



Defense Drive Promotion by Armin Winkler

In the last two articles I had the opportunity to discuss **Prey Drive Promotion**. I feel that protection training should always begin there.

If dogs have been trained in a similar way, we can start to incorporate defense drive promotion as part of training. At this stage I would like to see at the very least that the dog bites equipment (puppy tug, puppy arm, or regular sleeve). Also, I would like to see that the dog has learned some form of countering, whether that is re-gripping, shaking, tugging, or assertive growling. In addition, it would be good if the dog also has had a way to deal with the switching from obedience into drive issue. But as I said I would like to see these things, they are not absolutely required. (Before beginning with defense drive promotion, the dog should be capable of performing all the exercises described in my previous articles to some degree. Certainly not all dogs are the same, but a dog should have had a chance to go through the previous training steps and learn as much as possible given his genetic talents. Biting equipment, countering, and barking for action are probably the most important techniques.)

One absolutely crucial pre-requisite is maturity. The dog has to show the helper that he is capable of dealing with this type of training. I rarely start defensive training in dogs under one year old, more often though I wait until they are quite a bit older.

Next, let me caution the readers about the territory we are about to enter. Defense drive is an important part of protection training, but it is the most dangerous aspect of it as well. By that I mean that it is dangerous for the dogs. Defense training done wrong can really ruin a dog. My philosophy is this: "It is never too late to do defense type work, but quite often it is done too early."

Let me discuss the principles which should be understood before actually getting into training techniques.

- Defense behavior appears in two forms; active defense (forward=aggression, biting) and passive defense (backwards=avoidance).
- Both forms are triggered by the same stimuli: threatening (physical or psychological), staring, and open aggression.

- Which of the two forms of defense the dog will show depends on several factors: confidence and maturity of aggressor vs. dog (age), environment (strange vs. familiar), self defense vs. prey- or brood- defense.
- The root cause for defense behavior (regardless of which form) is always concern or worry. The dog is either concerned that he might get hurt or worse, that he may lose rank, that he may lose his prey, or that harm comes to socially important individuals (puppies, mate, etc.), etc..
- "The goal the dog attempts to reach through his active defense is always the same -- avoidance behavior in the attacker." Raiser

In other words the dog wants the aggressor to stop doing what causes him (the dog) concern or worry. With those concepts in mind we can start to try and stimulate defensive "feelings" in the dog during protection training.

I like to introduce defense stimulation to the dog with as little stress as possible. So, I focus the initial defense drive promotion on defense of prey (object defense). Dr. Raiser follows pretty much the same philosophy. Of course this is only possible if the prey drive training we have done so far has been successful. People who have read my articles on prey drive promotion will notice that at this stage there are overlaps in training.

In order to ensure the dog behaves successfully when he first encounters a defensive stimulus I like to introduce it to the dog when he is already doing what I want him to do in protection work and that is biting. Yes, I am talking about countering. I discussed countering already during prey drive promotion, but it fits in with defense as well. The teaching of the countering behavior takes place exactly as I described it during prey drive training. The helper has to determine what causes the dog stress and what makes him slightly insecure. He then has to create this insecurity to trigger the dog to counter. Some dogs counter very easily, some take more stimulation. So, we have the dog countering, we know pretty much what makes him counter and how he counters. Now we have to teach this technique to the dog as an active way of defending his prey against the helper. I set up a situation in which the dog experiences the threat. Let's say, for example, the insecurity causing stimulus is the helper leaning over him, staring at him (obviously this would be a dog who is not just a beginner). That is the kind of threat the dog faces when a helper drives him. Let's also say that the counter the dog shows is a re-grip.

I would set it up this way. I give the dog a shallow bite. Between the handler's holding the leash tight and my pulling, there is a lot of tension on the bite. The dog should already want to readjust his grip, but he can't. Before, we showed the dog threat and then weakness to teach the dog countering, now we give the dog threat again, but not weakness right away. I have the dog with the shallow bite, held with a lot of tension, now I show him the threat, I turn towards him, and lean over him a bit. Everything is set up so the dog will re-grip, at that moment I relax the tension on the bite, but I maintain the threat. I stay over the dog. He should at that moment re-grip while I am threatening. Once he does, I strip the sleeve and let the dog win. This sounds very similar to what I described before, but now I don't manipulate him to counter anymore. It is set up so that he counters to get me to back off. The threat has to stay until after the counter in order for the dog to learn this lesson.

