Training Notes on PSA 1 Surprise Scenarios 2015-2016 By Jerry Bradshaw Tarheel Canine Training

PSA 1 has included surprise scenarios for the past few years. The judges and directors have the intention to use the PSA 1 surprise scenario in the protection phase to prepare handlers for dealing with standard scenarios in the level 2 as well as to get handlers thinking about surprise scenarios in the higher levels. You can see how each of these scenarios has a theme or themes that are usually related to the beginning stages of the upper level types of scenarios.

Approaching surprise scenarios includes training and handling. The training part should be done before you show up at a trial. In this short booklet, we will break down each of the five scenarios into their component training elements, so that the elements required can be trained. Once the training is done, handlers must understand how to handle their dogs through the scenarios, and to understand the risk-reward tradeoffs that are what makes PSA so exciting. Therefore, we will break down the five scenarios one by one into component skills, train the component skills, and then put the exercises back together. Many of the component skills are the same for multiple scenarios. At the end there will be a short discussion of handling strategy in the PSA 1.

Send Through Tunnel on Passive Decoy (Guard/Return):

The dog and handler shall start at a marked cone. A regulation tunnel obstacle will be set up no farther than 10 yards from the start cone. Directly in line with the tunnel, a passive decoy shall set up 15 yards behind the tunnel. On the handler's command, the dog shall be sent through the tunnel, and engage the passive decoy on a frontal send. The handler may have 3 opportunities to send the dog through the tunnel from the start cone. Any advance from the start cone shall result in a point deduction, depending on how far the handler advances. Each separate command to go thru the tunnel shall result in a point deduction according to the judge's discretion. Once engaged, the decoy shall drive the dog with a distraction of the judge's choosing. On command of the steward, the decoy shall freeze up, and the handler shall be asked to out his dog. The dog shall out on the handler's command, and perform either an out and guard, or out and return. If the dog guards, the handler shall approach and pick his dog up on the signal of the steward, and the exercise shall be terminated once the dog heels away for a short distance. If the dog returns, the exercise shall be complete when the dog returns to heel position. Upon pick-up or return, the handler shall attach the leash. The handler may attach the leash on the dog in the guard. **Scoring: Send (10) Tunnel (5) Hit (5) Grip (10) Release (10) Guard/Return (10)**

When I break down a scenario for training, I like to break it down into components. Because this is a flowing sequence of a behavior chain, I will break it down in reverse, so I look at the last thing the dog must do first. In this case the component elements required are as follows:

Skill 1: Guard or Return
Skill 2: Out on Command
Skill 3: Grip on a Passive Decoy
Skill 4: Go through a tunnel
Skill 5: Send away to an obstacle.

Skill 1: Guard or Return: Dogs in PSA 1 should already know how to do either an out or a return. If they don't they have no chance at passing the other scenarios in the trial. The key here is that the handler has a choice. If your dog is stronger in his return, you should use that; if he is stronger in his guard you should use that. That seems obvious to say, but in the heat of handling you should prepare yourself for what you are going to do, before you step on the field, and keep to that plan of action. Handling on the fly is difficult at best, so make your decisions before things get fast and stressful, and stay with your game plan.

Skill 2: Release on Command: Every PSA dog should have a clean out. This is a basic skill, and should be attended to in every training session. But here again, this scenario doesn't present anything new for the PSA 1 dog to train. Your dog knows an out.

Skill 3: Grip on a passive Decoy: This may be a new skill for you. If your dog is high in prey drive, it probably won't be a difficult skill to train. However, if your decoys are always giving you prey motion, or some kind of threat prior to all your training bites, the dog may think something is wrong when you ask him to go on a passive decoy. Think about this: all the other bites in PSA 1 – the car jack, handler attack, and courage test – involve motion prior to the grip. The car jack decoy turns and attacks your dog in the car, the handler attack decoy runs out from the hiding place with distractions at your dog, and on the courage test, the decoy is running at your dog. There are elements of both prey (triggered by movement) and defense (triggered by threat) in all three of these exercises. A passive decoy is just standing there, not moving or threatening your dog.

You can train the dog to take a passive bite, by again working backwards. If you are in PSA 1, your dog should be very comfortable with the decoy agitating and moving either toward him or away from him for a grip in the front. What you now need to do is slowly de-condition the dog to these cues of movement or threat as the pre-cursor to the send. Set up in front of the passive decoy, have the decoy give minimal agitation, just enough to get the dog loaded, and send the dog. The decoy moves toward or away from the dog upon the send command. As sessions progress, slowly eliminate the amount of initial agitation prior to the send, so the dog expects that once he is sent on the decoy, his running to the decoy makes the decoy move. Then, slowly make the decoy wait longer and longer, until the dog is closer before giving any movement, until there is movement only just prior to the grip. Then eliminate all the movement, however, once the decoy is engaged, and the dog is in the grip, the decoy gives the dog a nice fight. The dog will learn to "turn on" the decoy by the act of biting. (Later in PSA 3 a judge may set up a scenario where the dog must take a passive bite and stay engaged in the grip while the

decoy continues to be passive! This is also a simple de-conditioning exercise. Can you come up with a training plan to train this particular behavior?)

This procedure for a passive bite should be started in your basic bite training from the beginning, but in many cases it is not. I see a lot of trainers have the decoy start the action for a young dog, by moving first, and having the dog get ramped up to bite as a result. In my training, as soon as I can do it, even with a puppy, I wait to see some proactive behavior on the part of the young dog prior to the decoy giving movement. Either the dog barks to start the action on command (which we can develop continually as the dog matures) or even if the dog only shows signs of forward movement into the line on a passive decoy, that proactivity is rewarded by movement on the part of the decoy. Thus my dogs learn that all decoys are passive until they (the dog) does something first, not the other way around. Thus the dog starts the action, not the decoy. This is critical for a PSA dog.

