

# With training, beagle can be hunting asset

Continued from page 16

recommended letting the first autumn frost kill any lingering parasites. For those who opt to chase rabbits during warm weather, I suggest not killing any if the meat will be wasted.

If you are working to familiarize a dog with the sound of gunfire but don't want to kill a rabbit yet, a shotgun blast into the air, or a .22 bullet fired safely into the ground, should work. If the shooter is positioned a bit away from the dog and the eager canine is hot on a bunny trail, the first few shots shouldn't bother the little hunter much. As a dog hears gunfire more and more in the field, the sound should start to feel like a normal and non-frightening part of the experience.

Although watching a dog work energetically provides much of my motivation for rabbit hunting, a pack of hounds certainly is not essential. A group of friends can have just as much fun packing into a pickup bed and waiting with .22s ready as the driver shines a spotlight. Outdoor lovers with more habitat knowledge than I have probably know how to find where cottontails or the bigger, faster jackrabbits are hiding even if they don't have dogs assisting on the hunt.

Those who do choose to train beagles can save substantial frustrations -- and keep their furry friends from running onto roads -- by using an electronic collar. Used properly, an e-collar gives a dog -- how should I put this -- a "helpful suggestion" to come when called and, just as important, to stop chasing deer.

I'll never forget last Christmas Eve, when my father-in-law, my youngest brother-in-law and I took Baily into the open to let her run. Not all of us had hunting licenses, and we didn't want to look like we were hunting deer with a dog -- which is illegal in Texas -- so we didn't take any guns.

Back then, Baily wore only a regular collar with vaccination and name tags.

She did fine and obeyed my commands promptly for a half-hour or so. When she found fresh deer scent, however, she ran off and refused to respond to any of my calls.

We started the long trek over hill and dell to find the wayward beagle. My brother-in-law had fun teasing me about how my wife would react to me losing the dog the day before Christmas. My father-in-law said a prayer, and I wasn't sure if he too was joking or if he really thought Baily was lost.

Fortunately, more than an hour later as we started to head for our vehicles so we could search the roads, a cold, hard rain began to fall. We found Baily, shivering and looking a little embarrassed, near the front gate of the property.

I easily could have lost her if she had run a mile or so after a deer. With that in mind, I saved for an e-collar and learned how to use it -- even testing several of its levels on myself, to my wife's great amusement.

I have not regretted the purchase. Now, when Baily wears her special equipment she rarely ventures more than a few feet after a deer, and she usually runs to the command "Come" without any "help"

from the collar. A rabbit hunt is much more enjoyable when searching for a cottontail instead of a dog.

The social aspect of rabbit hunting, whether in a pickup or on foot chatting with family or friends, is one of my favorite parts of the activity. I am excited to think about taking friends, and hopefully sons and daughters some day, on hunts.

I look forward to learning more about rabbit hunting as I talk to those with much more experience than what I have. In one quick conversation, Lampasas businessman Roland Schaub taught me much about the difference in jackrabbit and cottontail behavior. Longtime rabbit hunter and hound handler Richard Williams -- known to many Lampasans as "Big R" -- gave me several helpful hints when I called to invite him on a hunt.

I gather that traditional rabbit hunting, with large packs of beagles or other hounds, has a larger following in the Deep South, the East and maybe the Midwest than in Texas. Hopefully the activity's popularity will increase here.

Although Lone Star State hunters are blessed with nearly unmatched opportunities for harvesting deer, dove, turkey and other game, rabbit hunting remains an underrated outdoor pleasure.

Try it this winter when you're done with deer. If you take one or more dogs with you on your rabbit outing, see if your four-legged friends are the only ones who get extremely excited about the hunt.



**Baily, a three-year-old female beagle who is learning to hunt rabbits, follows a scent trail.**

# SULPHUR CREEK

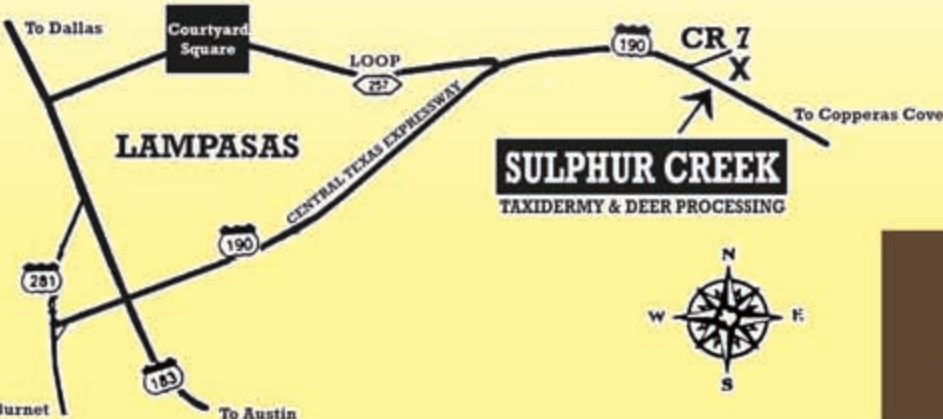
## DEER PROCESSING

SAUSAGE ~ JERKY

Complete Line of Basic & Custom Smoked Meats

\*VACUUM PACKAGING\*

TAXIDERMY ~ GAME FEEDERS ~ BLINDS



Deposit Required  
RUSH SERVICE  
AVAILABLE

Jed  
Dunning  
Owner



**1-512-556-0022**  
2691 East Hwy. 190 Lampasas, Texas