The dog should also learn to deal with the helper countering his (the dog's) counters. It will look like two fighters "trading punches", the helper threatens, the dog counters, the helper backs off momentarily, but then threatens again, the dog will counter again, etc.. But the exchanges should always be limited, the dog always makes prey in the end. As I explained in last month's article, triggering any counter is already defense drive promotion. What I described here are more advanced stages of the same principle, which should not be done until the dog is ready to start defense drive promotion in general. So once again, proceed with caution.

My next step usually starts from the hold and bark. With dogs who are not biting well yet after prey drive promotion, but they have learned the hold and bark through prey drive promotion this should come before countering. Let me quickly run through how to get to that hold and bark. In the beginning, the dog barks at the helper when the helper does not move in order to make him move. Then the dog is expected to bark more and more to get the action started. Eventually, the helper does not move right away, instead, the dog gets to take a step closer to the helper (who is standing still) every time he barks until he is right in front of him, then the helper jumps and gives a bite. From there we let the dog approach faster and faster, but he has to bark longer and longer right in front of the helper before he gets a bite. All this can still take place on a leash. The bites are to reward the dog's barking, so even if they are still weak because of lacking intensity we can teach the barking exercise. This brings us to where defense drive promotion takes place.

Dog and helper are on the field, there is some distance between them. The dog should start barking to get things started. But now it is not the dog who goes to the helper, instead the helper starts approaching the dog. The helper calmly walks step by step towards the dog. The barking will be very excited and usually a little higher in pitch. As the helper comes closer, he presents the sleeve less and less. I usually hold it down beside me or I put it behind my back. The dog will start to take more notice of the helper and less notice of the sleeve (I know there are exceptions). The helper, now more and more the focus of the dog, is still advancing forward and the dog will experience a bit of a worried feeling. I can increase this pressure by staring or raising my hand, to create a bit more threat. He will be a bit unsure, the barking will become less excited and more serious. At this moment I like to back away from the dog. The dog will liven up again and his bark will be more forceful, but less worried. I make my approach again, this time I pop the sleeve around the front again and give the dog a bite, strip the sleeve, and back off. Usually, the bite will be harder, even with dogs who did not bite very hard before.

This is the first example of channelling defense behavior into prey drive. More on that later. Another version of raising defensive stimulation during the barking exercise is to present it to the dog while creating environmental stress. Let me explain that briefly. We set up a barking exercise. Whether the dog approaches the helper or vice versa is not as big a factor here. The set-up is in a strange and unfamiliar environment for the dog. For example in some bushes, between buildings, in the dark, etc.. The idea is to make the dog uncomfortable and a bit worried through the environment. That way, the helper does not have to exert as much personal stress on the dog, but the dog still has to deal with the feeling of worry. The dog's barking should again become more serious, and the situation will be more tense. The helper can lessen the stress on the dog somewhat by making himself small or by backing up briefly. Once the dog is within biting range the helper pops the sleeve up and the dog gets to bite and win. Another example of defense behavior channelled into prey drive. But we have yet another exercise where the dog's defense drive is promoted. The fact that the sleeve is still part of the equation, and the situation has a very familiar tone to it makes me choose it for dogs who already bark fairly well and who have a good interest in prey work, ahead of the other defense drive promotion exercises.

The following exercises are purely self defense oriented. Avoidance behavior is created easier than during object defense. Therefore it is more difficult and requires more skill from the helper. This type of

work is done with dogs who have very little prey drive, but good defense drive. It should be done with dogs who will be expected to compete a lot on strange fields. For a dog to be truly prepared for trialing in my opinion has to have completed a course of defensive type work in order to deal with the multitude of stressful situations they will encounter on the field. Omitting this training is an oversight which will sooner or later lead to problems.

I train the remaining portion of defense drive promotion very close to the same schedule as described in Helmut Raiser's book. Let me describe how I like to go through it. Again I would like to remind people that this type of self defense work should only be done with dogs who are very mature and usually around 18 months or older.