My YouTube channel also has a sequence of videos showing the progression of teaching a passive bite in hidden sleeve. You can do the same with a bite suit or a hidden suit:

www.YouTube.com/TarheelK9

Skill 4: Go through a Tunnel: You must break down going through the tunnel from being sent through the tunnel. Again work backwards, get the dog going through the tunnel first, and then work on the send. If you have a collapsible tunnel, shorten it up first. I prefer to teach this exercise using a ball or a tug as a reward for going through, before I add a bite reward in. I do this because once the dog gets into drive to bite, it is harder for the dog to learn the exercise, because all that drive clouds the learning process as the dog gets fixated on biting. You can teach the tunnel by tossing the ball through the tunnel and not allowing the dog to go around to get the ball, he must go through. So work on a short leash. I also prefer to put the dog in a down position in front of the tunnel so he is on eye level with the goal you have in mind.

Therefore the process is as follows: On a shortened tunnel, place the dog in a down, with his front paws almost in the tunnel, lined up with the tunnel entrance. Use your leash to keep the dog in the down as you toss the ball through, then give the command you want to use, such as "through" or "tunnel" and guide the dog to the entrance. If he tries to go around, just hold the leash and see if he figures it out, once he commits to go through, release the leash, and praise immediately once he is through. If you praise him while he is in the tunnel, he may turn around and come to your voice. Instead, praise the completion of the exercise. The idea is allow him to self-reward with the ball when correct, and withhold the reward when he tries to go around the tunnel.

The ball is used initially as an inducement to go through, but you should make sure to change to rewarding the behavior for compliance without him seeing the ball go into the tunnel, by either tossing the ball in front of him once he exits or placing the ball on the other side for him to find once he exits. This is called moving from inducement to reward. You will likely encounter some resistance when you change to a reward from

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using the prey inducement. One way to deal with this is to toss a ball through, and then as soon as he exits throw a second ball to him as he exits. He will likely prefer to chase the moving ball, and come to expect the ball to come firing past him once he goes through on command. Be sure to get the dog neutral to your body position upon sending him – such as placing him in the down, and then standing up prior to giving the command. If you are kneeling or crouching initially, to keep him from going around, you must return your posture to normal as soon as is feasible.

Continue with this, slowly increasing the length of the tunnel (change only one variable at a time) until he goes on command every time. Then change the next variable, position relative to the entrance. Offset the dog to the left or right and repeat from the beginning, placing the dog in a down in front of the tunnel, but off to the side by maybe a few degrees, until you can send him through at a right angle to the tunnel. Repeat to the other side of the tunnel. The dog will generalize these positions more easily over time. Then change his position from a down, to a sit, and then to heeling toward the tunnel, and sending at the last second.

The biggest problem I see with obstacles is that trainers rush through the training of them. If a dog goes straight through a couple of times, people think "My dog has this down!" but in reality there is only a very thin context in which the dog actually will go through on command, and if you change anything the dog will fail. Take your time.

Another issue is anticipation. In the learning stage of this, if the dog anticipates, go with it and let him go through. If you correct him, verbally or with a leash or e-collar at this point, you run the risk of the dog balking at going through because he is not sure of when he is allowed to. Your job as the handler is to restrict him with the leash on a flat collar or by keeping him in obedience (down) that you can enforce easily and without much pressure.

When the dog is anticipating the send through upon heeling toward the tunnel, you can start teaching the send through from a distance. Begin by lining up straight, with the dog in a down, about a foot back from the tunnel. If he will go from a foot back, you can slowly work the distance backwards until he is doing longer sends, up to 10 yards. Then repeat the offset sends, by moving closer initially. The offset sends will teach the dog to look for the entrance, even at a distance, and this proofs his understanding that "tunnel" means go through even if you have to move off line to get through. Continue to use a tug or ball as a reward.

The last piece I teach is for the dog to go through to get the bite. Go back to the beginning, and put the dog in the down with a passive decoy behind the tunnel. Keep the decoy passive, as agitation will only create less clarity as the dog wants to immediately get to the bite. Once the dog exits successfully the decoy can move, drawing the dog and a bite is a reward. Keep these quick, with quick outs or slips of a sleeve or the suit to keep the dog's mind on the tunnel rather than the fight. I like to start using a sleeve, and as soon as the dog hits have the handler pick up the leash and slip the sleeve to the dog, and start over.

Repeat all the steps, doing offset sends, close to the tunnel from a down to the decoy, through changing his position to a sit, and then heeling up to the tunnel, before going to sends, and offset sends from any distance. If the dog avoids the tunnel, the decoy should not give the dog any satisfying movement if he grips after going around. The dog should encounter a dead decoy if he skips the tunnel, and then start over, moving closer. If you have a good down command, you can down the dog if you see him avoid the tunnel, and then start him over. If your dog is e-collar trained, you can reprimand him and recall him to you if he tries to avoid the tunnel, or nick him and down him as soon as he is off track. At this point the dog should understand the command "tunnel" and there can be consequences to not going through. I continue to use a leash to "check" the dog and down him if he tries to go around. You should know immediately if the dog is going to try and bypass the tunnel, but in case you are a little slow, use gloves otherwise the long line might burn your hands when you check the dog. If the dog is strong and fast, use the leash attached to a prong collar to equalize things for you.

I do the same exercises with all the obstacles: The meter jump, A frame, and window jump are all trained in a similar progression. This will help a lot as you move to the PSA 2 and are faced with directed jumping exercises, and multiple obstacles.

Now you can test the PSA trial version of the exercise, and if the dog is successful, you are in a position to make big points on trial day. Make sure that you continue to train the components of the exercise, but training the dog on offset sends, and sometimes have the decoy calmly agitate to see if the dog will stay on task going through the tunnel under additional distraction. Add in a second decoy behind you or off to the side, and passive, to see if the dog can discriminate when the tunnel command is given and go to the right decoy.

Defense of Handler Exercise (Guard)

Handler /dog team heel on leash towards a decoy and stop. The decoy and handler will greet each other and then shake hands. Dog must remain neutral. The decoy will then walk away while another decoy approaches from behind. The decoy approaching from behind will either walk around and greet the handler from the front, and then attack or will just attack from behind. An attack will be a sharp strike to the handler's upper body with the hand. The dog must defend the handler. Mandatory out/guard. **Scoring: Heel & Greeting (5) Stay (10) Defense (15) Grip (5) Drive (5) Out & Guard (10)**

The defense of handler scenario, as with the "fighting decoys" scenario requires training on the principle of decoy neutrality. Many young dogs when they see a decoy in a bite suit start to load themselves if they are not otherwise occupied by obedience to keep their focus on the handler. The challenge in this scenario is to keep the dog from biting upon approaching the decoy in the heel and greeting, and during the initial conversation with the 1st friendly decoy.

