

Need for Speed

A DVD by Deborah Jones, Ph.D.
and Judy Keller

Need for Speed is the third in a series of training videos illustrating the In FOCUS program developed by Deborah Jones, Ph.D., and Judy Keller. The In FOCUS program (Fun, Obedience, and Consistency Lead to Unbelievable Success) is described in Jones and Keller's book by that same name as well as their In FOCUS *Foundation Work* DVD. The more specific programs for out of control dogs as well as dogs that lack confidence are each illustrated in separate DVDs. The *Foundation Work* DVD is recommended viewing before watching the more specific *Crying for Control* or *Need for Speed* DVDs.

If you doubt that the world of agility dogs is divided into those that lack control or those that have a need for speed, just think about all the dogs you watch performing in classes and at trials. Some of the dogs are having so much fun zooming around a course of their own design that they hardly notice the handler. Others, though—the need for speed dogs—are sometimes so obviously unhappy to be there that it's painful to watch them.

If you work with a need for speed dog, you know that the standard advice is to find ways to motivate your dog more effectively. Jones and Keller go beyond that simple advice first by explaining what the cause of the problem may be. Sometimes dogs don't display as much enthusiasm for agility as we'd like due to temperament or negative experiences. They may be inhibited, worried, or nervous. Although they seem to be trying very hard to perform, their stress and nervousness make it difficult for them to let go and enjoy themselves.

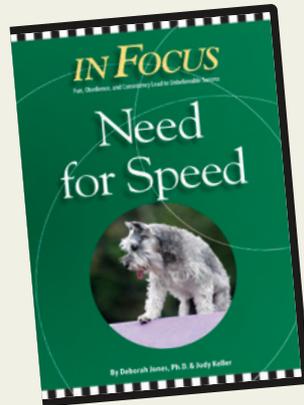
Jones and Keller remind us that “not every person or every dog is suited to be an athlete, and some dogs are better suited for something else.” Assuming, however, that your dog is structurally sound and that you have the desire to consistently apply the In FOCUS program, this DVD will help you to make agility a fun experience for him and thus improve his desire to work for you. “Although positive changes take time and dedication in training,” Jones and Keller are confident that “you can help your dog learn to relax and enjoy doing agility by consistently applying the steps of the program.”

Martha Faulk, a lawyer and author who lives in Fort Collins, Colorado, teaches agility through the Larimer Humane Society. She competes with her two rescues, RebaRae, Australian Cattle Dog, and SallyAnn, Australian Shepherd. Her Border Terrier, EmmaLou, MX, MXJ, and USDAA Performance National Standard semifinalist in 2005, is now retired. Contact Martha through marthfaulk@msn.com.



REVIEW

By Martha Faulk



“THIS COMPREHENSIVE, WELL-EXPLAINED,
AND AMPLY DEMONSTRATED DVD IS AN
INVALUABLE RESOURCE FOR ANYONE
DESIRING A HAPPIER, MORE MOTIVATED,
AND FASTER DOG ON COURSE.”

If you think about it, all dog training books and DVDs are really about training the trainer. This DVD contains particularly good explanations to help the trainer understand why the dog is performing slowly. Every training step is visually illustrated using a variety of dogs to demonstrate the techniques for building confidence, fluidity, and speed. The most important step is:

Making Training Fun

It's tough to think that we may not be as exciting and important to our dogs as we would like. Jones and Keller observe that some people, like some dogs, are just more inhibited than others. But it's essential for the need for speed dog that handlers prove necessary, useful, and important to their dogs. This means developing playful interaction through the use of food, toys, verbal cues, and body language.

What Dogs Want

To make training fun, we must understand how to use the universal reinforcers: toys and food. Dogs that lack motivation can benefit

especially from the use of food reinforcers, and Jones and Keller explain how to use food both for motivation and to lower stress levels.

If you've ever tried to engage a disinterested dog in toy play, you know how hard that can be. Jones and Keller demonstrate the steps necessary to get your dog interested in toys but suggest that it may take quite a bit of time to get the quiet dog to play. They believe that it's worth the effort to encourage the dog to play because play will help him to open up and become less inhibited. The sequences on how to engage your dog in play are especially helpful because they show how the handler can arouse the dog's interest without shoving the toy in his face—a common mistake.

Why Your Dog May Not Enjoy Training

If your dog does not enjoy training, he certainly won't enjoy trialing. If he is worried about making mistakes, he will find it difficult to relax and enjoy himself. Unfortunately, observe Jones and Keller, in some cases the dog will not be having enough fun because the trainer has focused more on precision and accuracy than on attitude and enthusiasm. Worrying about perfection, especially in the very beginning of training, can have long-term detrimental effects on the dog's desire to train. The DVD suggests several steps for the handler to use with the need for speed dog to increase his confidence and desire to work.

Other Critical Techniques

Especially helpful is being able to turn the need for speed dog both “on” and “off” so he will be in an aroused, playful emotional state for training and performing, and then restful and calm when he is not working. With a little practice, you'll be able to achieve these states with your dog. The DVD also illustrates “Games and Tricks to Build Speed and Enthusiasm,” and pre- and post-run rituals. Also useful are the sections dealing with start lines and connection points.

This comprehensive, well-explained, and amply demonstrated DVD is an invaluable resource for anyone desiring a happier, more motivated, and *faster* dog on course. If Jones and Keller's program had existed a decade ago when I trained my first agility dog, I would have been able to make much better progress shaving off those seconds over standard course time that plagued me. If you and your dog have a *Need For Speed*, this DVD is for you. 🐾