I like to do this type of training away from the regular training grounds for a couple of reasons. For one, I don't really want the dog to remember the stress of this work on the training field, for another, the fact that the dog is in an unfamiliar environment lowers the dog's stimulation threshold and he will feel defensive sooner. I like to use an isolated trail or something similar. In the first part of the exercise, the handler is walking along the trail. The helper who hid beforehand further (50 yards) along the trail makes a bit of noise, rustling bushes, hitting a branch against a tree, etc. The dog will alert to this, by stopping, standing tall and tense, and intensely staring at where the sound comes from. The handler should now also stop, hold the dog on a shortened leash or on the collar and support him through praising and using words like "Watch him". The helper then comes out of hiding onto the trail where the dog can see him. At first he may act like he's there just for a walk, then suddenly he focuses on handler and dog, he stops and stares, slowly takes a step or two forward acting very "suspicious". The distance between dog and helper should be at least 50 yards in the beginning, remember we can always go closer if necessary, but we don't want to start too close and trigger avoidance behavior in the dog. Most dogs, even the most friendly will start to growl, get a bit nervous, and then let out a very strong bark from time to time. At the first sign of active defense (forward) like barking or pulling forward into the leash, the helper should immediately run away and out of sight. Sometimes the situation is so tense for the dog, he can't do anything, then if the helper ducks and runs away after a few seconds of tension, he can actually get the dog to bark or pull forward. The dog will learn through this and show those behaviors on his own after a couple of tries. It is important to slowly work at a shorter distance to the dog, so the handler can advance forward a few steps, before the same scenario starts again. I have found that confident and

very friendly dogs may have to be threatened massively which can be very harmful. So if dogs don't respond well at a distance to just a person acting threatening, I set it up again this time equipped with a face mask or a hooded cape. Now when I appear, I don't look like a person, I look like a monster, and even thick skinned dogs show some concern. This exercise should probably not be repeated more than three times in one session because of how much stress it contains. Through this exercise the dog learns to show assertive behavior forward at the person threatening while being supported and guided by the handler.

In the next step in my program I tie the dog to a tree along the trail (if that's where we are doing this work) and the handler leaves the sight of the dog. Again, the helper makes some noise, to alert the dog, then he shows himself. After a short approach, if the dog shows us the desired behavior, the helper runs out of sight. We may again have to help the dog out a bit by ducking and running first, etc.. The mask/cape idea works here as well. After the helper runs out of sight, the handler returns to the dog. At first he will leash him up right away and walk him away, later he comes to praise the dog, then leaves again and doesn't leash him up until the second or third confrontation. After a few sessions like this, the helper should only duck for a bit to reinforce the dog's assertive behavior, then take a few more steps forward to create a renewed threat for the dog. The reward for the dog is always that the helper shows avoidance by running out of sight after a bit. The dog will learn to chose the active defense behavior forward more and more deliberately. As the law of instrumental conditioning explains, successful behavior is repeated behavior. An important step is to move away from training aids (mask/cape), the dog has to learn that the threat actually comes from the person who is the helper. After the dog has learned to assert himself against threat, we can threaten the dog personally more and rely less on the threatening appearance of the aids. It might be required to inflict some discomfort on the dog to make him take the threat more seriously. This training requires a skilled helper who can push the dog to his limits, but not beyond (avoidance), until the distance between helper and dog is only a few feet.

Up to now we always reinforced any forward assertive behavior displayed by the dog. Now it is time to teach the dog that the behavior that really counts is biting. So we once again tie the dog up and leave him alone. The helper again appears, moves closer to the dog. The dog should be displaying aggressive behavior towards the helper, but the helper is not reacting, he doesn't seem too impressed by all that

