

With Height Comes Distance

Contributed by The Crew at SportMutt

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I'm sure everyone can relate to the following scenario. You're standing in your yard watering some bushes and grassy areas. Your garden hose is at its arms length, the nozzle is completely squeezed projecting the water with a strong stream, and your un-able to reach some of those far away bushes and dry grassy areas. What do you do? You slowly start pointing the nozzle of the hose up a little higher. You're starting to reach those areas but your still not quite getting there. So, you aim a little higher. This goes on for a few short seconds until you realize you've pointed the nozzle just a little too high and your start hitting the areas you hit when the nozzle what pointed lower. The end of your stream of water starts coming back if you point the nozzle too high. You come to realize there is an optimum angle to hold the nozzle to get the farthest distance with the stream.

Well this same scenario applies to a Big Air Dog. There is an optimal angle of lift for the amount of speed the Dog is carrying down the dock to obtain maximum distance. The reason for this is due to gravity. Unfortunately as soon as the dog obtains lift, gravity immediately starts working against him pulling him down to the water. Now if your dog could some how continue carrying speed after the jump, DockDogs would have to come up with a different measuring system because the distance would be un-measurable. But as we all know the speed diminishes and gravity gets its way.

Instead of trying to determine what that optimum angle is I'm going to focus on how to achieve maximum distance by adjusting the dog's angle of lift keeping the garden hose scenario in mind. First, your dog must achieve maximum speed at the jump point on the dock. Refer to my previous article "Dock Speed" for more information.

Some of you might say: " My dog gets plenty of height, he's just not getting the speed", or vise versa "He's got the speed, he's just not jumping up". It's the perfect combination of both that is something you'll work on through out your dogs entire career.

To obtain the height you must instantiate vertical muscle memory in your dogs rear legs. It will take a certain amount of time to accomplish this through a scheduled training program that requires practice and repetition for a certain period of time. The program should include dry land work, shore work, and dock work. If you follow this schedule not only will the height improve, you will also build confidence, another critical aspect of a successful Big Air Dog.

Start on dry land. Introduce your dog to jumping over hurdles. Agility hurdles are great for this. Your goal is to attain a good amount of speed while jumping over two or three hurdles in a row. Remember to start low and close and finish long and high.

Use a throwing technique that closely resembles the technique you'll be using on the dock. Don't forget to PRAISE.

Move to shore work. Align the hurdles so the dog runs towards the water ultimately landing in the water after jumping over the last hurdle. Start with one hurdle, low and close and finish with more hurdles high and long.

Move to the dock. Now instead of using agility hurdles use SportMutt's Vertical Hurdle. Attaching the Vertical Hurdle to the dock and extending it out allows your dog to execute the same motion you've been training on dry land and shore. If you've worked the agility hurdles correctly you will have determined an

accurate distance between your dogs jump point and the hurdle. Your goal is to achieve the same distance between the end of the dock and the hurdle as you had with the agility hurdles. You may have to start close and low and finish long and high.

Remember to praise often. Remember to always train in short and achievable sessions. Always end on a positive note leaving your dog wanting more. If your dog shows any signs of tiredness, weakness, or boredom, you're done for that session.

Remember to Keep It Fun
Tom A. Dropik