

# *Training the "Out"*

*by Pat Taylor*

*Fellstar Bouvs*

The Out is an off-contact positioning exercise. Your imagination determines what you use it for but the general purpose of the exercise is to reduce/release pressure whether that pressure is the pressure dogs feel from stock or the pressure the stock feel from the dog. To reduce/release the pressure the dog is moved AWAY from the stock in a straight line.

The Out is similar to the Send Away taught in Schutzhund or the Send Away taught for directional jumping in obedience. With the Send Away you send the dog away from "you" and the dog has to leave the handler, travelling a straight line, until the handler commands the dog to either sit or down. The dog reorients on the handler waiting for the next command.

In herding the Send Away is called an Out. The dog is oriented to the stock and the handler tells the dog to Out. The dogs turns around and leaves the stock travelling a straight line directly away from the stock until the handler tells him to reorient to stock with a There and Down.

Optimally, the Out is taught AFTER the dog is "hooked" on stock. The reason for the need for the dog to be "hooked" is the Out is off stock.... Not you; and you reward the Out (during training it) with a Walk Up (reorientation to the stock and putting pressure on the stock).

It is of utmost importance that you remember the Out is OFF THE LIVESTOCK, not off you.

Use the KISS (Keep It Simple Stupid) method of training the Out. Don't need anything fancy or to complicate the issue.

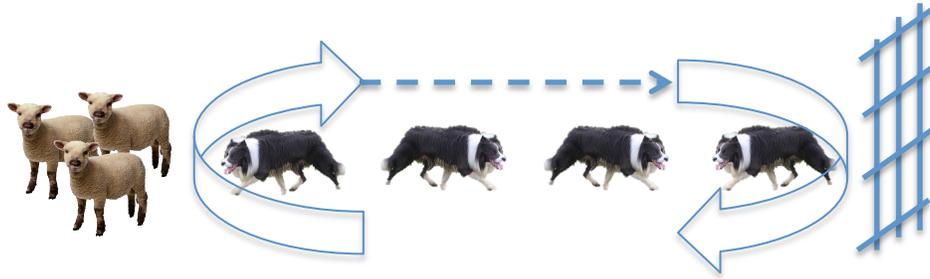
When I first train an Out I start it in a smaller area that has a fenced perimeter. I want the dog to believe that when I say Out, it is to keep going until it gets to a fence. The reason for orienting the Out to a fenceline is because it helps the dog mentally turn loose of the stock and move away easier if it is focused on getting TO some point, e.g., a fenceline. AFTER the Out is trained you can stop the dog at any point before the dog gets to a fence. You want to “pattern” the dog to go a fairly good distance and/or TO a fenceline. Later in training you will have a dog that just leaves the stock and keeps running Out until you stop him, whether or not a fence is even within sight.

You may wish to start in an arena (even a duck arena) otherwise if you start in a pasture you’ll walk a million miles in each training session to get the Out trained correctly.

I like to start training the Out from the beginning of training but it can be introduced into training at any time, whether the dog is a beginner or advanced. It is a tool. Nothing more. Nothing less. It should be approached as an exercise that needs to be taught as though it were an obedience command where you get 100% compliance from the dog. The dog needs to “commit” to execution of the “Out” command e-v-e-r-y-t-i-m-e you give the command.

I work as few “other” exercises as possible while working the Out. The There command and Down command are actually 2 different exercises combined to help start working the Out. I don’t want to add a Flank in the beginning of training. Take one 5-10 minute session and work just the Out. Do 3 to 5 repetitions of the Exercise per that work session. Relax between sessions for at least 10 to 15 minutes before working anything else or repeating another Out session.

Again, in training the Out is executed by the dog doing a 180-degree turn DIRECTLY AWAY FROM THE STOCK and travelling in a straight line until the dog gets to the fence.



To simplify the exercise the commands that will be used are in sequence, to-wit: There, Down, Out, There, Down, Walk Up, Down, That'll Do.

This exercise is to be taught on lead and using a stock stick.

This exercise needs to be taught with the dog both on your left side then right side. So make sure as you train this exercise you work both sides and your dog is comfortable with you on either side of him.

Basically the dog will always be travelling toward something. When you start the exercise the dog will be “looking” (travelling toward) the stock and you will There/Down your dog. Then the dog will be moving away from the stock and toward something (the fence) with a There/Down again issued for this routine.

The Out is started with the dog on lead. You'll walk into the training area and orient your dog to the stock with a There/Down. The dog is now facing the stock and on contact.

Your dog is at your side. Place your stock stick between you and the dog to make sure the dog doesn't try to cross in front or behind you as you turn around. You have the leash in one hand and the stock stick in the other. Turn around (turn into/toward the dog) and command at the same time, “OUT”. Keep the stock stick in position between you and the dog and apply mild pressure so the dog is not heeling but slightly off to one side. I don't want the dog to veer off the straight line from where it downed. Make sure YOU are walking off to one side of the dog's path.

You walk next to your dog and parallel to the dog's path and go all the way to the fence. Make sure you look up and pick a point on the fence to walk to so that you don't have a crooked line or veer off course.