This particular scenario is all about control around decoys and delayed gratification for the dog. I do not recommend actually setting up this scenario (nor any scenario) and doing it as it is presented for trial. The key to doing well in a trial is to set the dog up for success by building the parts that make up the whole. If we break this one down from last to first skill, you can see this isn't a scenario like the tunnel that has a natural flow or progression in terms of it being a chain of behavior for the dog to learn. Instead it is about neutrality to the decoy, and understanding when and when not, for the dog, to feel free to make decoy contact. The following are the skills:

Skill # 1: **Heeling correctly with a decoy on the field moving toward you**.
In this scenario you will start in basic position, with a decoy in front of you, and you will heel toward the decoy as he walks toward you. This should be part of your dog's skill set already for the PSA 1. If all you have done with your obedience is to heel around a decoy in a chair, you may squeak by in obedience, but the movement and the presence of the decoy standing in this scenario may cause your dog to forge during the heeling. While the heel and greeting is only 5 points, if your dog breaks and bites the decoy upon shaking hands, your exercise is a zero and you cannot title. So while the points are low, control is essential.

You should practice heeling around decoys that are moving around the field. Come on the field with the decoy in a chair first, and as you are heeling around (especially if your dog is highly attracted to the stimulus) have the decoy slowly get up and start walking. Too many handlers have the decoy immediately start agitating, running, and then when the dog tries to break or looks away are forced to compulse the attention/position. Think of this as a systematic desensitization exercise. Have your decoy walk around, sometimes stopping and being still, and you can heel around variably rewarding the dog for proper heeling. Over a succession of sessions have the decoy be a little more active, make a little more noise, but it should be done in waves. As you increase the draw from the decoy, increase the frequency and duration of the reward you give the dog for being correct. If

the dog tolerates the decoy well, have the decoy dial back the stimulation. The stimulation should go up and down, managing both the intensity and duration of the stimulation that the dog must become neutral to.

Move close and away as you heel, fall in behind him sometimes and then break away and reward, and sometimes heel toward the decoy. In your mind you must set the criteria for what you are going to reward and why. In decoy neutrality training the dog must think you are the source of the reward, not the decoy otherwise you will become less interesting and the dog, if impulsive enough, will build his frustration to a point where if he is too close he may not be able to help taking a bite on the handshake. Remember, you don't need a full grip to fail, only teeth on the suit. You should heel past the decoy, heel up close but far enough that the dog cannot lunge out and grip. However, you should expect the dog to try so don't be caught unaware. Always expect the mistake to be made. Never expect the dog to be correct. If he is correct reward the dog with his toy from you, as you heel away from the decoy.

Skill #2: Stay Means no Bite.
When the dog is showing neutrality (no self-loading as you approach the decoy) start halting and give the stay command with the decoy a few feet back. Be ready to intervene of the dog decides to load on him, just heel away, and get the dog into a more settled mood. If you have excellent eye contact, demand it throughout. The dog cannot maintain eye contact and position and bite at the same time. This is what is known as training mutually exclusive behaviors. Return to rewarding good position, and attention, and then try again. When the dog can tolerate heeling up and sitting in basic position (give a stay command if you wish) with the decoy about a yard in front, start practicing the handshake tolerance. This is a systematic desensitization exercise. Either you can approach the decoy or you can start in a sit with eye contact and have the decoy approach you. It is also a successive approximation exercise.

If you push the proximity of the decoy too fast, the dog may try to grip. We want to avoid allowing the dog to get into the mindset of being on the verge of biting. This is tolerance. Just like a dog can be neutral (indifferent) to a gunshot, the dog must be neutral to a calm approach of a decoy. You don't want the drive to build and build and then be "capped" but rather you want desensitization to occur. I suggest a subtle cue here, where you reach for the decoy's hand and he reacts to you by reaching toward you. If the dog sees this each time, and the result is no bite, the dog will be cued to continue to be calm when you reach toward the decoy initially. Move slowly but deliberately. Practice shaking hands at a distance, without even touching, and slowly over a few sessions, come closer together. The reward for the stay is always from you (toy) as you heel away from the decoy. Use a calm verbal marker as you would for any stay exercise to bridge the behavior you are rewarding to the release into the toy or ball as you heel away.

Skill # 3: Delayed Gratification.
Make a training session of the dog doing many of these calm approaches, shaking of the hands, and the decoy leaving. You can lineup 3 decoys and go from one to the next to the next. Each time the dog must show focus on you in heeling, and calm acceptance of the

decoy during the handshake. In essence you are trying to make the heeling together and handshake an exercise where the dog expects nothing to happen, to create true neutrality. The decoy walks away, and then you go to the next one, etc. Next you must have the second decoy approach, but do not give the bite on the approach and attack of the second decoy! You must practice the same neutrality with the approach of the second decoy, because the dog must stay calm through another greeting before that second decoy puts hands on you to initiate the attack and signal the dog to be allowed to grip. 80-90% of the training of this exercise should be friendly approaches by all decoys, both the first one and the second one.

Skill #4: Cue for the grip.
In the exercise, once the initial friendly decoy says goodbye and walks away, as I said, another decoy will approach you. The dog must stay "neutral" according to the rules. As the second decoy approaches from either behind or from the front, if the dog starts to anticipate that now he is getting the grip because you have trained the trial exercise as it is written, you will lose a number of points. Any handler intervention with the leash, or extra commands will cost points. At this point the dog needs to be completely neutral to approaches and tolerate the decoy in proximity to the handler, before we introduce the possibility that one of these decoys will attack. Your dog already knows how to grip the left bicep or in the legs. The cue for the grip will be the decoy pushing you, generally from the front greeting position, with his left arm into your right shoulder. Just to make sure our neutrality training didn't make the dog too sleepy to bite (right!) we set the scenario up so that we are going to do 4 greetings that are friendly and on say the 5th one have the decoy attack. On the attack you should give the command to bite, and praise the dog for reacting to the attack on your person. The dog bites, have the decoy just calmly walk backwards (no need to make this grip too intense) and then do your out/guard and heel away. Now go back to doing another 4 or 5 friendly greetings with no bite. Literally one in 10 of these greetings and no more (for very sharp dogs, you can do 1 in 20) should include an attack and a bite. You want your dog to think it's possible a greeting will result in a grip but not real probable on any given greeting. In fact, rarely give the grip on the first few approaches. Let the dog learn the gratification here is delayed, so as to reduce his impulsiveness, as we do in many other exercises. (I use the same principle of delayed gratification to teach a generally force free food refusal).

