

Out in the big wide world..!

Emrys is around 6-7 months old, and it's time to transfer some of his training exercises into the big wide world! Lez explains how to do this without taking a backwards step

I'm so pleased with Emrys' progress this month, you wouldn't know he'd missed a couple of weeks of being out and about.

We have spent most mornings pootling through the village on a loose lead (for the most part) where I have made a point of stopping at every other lamp post to work on automatic sits: I stop, Emrys sits. It's such a great thing to train, not only for when you're out and about on walks but if you decide you want to compete or work your dog when he's older – both of which I'm planning on doing with Emrys.

Once he'd got the hang of sitting automatically, I started to add the whistle; in the way that we paired the word 'sit' with the action of sitting, so too do we bring in the whistle. Between this little routine and introducing the sit whistle whilst

playing, he's starting to get a good little stop on the whistle too.

His recall at home and around the garden has been excellent so I decided it was time to bite the bullet and do some off-lead training on the big field next to our home. Initially, I just walked around on a loose lead and did a couple of sit-stays and down-stays while I left the lead on. Then I very quietly slipped the lead and continued as if nothing had changed. And as far as Emrys was concerned nothing had – because he wasn't used to feeling the pressure of the lead around his neck, when it came off it didn't make any difference to him, and he just carried on walking beside me.

Emrys's retrieving at home and the garden has been coming on a treat. He's really focused on the

ABOUT LEZ GRAHAM

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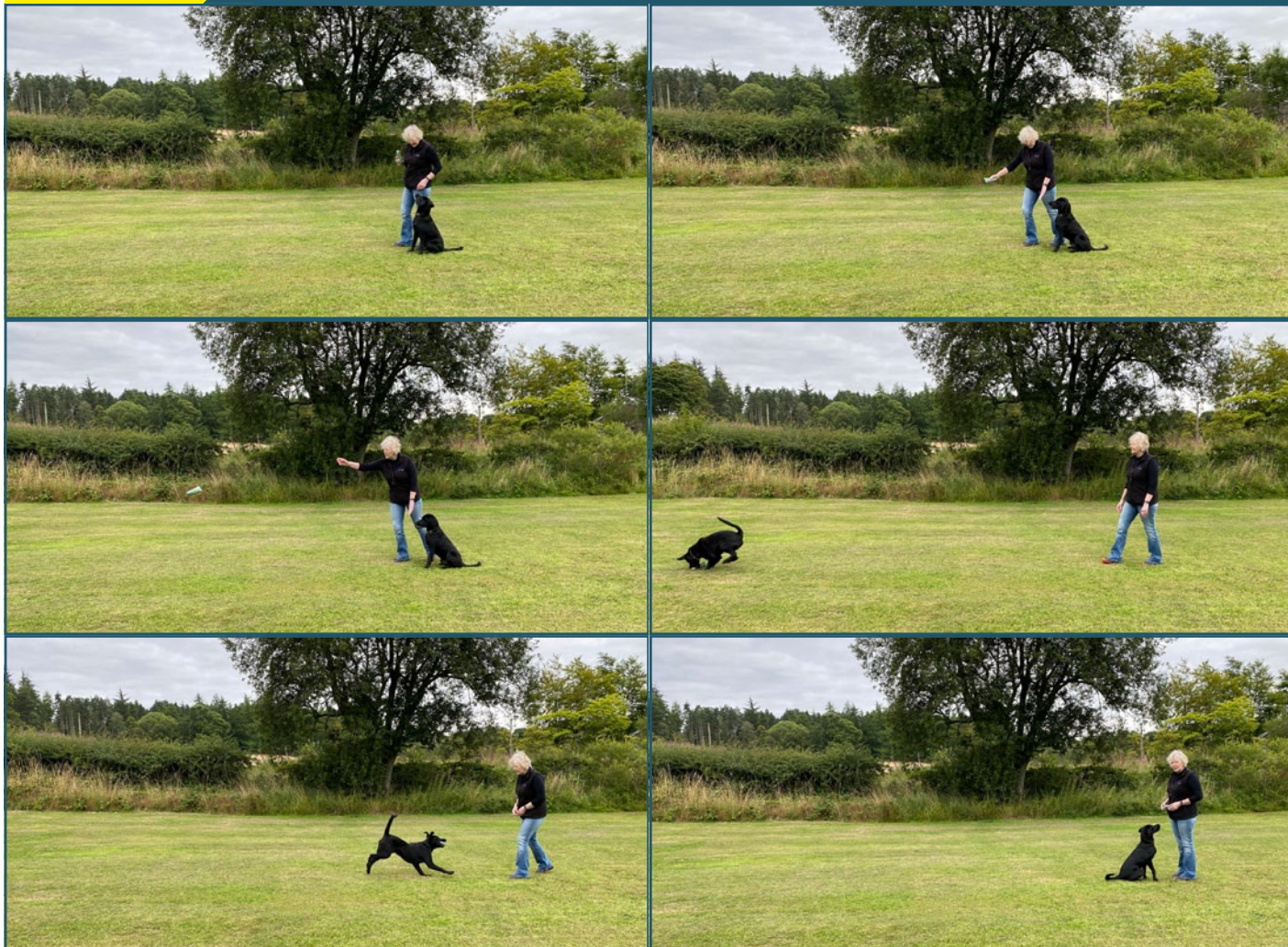
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little dummy, casting off like a little rocket and returning straight and delivering to hand from a stand before sitting nicely while I got myself organised... so it was time to transfer his learning to the big outdoors.