If the dog doesn't call off (Out) easily then give a gentle jerk on the leash to get the dog started walking with you away from the stock. The stock stick can also be used to help yield the dog away from the stock.

I would prefer you don't use the That'll Do command combined with the Out command to call the dog off. I would like the Out command to be understood by the dog as a "mentally turn loose of the stock" command and for the dog to understand that it is STILL working but has to commit to executing a new command.

When you reach the fence, tell the dog "There/Down" (you are reorienting the dog to the stock) so turn INTO/TOWARD the dog making sure the dog turns with you and faces the stock once again. AS SOON AS THE DOG'S ELBOWS TOUCH THE GROUND... tell the dog to "Walk up" and walk the dog straight back toward the sheep until the stock shows slight movement. We're not talking the stock has to move away but the stock should start turning their heads, twitching their ears toward the dog or shuffle in place because the dog is putting pressure on them.

When you see that "flick of an ear" from the stock you tell the dog Down.

EXERCISE OVER. Tell your dog "That'll Do" and walk away from the stock with the dog, patting the dog and telling him he's a good dog.

In the beginning while training the Out it is imperative to remember... FOR EVERY "OUT" YOU DO, YOU END THE EXERCISE WITH A WALK UP TO REWARD THE DOG. This is extremely important. Since the dog has to mentally turn loose of the stock to successfully complete the exercise you need the reward as a motivational tool. The reward for the dog should always BE the stock. Food treats or toys orient the dog to YOU. We don't want that.

The Out starts and ends with a Down. As a matter-of-fact ALL my training exercises start and end with a Down command. Why? Because it allows the dog to “see” the bits and pieces that make up any given exercise. It allows the dog to focus on a short routine and understand that the exercise has ended.

When you work ANY exercise, including the Out, you don’t want to “run together” a bunch of exercises. You work ONE “Out” exercise and after the Walk Up you release the dog with a That’ll Do and walk off with your dog. Set him up after a moment or two for another Out exercise.

As you replicate the exercise you will step further and further away from your dog and off to the side. But continue to travel a parallel path to your dog’s path. You will be taking all the steps the dog takes in the beginning.

Use the stock stick to hold your dog off to one side of you and to enable you to get further from the dog.

Your dog should begin to Out with ease and turn loose of the stock without any problems before you attempt to step too far away from the dog.

Once the dog Outs without difficulty and you have him doing the exercise at the end of a 6 foot leash you can drop the lead and pressure the dog to move a little further away from you as you execute the Out exercise, until you are walking a parallel path 10, 15, 20 or 30 feet to one side of the dog.

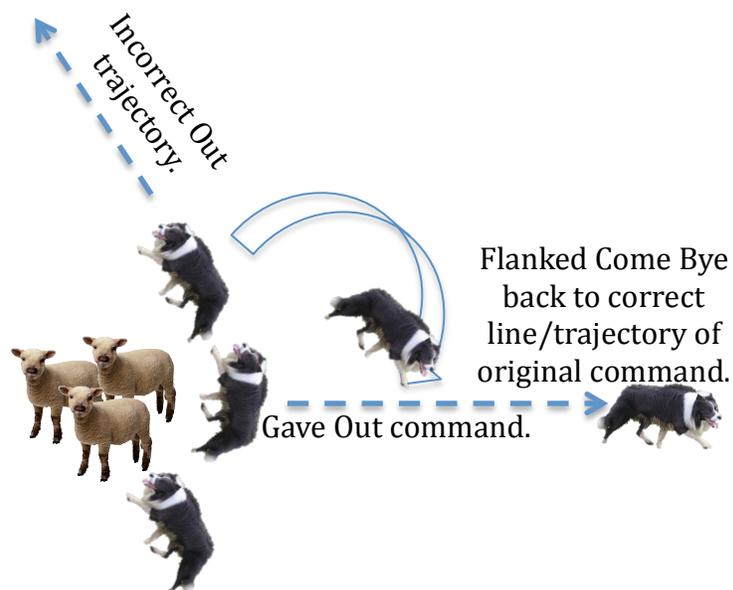
When the dog is perfect at executing the Out to a fenceline with you walking parallel, start fading back and away from the dog and allow him to finish the Out exercise without you walking the whole path with him.

**REMEMBER** to always **FACE THE DIRECTION YOU WANT THE DOG TO OUT** during the training of the Out. Always step off to one side so the dog can see you out of the corner of its eye as well. People do not realize how much the dog depends on your body language to affirm to the dog that it is correct in its actions. Make it so.

At any time the dog fumbles with the execution of the command step back into the picture to help the dog get it right.

As you transition from always walking parallel to the dog to fading back away from the dog don't let the dog fade or bend off his straight line.

At THIS point you will correct the "line" the dog takes by adding Flanking to the routine. If the dog bends or fades off his straight line you IMMEDIATELY DOWN THE DOG. Then Flank him back onto his line and redirect with another Out command. You WORK the dog this way to make sure he stays TRUE TO THE LINE and does not fade or bend that line.