Redirected Attack (Guard)

Handler and dog shall begin at a marked starting place. One decoy shall be placed at a distance of 30 yards downfield of the team. A second decoy shall be passive, and directly behind the team at a distance of at least 10 yards. Upon the command of the steward the downfield decoy shall fire the blank gun twice and flee, upon the start of the action the handler should direct his dog to apprehend the fleeing decoy. Upon engaging the decoy the decoy shall briefly drive the dog, and upon command of the steward shall freeze. The handler shall then call his dog to return, as the second decoy has advanced upon him. After the handler's command for the dog to return has been made, the second decoy shall vocally pretend to attack the handler, and the dog must return to defend the handler by engaging the second decoy. The decoy shall briefly drive the dog, and on command of the steward, freeze up, and the handler shall command his dog to out and guard, and upon signal, pick up his dog from the guard. The handler may attach the leash on the dog in the guard. **Scoring: Send (5 points), Grip (10 points) Release (5 points) Return Speed (5 points) Defense (5 Points) Grip (10 Points) Release (5 points) Guard (5 points).**

Re-directed bites, by definition, are scenarios where the dog is sent to bite one decoy, and must be called out of the grip to be sent to another decoy. This should be a fluid motion, not having the dog out and fall into a guard, but to leave the grip, turn and head to the handler in one fluid motion. In PSA this scenario shows up in more formal fashion in the PSA 2 "Two man Attack." In the upper levels of the PSA 2 and PSA 3 there are a number of scenarios where this redirected bite may be employed, so it is imperative that you and your dog become comfortable with it. In PSA your dog must be fluid with both out and guard and out and return, and the out and return begins with training the redirect.

The redirect will also be the basis for teaching a fast out and return as well, so this exercise is very important! I also use it for starting directional, but that is also another discussion! Let's break it down:

Skill #1: Send to a fleeing bite with gunfire
Skill #2: Release and return to handler for a handler attack
Skill #3: Out and Guard

Skill #1: Even though it says send your dog upon the gunfire, there are scenarios below where you want to be sure the dog doesn't break on gunfire, so the handler MUST not let the dog think gunfire means just go! The handler must train gunfire neutrality (dealt with in the last exercise below – the apprehension with transport). That discussion covers this skill.

Skill #2: release and Return to handler for handler attack bite. This is a very simple redirect in itself, however, the training of the redirect requires some thought and systematic training:

Re-direct Command Structure

Once we introduce the re-directed bite, we will now have two ways in which the dog can be disengaged from the grip. The out and guard, and the out and return must be distinguished on command. We want the dog to be able to drop into a guard on one command and stay focused on the decoy without looking back to the handler, that's the out and guard. We also want the dog to "out" and come off the grip and return to the handler in a fluid motion on another separate command, that's the out and return. Many new trainers use the same command for both, just calling the dog out of the guard for the redirect. This is faulty under the rules. Further, the problem that introduces is instability in the guard. The dog may anticipate another grip behind him, when in a trial situation, and the dog leaves the guard to go back toward the handler. By having two separate commands the dog can better discriminate between the two behaviors. If we structure our commands properly the dog shouldn't experience any confusion as to what he should do. Here is how I structure these two separate disengage commands:

Out & Guard: "OUT"
Out & Return: "Dog's Name & Heel/or Here"

The trainer should know ahead of time if the dog is normally easy or difficult to out. The added confusion of a second decoy on the field may cause some problems with the out as the excitement will be at a high level. The goal is to have the second decoy motivate the dog to disengage the first decoy when the first decoy freezes up, by excitedly agitating the dog with a whip or clatter stick, or jug of rocks, something very enticing, and then we slowly eliminate the agitation to the point where the dog will recall from the grip on command and engage a second, passive decoy. Be ready for the dog to mistakenly continue to fight decoy #1 when he hears the agitation behind him. This improperly directed aggression is normal. This is why the dog will be set up with a training collar to out the dog (the decoy can make the correction, or another trainer can float into the scene and make the correction), and a second line on the dog affixed to the agitation collar to physically control the dog. There are examples of setting up this command and correction structure on video on my YouTube channel:

www.youtube.com/tarheelk9

It is critical to be aware that while motivating the dog to come back to another grip through agitation is initially desirable it can cause the dog to react only if he hears the agitation. This is a contextual cue that is inevitable, at least initially. We must wean the dog off this contextual cue to the desirable cue of the handler's recall command "Ranger – Heel".

Redirect Training set-up

Step 1: Planning

As in all our training, planning ahead to make sure we get the outcome we desire is crucial to keeping the dog out of conflict. The equipment necessary will be as follows: Long line (15' or 30') attached to a flat collar, and a short 6' leash attached to a pinch collar. Later we will introduce the e-collar after the behavior is clear to the dog. Don't rush into the E-Collar, as the E-Collar only gives stimulation and not direction. Further, a second line on the prong collar will allow the decoy not only to correct the release behavior, but if an out and guard is commanded to keep the dog from leaving the guard and returning to the 2nd decoy. There will be two decoys, set up 180 degrees apart. Both decoys should be equipped with a whip or other distraction to excite the dog's prey drive. The handler comes out and has the dog sit in heel position and face one of the decoys. I like to start with a grip on the bite suit in the triceps area to make the out as easy as possible, minimizing the confrontation and defensive mood of the dog. The dog is sent to decoy #1 who works the dog, making sure to get the grip nice and full, as we would normally do. Then this first decoy makes sure there is a clear line from the back of his arm down the long line from the dog's collar to the handler's hand, as he holds the second line with a short leash to the pinch collar so he can make a correction to force the out if needed.

