

2000

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Recommended Citation

Sisson, D. Clay; Stribling, H. Lee; and Speake, Dan W. (2000) "Efficiency of Pointing Dogs in Locating Northern Bobwhite Coveys," *National Quail Symposium Proceedings*: Vol. 4 , Article 25.

<https://doi.org/10.7290/nqsp04x6k0>

Available at: <https://trace.tennessee.edu/nqsp/vol4/iss1/25>

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EFFICIENCY OF POINTING DOGS IN LOCATING NORTHERN BOBWHITE COVEYS

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ABSTRACT

We studied the efficiency of pointing dogs in locating coveys of northern bobwhites (*Colinus virginianus*) using radiotelemetry from 1992–1997 on 2 private hunting plantations in southwest Georgia. During these 5 hunting seasons, 169 hunts generated data on 838 “encounters” with 254 separate radio-marked coveys. Pointing dogs located 53% of the available coveys, 25% of which were never seen by the hunters due to evasive behavior by the birds. An additional 12% of encountered coveys were seen by the hunters even though they were never located by the dogs. This resulted in the hunters seeing a total of just over half (53%) and shooting into approximately one-third (32%) of the total radio-marked coveys they encountered.

An evaluation of “false pointing” was conducted by examining cases when dogs pointed radio-marked coveys that were never seen by the hunters. Most (58%) of these unproductive points were caused by coveys running away from pointing dogs, but were also attributed to wild flushes (28%) and pointed coveys that held tight and refused to flush (14%).

The percentage of radio-marked coveys seen by hunters was highly variable from day-to-day ($\bar{x}$ = 53%, range = 0–100%), but fairly consistent between years ($\bar{x}$ = 53%, range = 40–63%). Information obtained using pointing dogs appears to be more practical for measuring population trends than it is as a census technique.

Citation: Sisson, D.C., H. L. Stribling, and D.W. Speake. 2000. Efficiency of pointing dogs in locating northern bobwhite coveys. Page 109 in L.A. Brennan, W.E. Palmer, L.W. Burger, Jr., and T.L. Pruden (eds.). Quail IV: Proceedings of the Fourth National Quail Symposium. Tall Timbers Research Station, Tallahassee, FL.