

Many things can make it harder or easier for the dog to follow a trail, for example the trail can be contaminated by people or animals crossing over it.



In one case we had to trail across a field that had slurry spread across it a day before a trail was set, for once Dill and Flo were so focused on the trail that they didn't even try to eat the cow slurry! There can be distractions physically on the trail such as people or wild animals such as rabbits; once a deer suddenly appeared 5 metres in front of Dill, a potential Fenton moment, (Fenton became an internet sensation after he chased a herd of deer in Richmond Park while being followed by his horrified owner in 2011), but no, Dill carried on with the trail.

We go out trailing whatever the weather, come rain or shine, BUT the weather can make a big difference.

Strong winds mean the scent might blow far away from the trail, heavy rain may wash and spread the scent around, while on a hot humid day, evaporation can impact the scent, squashing the scent to the ground as a layer between the water vapour and the ground. There are so many variables, but the dogs all seem to pull it off every time we ask them.



Trailing isn't only restricted to the countryside, we've done urban trails round Gloucester Docks, and Dark Trails at night in the pitch black, bar headlamps, then you are truly reliant on the dog to lead you. Our average trail is usually about a mile in length.

What's in it for Dill and Flo? The main motivation is the reward at the end of the hunt, a big handful of treats such as sausages. The other thing they seem to enjoy is the teamwork, a true working partnership - I don't know where the missing person is, I'm dependent on my dog showing me, I have to learn to read their signals, and in moments of uncertainty I'm there to give them confidence and reassurance that they are doing a good job, or ask them to think rather than rush.