Step 2: Motivating the re-direct

The goal in motivating the re-direct is to trade out one passive decoy for a more exciting fight with another decoy. There is a very important progression to the redirect. After decoy #1 freezes up we are ready to re-direct the dog. The process is as follows:

Decoy # 1 freezes → handler: "Ranger- Heel" → Decoy # 2 Agitates just after dog's name

Now, one of 2 things can happen. Either: (1) the dog lets go and comes to the agitating decoy, or (2) he stays in the grip on decoy 1. If he stays on the grip, decoy #1 must immediately correct the out (into the suit), and as soon as the dog drops out of the grip, and **before** he can come into a guard (what he already knows to do after the out) the handler must pop the long line on the flat collar as the second decoy continues agitating, to re-direct the dog on the second decoy.

Three of the most common problems in the first few sessions are:

(1) The dog does not out.
(2) The dog outs but guards decoy #1 despite all the commotion behind him.
(3) The dog outs but then on the agitation, re-engages decoy #1 (directing his aggression on the closest available target).

The suggestions above deal with each of these issues. It is the job of the handler and decoy to be aware of these likely outcomes and have a plan to deal with them. Decoy #1 must be in a position to correct the out, and timing must be keen. In many of the seminars I teach, I see poor planning and poor communication between decoy and handler about how to deal with these issues "on the fly" when they are happening at full speed. I cannot stress enough that these issues must be worked out prior to sending the dog to the first grip. Talk about what you expect each decoy to do, especially if the decoys are not very experienced. Decoy #1 must catch the dog, grab the correction line and be ready to enforce the out if necessary. The handler must be ready to give some motivating pops on the line to bring the dog out of a guard or keep the dog from returning to decoy #1 when the dog does let go. And decoy #2 must agitate at the right time.

The handler not only must be ready to help the dog with the long line to make the re-direct, but he must also give the dog the familiar signals of a tight line when the dog is correctly in the grip, and a loose line just prior to the out. The line tension will help avoid anticipation of the re-direct.

Now assuming we get the dog to come to the second decoy, give the grip on the back of the arm, and set up for another re-direct back to decoy 1. The procedure is exactly the same as discussed above. Once the dog begins to see the pattern of what is required, the likely outcome is that the dog may begin to anticipate the re-direct. This is an undesirable outcome (anticipation). However, it signals to us that the dog understands the context of what we want him to do. What we *really* want him to do, however, is to come off on command, and not to anticipate the second bite. Therefore we must take some steps to insure this is the outcome we get.

There are a number of things we must now do to vary the context:

1. Decoys must keep the dog in the grip, adding some defense and keeping a lot of movement in the fight. Vary inside front bites with back shoulder bites, and forearm bites (for police dogs). Throw in some distractions, such as stick or jug of rocks to keep the fight more intense.
2. Decoy must keep a hold on the short line, and not allow the dog to leave him prior to the command. If the dog comes off the grip, on his own, the decoy must not let the dog leave (using the line) and must immediately attack the dog to re-engage the grip. However, a good decoy will be able to read the anticipation in the dog's grip before he comes out, and make an adjustment accordingly. Try to avoid this at all costs if possible.
3. Begin mixing in outs-and-guard with reward bites for guarding, with the outs-and-return.
4. Once we add in out and guards, vary sessions where we don't do any re-directs, remember that action commands (re-directs) are more exciting than commands where the dog must restrain his drive (guarding).
5. Be sure to vary direction and decoys throughout the process, for example if you send the dog in one direction down the field and re-direct him from that position all the time he will anticipate based on direction (place on the field). If you send

the dog first on decoy "Bob" and always re-direct him from Bob, he will anticipate the re-direct based on the decoy he is biting. What I try to do is to switch up direction, and decoy position on the field all the time.

Step 3: Enforcing the Re-Direct

At some point you will want to incorporate a correction into the re-direct. This is one instance where the handler will correct the dog from behind on the long line. Though this is not optimal for reasons discussed earlier, as long as the dog is clear on the out command, a correction from behind will serve as a reminder to come back on the "Ranger-Heel" command. As he comes back the handler sends the dog to the next decoy.

Note that if you get to the point where the dog will out and return quickly, making him stop in heel position is just an obedience exercise (come to heel from any place) and you can reward the dog with the second grip after coming to heel position. This will be very useful in upper level training.

If the dog has been properly trained to react to the E-Collar for the out, the same correction pairing method can be used to enforce the redirect. I don't personally teach this exercise from the start with the E-Collar. See for example the explanation in my book Controlled Aggression, or the E-Collar technique in this article in K9 Cop Magazine:

http://www.tarheelcanine.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/10/Jerry-E-Collar-Article-K9-Cop.pdf

The redirect is the hardest part of this scenario. The start of the scenario requires gunfire neutrality. The dog is allowed to go on the gun-shots, but just because it is allowed doesn't mean it's a good idea. Again, I recommend teaching neutrality so the dog doesn't react to shots and goes rather on your command (there is another scenario below where the dog has to stay through gunshots, so don't train one scenario and condition him to blast forward on the gun, and then train another scenario where he gets corrected for doing the same thing!).

Skill 3: As for the last skill the dog should already know an out and guard before you do the redirect training. Once your dog will do multiple redirects, start throwing in out/guard sometimes so your dog can clearly discriminate between the two disengage techniques. The hard part of this skill is not having the dog anticipate another redirect. Mix it up a lot, with redirects and out and guards, vary places you train, and vary decoys from whom you redirect, and from whom you out and guard. For a more in depth discussion of redirects, and a complete training progression, see my book, Controlled Aggression:

http://www.lulu.com/us/en/shop/girard-bradshaw/controlled-aggression/paperback/product-3477690.html

Keep the short line and long line on the dog (even if you are primarily using the E-Collar to correct) to physically keep the dog in the positions you want. Remember E-Collar gives stimulation but not direction, and we want to make the exercise as clear to the dog as possible.