barking and pulling. The threat against the dog needs to increase, a brief attack, like a kick to the shoulder, or a sting with a whip, maybe even a pinch on the side. The dog will snap at the helper for this mistreatment. That is the behavior we were looking for, the helper runs away. Strong dogs will snap at the helper, his hand or his leg. I usually present the dog with the opportunity to actually bite me in the scratch pants and then wiggle my way free. The fact I don't have a lot of protection from the dog's bite makes my efforts to wiggle free all the more real, and after all, if I pinch him what's a pinch in return. With a bit weaker dogs we might slap them with a puppy tug, and let them bite at that. As soon as he does, the helper lets the tug go and runs away, the handler returns to the dog and takes him away. Dogs who have had prior prey drive promotion, whether very successful or not will choose to bite into a sack or tug or sleeve without much hesitation. The helper has to be able to assess whether the dog is showing inhibitions about biting at a person. It is very difficult to make them overcome these inhibitions, nor is it necessary for a Schutzhund dog. If the dog from the defensive state of mind chooses to bite equipment we have accomplished our goal of teaching the dog what to do when he feels confronted and defensive. This is again a form of channelling defense behavior into prey drive, and like I said earlier I'll describe that in more detail later. What we want to see at this training step is that the dog will defend himself against an attack from the helper by biting. Dogs who are confident enough, have strong defense drive, and low inhibitions towards biting a person, will bite the helper where ever, when required to do so. But even those dogs will prefer to bite a sleeve when offered the opportunity, because of the satisfaction of keeping the prize after biting.

Dogs will learn that biting is the route to success, and we have an avenue to start working dogs who didn't get very far during prey drive promotion. Dogs who have absolutely no prey desire but very strong defense drive usually start biting OK after these steps. Dogs who don't work at all in prey and are not very strong in defense can be worked, but it is very difficult and tedious, and probably not a lot of fun for them or the helper. So, I would suggest they should not do the sport of Schutzhund.

To bring together all the work we have done with our dog so far, we have to teach the dog to utilize components of both drives during training. And this is where we again discuss channelling defense behavior into prey drive. We want the helper to represent a trigger stimulus for prey drive and defense drive. It is more important that the dog feels defense when he sees the helper, as defense drive does

not suffer from stimulus or action specific exhaustion. This means the dog can do defense anytime. We move training back to the field. The helper stimulates the dog in defense by threatening, the dog acts defensively forward, the helper presents a prey stimulus, popping up the sleeve or running sideways and presenting the sleeve. The dog is allowed to bite and make prey. Later, after the bite, we once again wait for countering before we let the dog win the sleeve. We now raise the dog's overall drive level by stimulating him primarily in defense, but the dog learns that the outlet for built up defense drive is a prey action. So in the long run it will appear that the dog's prey drive is also being stimulated and it gets stronger. Initially it is very important that the helper shows the dog a very obvious prey trigger stimulus after the defense stimulation, so the dog truly does go into prey drive. Defense drive can sometimes block the appearance of prey behaviors such as carrying and re-gripping, so it is important that the helper makes the prey maneuver obvious enough and that he is patient enough to wait until the dog is able to show prey behavior. If this is done correctly it will look like the dog has been perfectly balanced between both drives all his life. Dr. Raiser describes this subject extremely well in his book, so it should be consulted as a source of additional insight and information.

There is a good possibility that the dog will develop a bit of a "bite first ask questions later" attitude with this type of training. The dog certainly does not want to take a chance and give the helper the opportunity to strike first. So, the handler has to start controlling the dog; boundaries need to be set. The dog needs to learn that the handler controls whether or not he is allowed to act aggressive. It becomes increasingly more important that the dog is made to do obedience with a helper on the field. A trust between handler and dog has to be established where the dog learns that the handler doesn't steer him wrong. When the handler says stop and behave, the dog must control himself, but when the handler gives a protection command, the dog must become stimulated and start to engage the helper. Not introducing control work at this point is irresponsible. Obedience during protection work, as well as in any other situation when the dog decides he will act defensive (i.e. out on a walk, etc.) is an absolute must, so that the handler is capable of controlling the dog's behavior.

In conclusion, I would like to state again that this work is difficult and can have very serious negative effects on a dog's training if it is not done correctly. It should be left to master trainers with years of experience. I feel that defense drive promotion is an important part of protection work. Many trial helpers, especially at high level trials, will

stimulate a dog in defense. If we take our dogs to these trials and send them out there, I think we should at least give them the tools to handle what can happen. At this point I would like to mention a word about helper corrections. I personally am not a great fan of them, but that does not mean they never have any place in training. However, once a dog has undergone defensive drive promotion to this degree, helper corrections have to stop. The dog should meet any harsh influence by the helper with active defense. We can't expect the dog to react differently when the helper gives him a correction. So if they are part of your training program, make sure you are done with that stage in the training before defensive drive promotion goes this far. I hope I have shed some light on this subject. Remember, safety first in training for everybody, including the dogs.