If you have problems Flanking the dog back onto his line you will have to step back in and get closer to the dog to make sure he executes the exercise correctly. If you have not skipped ahead in the training you should not have any problems Flanking the dog back onto his line and redirecting him to Out again and continue away from the stock on his original trajectory.

If you start the Out this way you are always Outing OFF the stock and not you. (You're off to one side remember.) Your dog will understand that it is leaving the sheep. As you fade out of the picture the dog will gain a better understanding of the Out command.

Remember, AGAIN, that while training this exercise you ALWAYS reorient the dog to the stock and do a short Walk Up, rewarding the dog for executing the command.

Once you can stay with the stock and the dog Outs to the fence and reorients to walk back up without a problem, it is time to move yourself around the clock face and Out the dog while you're standing in a different places.

Remember to continue to face the direction you wish the dog to Out. Give the dog the Out command and if need be, Flank the dog back on the original line or walk through the sheep to help the dog Out correctly on that straight line.

If the dog has problems Outing then repeat the exercise until the dog is comfortable with your new position.

NOTE: Notice I did not flank the dog to a different position but left the dog to go to the new placement for myself. By moving ME and not the dog, the dog's picture does not change.

Training in the above manner allows the dog to see the SAME picture every time you do the Out exercise. For the dog, nothing changes. You may be in a different place but the dog was left at its location with a There/Down command. You just walk off before finishing the exercise.

The above exercise goes fairly quickly if you make sure you keep it simple.

You now move around the arena or field and practice the Out with you in many different locations. You want the dog comfortable with its understanding of the Out and moving in a straight line off the stock.

You have now trained the Out. You can use it to help "set the distance" you want the dog to Flank off stock. You may have a dog that is not naturally wide on its Flanks or Outrun.

Use the BOX EXERCISE to help the dog understand to maintain its distance from the stock while Flanking around stock. Then you may use the Out command to set that distance. You start a dog 10 feet off stock and want the dog to maintain a perimeter of 20 feet while Flanking around the stock. Flank the dog a short distance around the stock then Out the dog to 20 feet off stock. ReFlank the dog at that distance. If you have used the Box Exercise and the dog understands to maintain its distance, the dog will now continue that Flank and stay 20 feet off the stock.

At this point let me state NEVER Out a dog while it is IN MOTION. If you make a habit of using the Out to get the dog off stock while the dog is in motion the dog will begin to understand the Out as a Flanking command. It will just go a little wider on the Flank but continue on the Flank instead of turning and leaving the stock. If you bastardize the Out this way you will lose your true Out. If you need to get the dog wider on the Flank then stop the dog and redirect with an Out. When the dog gets to the distance you want from the stock Down the dog and redirect with another Flank command.

I realize that in a trial you are going to throw an Out into the Outrun if the dog is running too close and not executing the Flank correctly. But let that be the exception to the rule and not happen when you are at home TRAINING. If you let this exercise slide and do not make sure the dog is executing it correctly you are shooting yourself in the foot.

Make sure your dog does the Out correctly e-v-e-r-y-t-i-m-e you Out the dog in training and when you need the perfect Out in a real trial you will get exactly what you have trained.

The Out is a wonderful training tool. It allows you to micromanage the dog and relocate the dog anywhere on the herding field.

NOTE For those that train AGILITY (A training tidbit):

In handling some dogs that were also trialing at advanced levels in agility, I noticed a lot of the dogs were “Hard minded” and “on the muscle” at the handler’s post.

When you go to the handler's post in herding the first time the sheep see your dog you want the dog to be soft minded and not "working" sheep while it sits and waits for the first command of the day. You also don't want the dog to prematurely leave the post before you command it. THEN you want the first step of that Outrun to be soft and wide. The agility dogs are vibrating at the post, waiting to zoom in at the first opportunity. Don't get me wrong, a lot of dogs are vibrating at the post whether in agility or not. It's called "anticipation". The dog anticipates the flank command and is "on the muscle" which interprets as the dog not listening, as it should.

In attempting to soften a dog I used the Out command at the post. When I have a dog that is anticipating at the post or not leaving for the Outrun softly I will Out the dog instead of giving the Flank command. I will Out the dog and Walk them back up numerous times until the dog relaxes and becomes soft minded. THEN when I give the Flank command to start an Outrun the dog "commits" to execute the command correctly.

If the dog anticipates the Out then it isn't working stock anyway. It has mentally turned loose and is in the perfect frame of mind to execute a wide, soft Outrun.

I hope this gives you another tool for having that great herding dog.

### *Patisms*

- Listen to the dog. They are communicating but are you listening?
  -
- The art of Training is actually the art of Communicating. Treat it as such. Be a better communicator to become a better trainer.
  - Modification of technique per the need of the dog is the key to success.
- The owner making the correction personal, brings on a personal response from the dog to any given correction. (Personal can be defined as an emotional response by either party.)
  - To err, is human, to forgive, canine. (From Vortex by Cherry Adair, Author)