Once your dog knows both exercises, out and guard and out and return, mix up the method of disengages so the dog must listen to what you say each time and not anticipate. As the dog fluidly comes back on his name ready to be sent again to the reward decoy, you can start to demand the dog to stop in heel position, and give you facial attention, before being sent on to the reward. Use your verbal markers to bridge the behavior and the delayed reward. This will get the dog to hurry to heel position in order to be sent along to the reward. Once this piece is complete you have a properly trained out and return in addition to a clean redirect.

Fighting Decoys (Recall):

Dog and handler start at a cone. The handler leaves the dog and proceeds to a hiding place (can be behind a car or blind; but must be out of sight) with two decoys who are sitting in chairs 30-40 feet away from the dog. When the handler reaches the hiding place, the decoys will start arguing (the argument will be verbal ONLY, but it can be loud). After 20 seconds of verbal arguing, the steward will waive the handler to approach the decoys to sort out the argument, and then on the further signal of the steward one decoy will get up and jog away from the argument. This decoy running away will NOT have any distractions. After the decoy runs away, there will be a 5 second delay, and then the second decoy will attack the handler. The dog must engage the threat (at the last second, the decoy will stop attacking the handler and will advance/attack the dog). The handler must return to a designated spot near the hiding place. After the drive, the decoy will be instructed to "freeze up". The handler MUST perform an out and recall. The exercise is complete when the dog returns to the heel position. **Scoring: Stay (5) Defense (10) Grip (10) Drive (5) Release (10) Return Heel (10)**

This exercise is seen by some as very difficult, however to me, I see it as an extension of the PSA 1 obedience routine, where the dog has to stay in place under distraction of a decoy in a chair. This scenario adds complexity in that the handler will be out of sight, and there will be 2 decoys arguing, and making some light hand gestures. Let's break it down:

Skill 1: Stay under distraction of decoys verbally arguing with handler out of sight
Skill 2: Stay under distraction of decoy jogging away with a somewhat sudden movement as a trigger to the dog's prey drive.
Skill 3: Handler attack
Skill 4: Out and recall to handler.

Skill 4 was developed in the redirect exercise. And **Skill 3** was trained already in the greeting of a friendly stranger scenario, when the decoy attacks the handler and touches, the dog is allowed to grip and fight. So really this exercise mostly comes down to training decoy neutrality. It is so very important to disconnect the stay from any biting in the beginning. You will see in the next scenario where we take the decoy neutrality further with deconditioning the gunfire.

Skill #1: I use systematic desensitization method to decondition the dog to the decoys arguing in the chair. I set up back-ties around the field so we can train in different places, and I use chairs initially, but then go to decoys standing next to one another and arguing (this will help train the decoy neutrality required for the last scenario and not make it too contextual). For a discussion of systematic desensitization and other environmental training techniques see this article in K9 Cop Magazine:

http://www.tarheelcanine.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/10/Bradshaw-1.pdf

Prepare the back tie in advance so all you do is heel to the place where you will place your dog in a down. The dog will certainly want to be looking at the decoys, so as you approach, demand focused attention, and do not let him look at the decoys as you set up. Have someone hand you the back-tie clip as you enforce the facial attention, and clip it to your dog's fur saver or flat collar. Make sure it isn't tight. I use the back tie the same way in teaching the long down exercise in the PSA 1. I never let him think he can leave the down, and get anywhere. If he breaks he gives himself a line correction to interrupt the behavior, and he doesn't get any reward from breaking. I use 2 lines and double handling on the down in front of the decoy in the PSA 1 obedience, and recommend if your down is a little sketchy you add a second line to a correction collar to the picture. You can have the "judge" or whoever is playing judge during the training hold the second line, so if the dog breaks in any direction he is able to correct the dog back into the down. This also prevents the dog from going to find you as you work up to being farther away and then out of sight. I never let the dog get a grip on the decoy in the chair, and I mean never, ever allow it. The 2 line method keeps the dog honest. But as both handler and trainer you need to be on guard and expect the dog to make the mistake. Training uses for the back tie can be seen here in this article from K9 Cop Magazine:

http://www.tarheelcanine.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/10/JerryBradshaw.pdf

As you progress don't be quick to eliminate the lines in training. I recommend using that set up all the way to trial. Vary where you do the training around the field so the dog doesn't just get place associated. Go to different fields, and set up back ties in advance. Move the dog around. This training should desensitize the dog to the decoys, and you are not going to give him any bites for a while in connection with this scenario.

As you progress this scenario you are varying two things, where you are in relation to the dog, and the intensity of the verbal argument. You want to really over-train this scenario to where the decoys are going to make a lot more noise in training than you will see on the field. The new rule is a 20 second argument, no longer a full minute, but I recommend training to a minute at least, before you consider yourself ready. I would work on intensity first with you in proximity to the dog. The verbal arguments should start soft, and build in intensity, and then taper off, and then build again slowly in intensity. As the decoys taper off their argument and the dog stays through the intense part, walk back to the dog and give him some physical praise, slow petting from behind the ears down his back, and remind him to stay down verbally once you touch him. Then move a little distance away.

When you start working on you being out of sight, dial back the decoy intensity some, and work your way away from him. Keep the hiding places varied. If your dog is a little over-dependent, he can get nervous when you are gone and there is the temptation of the decoys right there. Leave and come back, leave and come back, extending the time a little bit with each time you leave. Once he is comfortable with you leaving and standing in sight at a distance, start going out of sight for short periods, just a few seconds, with the dog double lined so he can neither go get the decoys nor break to come find you. Each

time you go out of sight, come back, praise, and occasionally reward the dog with a toy. (It is critical in PSA to be able to reward your dog with a tug or ball in the presence of decoys). When you want to end the exercise, come to the dog, make him sit, just like in the long down, and heel away, then reward the dog with a tug as you heel away from the decoys. Play with him vigorously. You can break up the stay with these heel-aways occasionally to let off a little frustration so he doesn't stay in the down loading. Let him know the only way from him to off-load the frustration is by playing with you. He will not be allowed to go bite (that part is a piece of cake). As part of your desensitization process, you will keep the dog in the down, as you approach the decoys, and then leave. So this part of the skill requires desensitization to the decoys and you moving around the field (and eventually out of sight). I think the picture here is clear. No bites. Lots of neutrality work.