We started off with a little marked retrieve and I

MARKED RETRIEVE

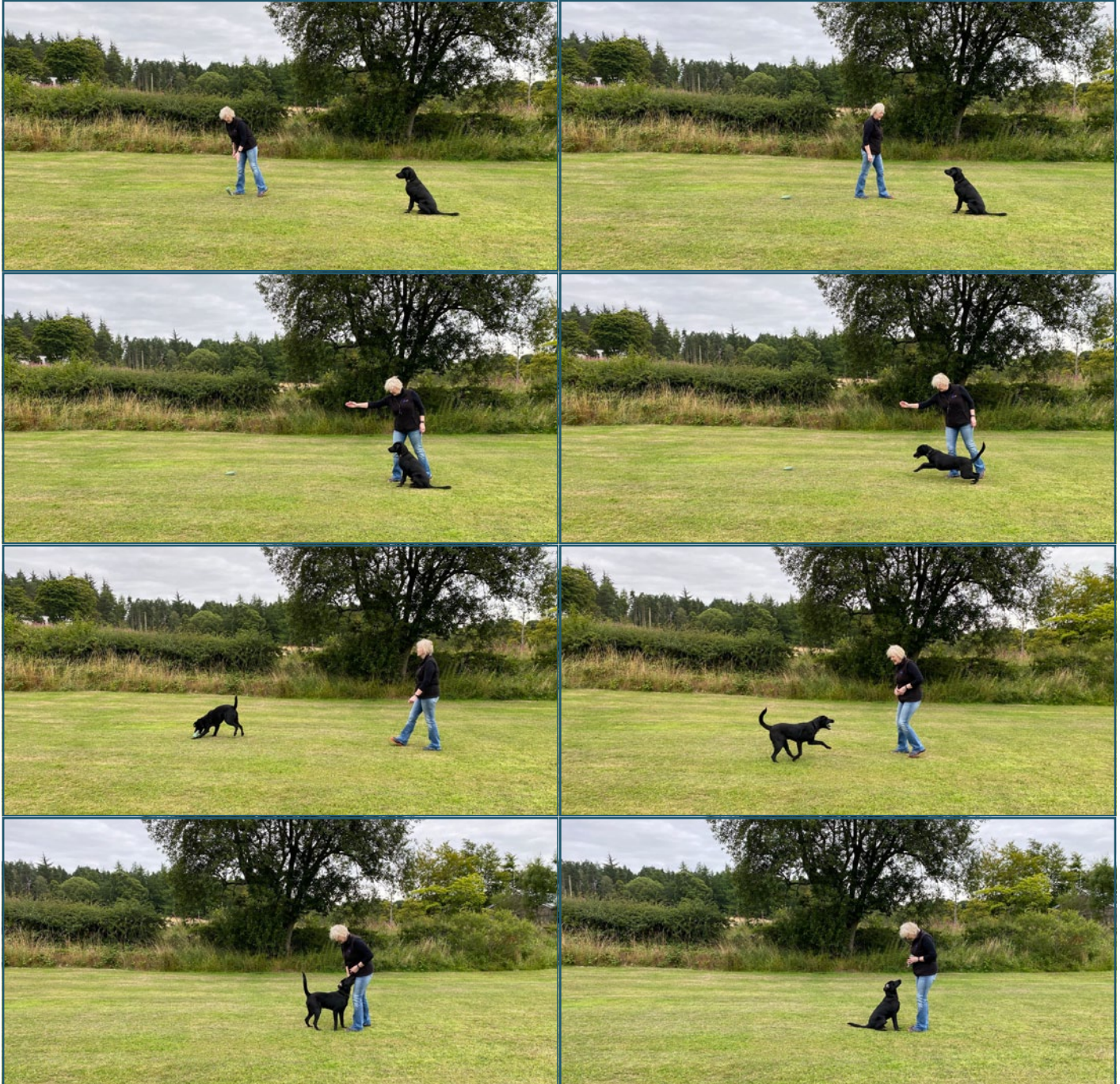
As Emrys transitioned to some training outside of the home and garden, Lez began with a few simple marked retrieves, keeping him on the lead while she threw the dummy.



PICTURES: LEZ GRAHAM

PLACED DUMMY RETRIEVE

After a few days of success with the marked retrieves, Lez progressed to some placed retrieves, with Emrys sitting off-lead while she placed the dummy 10ft or so away from him. So far so good!



kept him on the lead while I threw the dummy; I was so pleased with him, he sat quietly and then straight out and back with no messing around. A couple of days of occasional marked retrieves on the field and it was time to up the ante, having him sit nicely off-lead while I placed the dummy on the ground 10 feet or so away, before returning to him to cast him off.

All of the steadiness training at home, developing self-control at mealtimes and around doorways has really paid off as Emrys demonstrated the same level of self-control when doing these exercises.

Our dog's psychological growth

At 6-7 months old, there's a very good chance that our young dog is going to be teething again, bringing in those huge molars at the back that are designed for crunching bones. For us, this means investing in some heavy-duty teething chews. Once my dog's premolars are coming through, I tend to give them Yak chews, Benebones and a raw brisket bone in the garden, which not only helps alleviate the gum irritation and keep their teeth white, but from a psychological perspective, triggers the release of endorphins in the brain which can help to calm and relax them. ■

TOP TIP: STEPPING BACK

When you increase the complexity of one element of an exercise, make sure you decrease another. As you start to train in different places, be prepared to take a step back in your training – although for us a sit-stay is a sit-stay, when that is done in a different environment with different smells and sounds, it really ups the ante for a young dog and a long sit-stay can be a step too far. Instead, do a couple of short, close ones to build confidence and ensure your training ends on a good note.