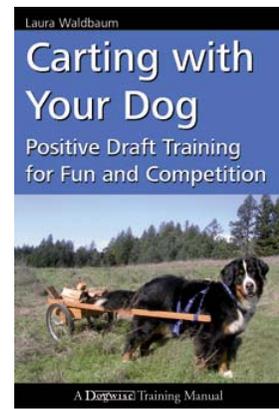


An excerpt from

## *Carting with Your Dog – Positive Draft Training for Fun and Competition*

### Introduction

by Laura Waldbaum, Dogwise Publishing. 800-776-2665, [www.dogwise.com](http://www.dogwise.com)  
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Historically, many large breed dogs worked as draft animals, pulling carts and wagons, hauling anything and everything. My favorite breed, the Bernese Mountain Dog, was developed as an all purpose farm dog, but worked primarily pulling carts laden with dairy products from farm to market in its native Switzerland.

In modern society we no longer rely on dogs for delivery of farm goods, but many dogs still help out around the house and ranch. They transport firewood, carry groceries from the farmers market or delight children by giving them rides. Many breed clubs offer tests and titles for draft dogs, and any size dog can have fun pulling a festively decorated cart in a parade.

In 1997 I attended my first draft test. I had only recently heard about the sport and wanted to see firsthand what it was like. I was still waiting for my first Bernese Mountain Dog puppy when I traveled to Arizona to see the test. I saw a team that day that inspired me to write a story for my local paper. The dog was Alpenblick's Tish v Autmhof or "Tish" as she was called. She and her owner, David Denis, had come down from Canada to add an American Draft Dog title to their already numerous Canadian titles. I didn't know any of that at the time though. All I knew was what I saw that day—a Bernese bitch, small in stature, but with a heart and a will and a strength beyond her size. She obviously loved to work and she loved David. I wrote that she reminded me of the little engine that could. I could almost imagine her chanting "I know I can, I know I can" as she chugged up the steep hills. David had created a draft dog who loved to work, and seeing them that day inspired me to do the same.

Maybe, like me, you are interested in competition. This book will provide the framework needed to take you and your canine partner through the foundation work, the conditioning and finally test preparation. If you are an experienced trainer, you know by now that dogs learn differently and that they have different strengths and weaknesses. I have provided several ideas or techniques for each training challenge, and I encourage you to think about what will suit your dog's learning style best. Chapter 10 contains some ideas to help you work through the "rough" spots.

Most of the draft/carting enthusiasts I know, however, are not interested in the structured world of competition. They just want to get out there with their canine buddy and have some fun. Maybe you are new to training, or just new to teaching the mechanics of draft work. This book is for you folks as well, since it can be almost impossible to find information on how to get started or what to do if things don't go smoothly.

The basic control training explained in Chapter 1 is a critical part of developing a safe and reliable draft dog. Chapter 2 will help you to determine what equipment you will need and the Resource section in the back of the book provides you

with purchase and building options. Chapters 3-7 give you step by step instructions to teach you and your dog to get comfortable with the equipment, the mechanics of pulling and control of the draft rig—and will help you develop a team that is safe and reliable in public. Chapter 8 provides the information you will need to take your dog out in public and participate in events like parades. Chapters 9 and 10 are for those of you who want to participate in competitive draft tests. If you are new to "positive training," I encourage you to read the foundation training techniques summarized in Appendices 1-3, and to refer to the books listed in the reference section for more details on these great training tools.

No matter what you see as your goal, the same basic principles of training apply. Your training should be directed toward a motivated and consistently hard working partner. Pulling is hard work. If draft work is not fun and rewarding for dog and handler, the team will not be successful. You can't "make" your dog do the work, but you can make it fun.

I will give you one recipe for a super team. This team has a leader—you, and you will have your job to do. It is an easy job. You will keep your dog safe, and you will make drafting fun. Your dog will do all the hard work. He will watch where he is going; take direction from you; and happily stop, back, turn, stay and pull. Though he will be tempted, he will not be distracted from his work by anything he encounters while hitched up. Responding to a sudden urge to chase a squirrel, or racing across a busy street because he is frightened by a loud noise while pulling a heavily loaded cart or a small child could result in disaster. Your dog must be dependable to be safe with a cart out in public and effective training will make him dependable.

There is a saying that goes like this: "Do what you love and the money will follow." Training is a process. Enjoy your training time and the relationship it develops between you and your dog, and success will follow. The dog will not care about the ribbons and titles you earn together, but the time you invest training and conditioning him, his joy in the work he does and the successes you share together will be his reward.

**Laura Waldbaum** has been competing with dogs all her life, first as a Jr. Handler in the conformation ring with her English Setters, and later in obedience. Laura currently competes with Bernese Mountain Dogs who have AKC titles in Rally, Agility, Conformation, and Tracking. She and her dog Sadie were the 7th team to earn the highest title in BMDCA Draft work, Master Draft Dog.