Skill #2 The dog must not break when the decoy jogs away and you are standing there with both decoys (in the trial exercise). This is also a desensitization exercise. Once your dog is good and solid on skill #1 above, start with the dog double lined, and you near the dog, as the decoy gets up first and just walks away after a short verbal exchange between the decoys. This will desensitize the dog to the decoy leaving without exciting the prey drive to kick in. The decoy leaving should build up from just walking away, to getting up progressively faster, and jogging. As the dog holds the down, come in and do your heel-aways and reward the dog with the tug or ball. Let him off-load the stimulation in a controlled way.

Once the dog will do both these skills well, and show patience, and not be loading during the argument, you can add in a bite so the dog knows it can happen. This should be a 1 in 15 or 20 times ratio. Remember in a trial when you are attacked you are allowed to call your dog to you. Your set up will be put the dog in a down, with a second handler on the back-tie line so he can release it at the appropriate time. You can still have a second correction line on the dog so he is still in between two people and if he's a little unsocial can't get to either of them it things go south on the set up.

You down the dog and walk away to the hiding place as the decoys argue. You then go to the decoys as they argue, and the decoy jogs away once and comes back. No bite. Yu return to the dog, praise, leave to go to hiding place, and then to the decoys, decoy jogs away again, no bite. On the 3rd or 4th approach of the arguing decoys, after the decoy jogs away and gets some distance, have the remaining decoy make a move on you and put hands on and make it very clear, and call your dog to you. Your support staff once they see the dog is going to the right place let the lines go and the dog gets a grip on the correct decoy. Good fight and you go grab your correction line, get some distance back, and disengage your dog. Reward with your tug for the disengage (return to heel). Hold the line so if he gets a wild idea to now go get the other decoy you can prevent that mistake from happening. Throw in these bites very rarely. We just want him to know it can happen, not that it will happen every time, or be very likely. It's all about balancing.

The Apprehension (guard):

Handler will start with the dog in the heel position at the position where the dog will be left. In front of the handler and off to the side about 15 feet away will be a decoy who indicates verbally that he was just robbed by the man standing downfield (about 30 yards away). The decoy may only point and verbally indicate the downfield decoy. Gun fire will occur from the decoy downfield at the steward's indication and that decoy will slowly jog away, while the other decoy near to the handler will become passive. Handler then leaves the dog in a stay and moves to the position abreast the 2nd decoy (same positioning as the Level 2 call off). The handler must call the dog to the heel position, and then send the dog downfield to apprehend the gun-toting decoy. The dog will apprehend the decoy. After a short drive, the decoy will be instructed to freeze up. The handler will perform a mandatory out/guard, then be instructed to go pick up the dog, walk it away about 5 feet, and put it in a stay (handler's choice). The handler will pat down the decoy and disarm him. After disarming, the handler will pick up the dog, then perform a rear transport to the judge. In this scenario, a rear transport means the handler/dog remain approximately 10 feet behind the decoy. The perfect picture is one in which the dog is attentive to the decoy. The dog giving attention to the handler but glancing away to look at the decoy is acceptable. Pulling or dragging the handler to the decoy is unacceptable. The steward will tell the handler to command the decoy to halt. Upon halting, the exercise will be complete. **Scoring: Stay (5) Return to heel (5) Send (5) Grip (10) Out (5) Guard (5) Stay/pat-down (5) Rear transport (10)**

This exercise is all about being a smart handler. The scenario has changes to become a little easier to use your handler influence in the trial. This scenario is to prep you for the level 2 call off scenario, as the set up in the beginning is considerably close to the set up for the call off. Let's break this down:

Skill 1: Neutrality with the handler by his side to the gunfire down field.
Skill 2: As decoy down field jogs away, handler moves up 15 feet and has to call the dog to heel position, without a bite on the distraction decoy.
Skill 3: Send downfield on fleeing decoy
Skill 4: Out/Guard
Skill 5: Heel away from decoy and place in a stay behind the decoy
Skill 6: Neutrality to Pat down
Skill 7: Rear Transport

Almost all of these skills can be developed on the back-tie or double handling is trained using the double line technique and desensitization training! Skill 1, skill 2, and skill 6 are all trained using this approach already explained in detail in the previous scenario. The dog knows a recall to heel from the obedience requirements, the only additional distraction being having heard the gunfire, and the decoy downfield is jogging away and there is a second decoy present.

Skill 3 is a fleeing bite, and is a piece of cake. Skill 4 is an out and guard, already trained. Skill 5 is to heel the dog out of the guard and put in a stay behind. This is already done in

a number of the PSA 1 exercises: Heel out of the guard and a down stay with a decoy in the vicinity (see greeting a friendly stranger set up). Skill 6 with neutrality to the pat down is easy. There is never a bite in this exercise, so just 2-line desensitization is needed (see the article on advanced back tie training referenced above).

The new thing here is the rear transport. For those unfamiliar with a rear transport, the dog and handler are together in basic position behind the decoy about 5 paces. The handler commands the decoy to walk ahead and the dog is told a command to transport (could be different from the side transport command, or the same.). If the dog watches the decoy the entire time and stays in position, without touching the handler, this is a pretty ideal picture. If the dog stays in heel position and looks entirely at the handler (heels with attention) this will result in a very minor point deduction. If the dog heels sometimes looking at the handler and occasionally glancing to the decoy, this is acceptable, and should bring no point deduction. How you train this comes down to a risk-reward situation. If the dog breaks out of position and bites the decoy in the transport, you will ZERO the whole exercise, so for me, who has no desire to do the level 1 more than a couple times, I would just have the dog heel with attention. I'll take a point or two here because the cost of the dog zoning into the decoy and breaking or just getting out of control (it's the very last things the dog will do in a 1 routine) is too high. I know from my IPO experience, that if you do enough of this training, using the heel command, and allow the dog to glance away to the helper and praise when he looks back to you, you will eventually create the heeling with glances in this context, as you add in an occasional bite (I always start with bites from the halt after some heeling so the dog doesn't thing about forging when we are moving behind the decoy. I throw in multiple turns, halts, etc.).

