each breed differs somewhat with respect to their physical characteristics and hunting styles, they all possess the versatility required to locate, point, and retrieve upland game, find and retrieve wounded waterfowl, and serve as well-mannered companions in the home. Click on any of the pictures below for a larger image.



Blue Picardy Spaniel
(BP)



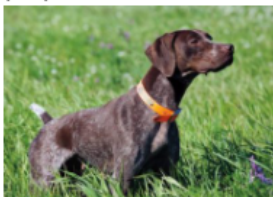
Bracco Italiano (BI)



Braque d'Auvergne
(BA)



Braque du
Bourbonnais (BB)



Braque Francais (BF)



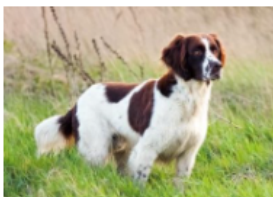
Braque St. Germain
(BG)



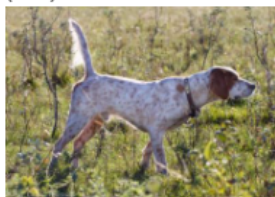
Brittany (BS)



Cesky Fousek (CF)



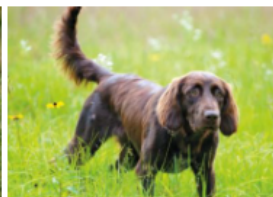
Drentsche Patrijshond
(DP)



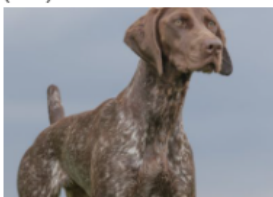
English Setter (ES)



French Spaniel (FS)



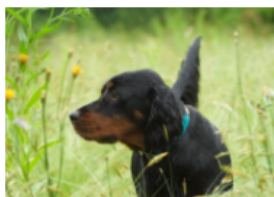
German Longhair (GL)



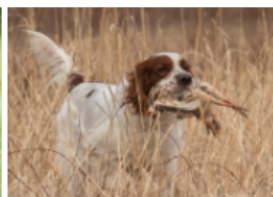
German Shorthaired
Pointer (GS)



German Wirehaired
Pointer (GW)



Gordon Setter (GO)



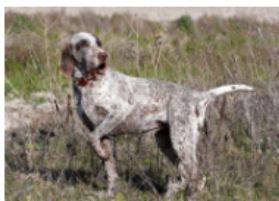
Irish Red & White
Setter (IR)



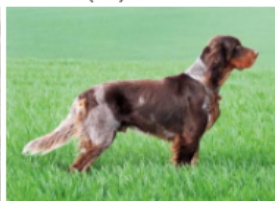
Irish Setter (IS)



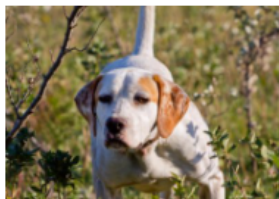
Large Munsterlander (LM)



Perdiguero de Burgos (PB)



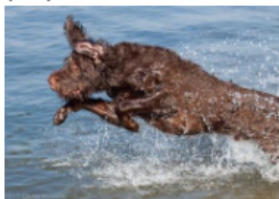
Picardy Spaniel (PS)



Pointer (PT)



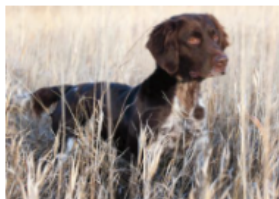
Portuguese Pointer (PO)



Pudelpointer (PP)



Slovakian Wirehaired Pointer (SH)



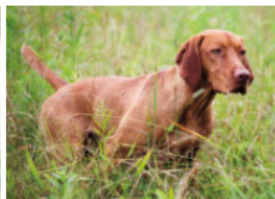
Small Munsterlander (SM)



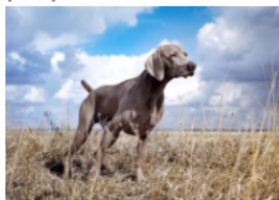
Spinone (SP)



Stichelhaar (ST)



Vizsla (VI)



Weimaraner (WM)



Wirehaired Pointing Griffon (GR)



Wirehaired Vizsla (WV)