I use the "transport" command coupled with the heeling command at first to give him a sense of position. Then I wean out the heeling command pretty quickly because to me, in PSA, heel means do not look at the decoy at all, while transport (both side and rear allow attention to the decoy, we just want him in correct position relative to the handler/decoy). This is a finesse exercise, and as a trainer you need to think about what is important and not important, and how you can create the behavior you want with a little point loss and control risk as possible.

You can blend the rear and side transports, going from one to the other. If you are going to do that you need to already train a side transport, so you can move between the two. That topic is for another article. But maybe you can see how that will eventually help you develop the send into the transport and the remote transports for the level 3.

Note how the heeling training up to the decoy in the Defense of Handler scenario also helps with this preparation, and vice versa.

General Handling Strategies

Training the exercises is the first step. If you train consistently, you will know your dog's strengths and relative weaknesses. Notice that there are important pieces of information for handling in these descriptions. There is some gray area as well. Try to ask questions of the judge in the handler meeting to clarify some of these grey areas. As a competitor, I will ask questions in the handler meeting for two reasons. First, to clarify information so I can form a strategy based on what my dog knows how to do, but I also ask questions in order to try to unnerve my opponents a little, or possibly give them some disinformation that might lead to disaster should they try the strategy! Since these scenarios are published in advance, you should come in with a strategy of your own. Do not make the mistake of listening to someone else's game plan and changing your strategy at the last minute! Make sure you know the scenarios back and forth, so in case a mistake is made in the handler meeting by the judge (yes we are human) or the steward, you can make sure to ask a question about it. Your strategy is based on knowing how the scenario is written.

The handler meeting in level 1 is usually very quiet. Judges describe the scenario and few questions are asked. Handlers sometimes worry that that haven't trained enough, and resign themselves to failure. This is the problem with handlers new to surprise scenario trials. You are used to preparing a standardized skill set, and applying it in the trial. Surprise scenario trials are just the opposite. You must prepare as much as possible select individual compartmentalized skills, and string them together at the trial. You must determine risk and reward, and come up with a plan to give your dog the maximum points based on what he knows how to do at that moment you are in the trial. In higher levels, the dogs will also be confronted with scenarios they haven't seen, and you haven't seen, and exercises their dogs may not know. The skill in handling in surprise scenarios is to make the most of your dog's strengths, downplay his weaknesses, and handle creatively.

Let's take the approach to scenario 1 above as an example. Suppose you know your dog doesn't know how to send through a tunnel at 15 feet. You are pretty close but you know your dog hasn't been proofed enough. You've only sent him from right in front at that distance a couple of times. In the handler meeting you could ask, "Will I zero out if I move forward from the start line?" In this case, the answer is no. But you will lose send points the closer you get to the tunnel. Now you have a strategy for the beginning part of the scenario. If you take the chance your dog will go through at 15 feet, you risk blowing some of the 10 points of the send, and all of the 5 points of the tunnel. That is probably about 8 points total in a 50-point exercise, bringing you to 42 points. You need 38 points to pass. That gives you only 4 points to play with. If you move up half way and the dog goes through the tunnel, you lose only 5 for going half way up on the send, and save yourself 3 points!

The problem with handlers new to the exercises of surprise scenarios is that they feel as though they must do things exactly as presented, no matter what the dog knows. They come out, send the dog through, he goes around bites the passive decoy and they lose a big chunk of points off the top. Handling is about making choices. If the judge were to say you zero the entire exercise if you move from the start cone, you would know that is not an option. But in most cases, we devise scenarios for which you must think up creative solutions.

Let's now look at the Redirected Attack Scenario. After the redirect the second out must be an out and guard. Suppose your dog was initially trained to do out and recall, not out and guard, and is a little weak on his out and guard. In the first 3 scenarios you could do your out and recall without losing points. Now you are faced with a mandatory guard.

In the handler's meeting I might ask this important question: "once the dog comes back to defend me, can I go up near the dog on the 2nd grip?" The judge would have to say: "nothing in the scenario says you must stay at the line after the dog returns, yes, you may move once the dog engages the decoy on the return bite." Now I will have my strategy. I will go up to the decoy to out him in heel position. No recall, just an out and guard, but I will use my influence to cover up the weakness in my training. Might have to give a couple commands, but the approach is free, and not releasing is a zero!

I hope this gives a glimpse into what kinds of questions need to be asked in handler's meetings to be able to properly form a strategy for your dog, given his training experience and proclivities. Judges may or may not answer your questions. You may get a hint that something is not being judged by a non-answer. Or you may get fooled altogether! This is the fun in these trials.

In a surprise scenario tournament a few years before we founded PSA, Joe Morris was handling his excellent dog Reno in the trial. The scenario was very difficult. He murmured to the other handlers in the handler meeting that the scenario was just impossible, and how he was just going send his dog to blast the first person available. The other handlers came out one by one resigned to failure, and just let their dogs go bite (the wrong guy). The all failed one by one. Then he came out, and had a very smart strategy to get his dog to bite the right decoy. It cost him a few points, but his dog performed the scenario correctly and he won the trial. He got into the heads of his competitors, and used their fear against them. It was one of the best strategies I have ever seen. He handled his competition, by good training, and also getting into their heads!

By no means is this a complete treatment of how to train the surprise scenarios. Nothing beats having a creating group of trainers to work with, and experienced training directors and decoys, and there are many ways to solve these scenarios. However, these are tested methods for training, and I hope they give you some ideas, inspiration and maybe get you to think of your own way to train the PSA 1 Surprise scenarios. Any feedback on this E-Book is appreciated to: jbradshaw@tarheelcanine.com

Tarheel Canine (www.tarheelcanine.com) offers 3-day and 5-day PSA Training classes for serious competitors to include obedience, bite work, training theory and methods, handling, decoy training for all levels of competitors and their dogs. If you want to train with the group whose present and former members have titled more PSA 3 dogs than any other, contact Jerry Bradshaw at jbradshaw@tarheelcanine.com for training availability for private, semi-private, and group instruction. Tarheel Canine Protection Sports Club is home to PSA's director of judges, director of decoys, and two other active and certified PSA decoys. Happy Training!!