

What many don't know about a Bloodhound

By: Shannon Marie Simmer – Public Group (Facebook) *Bloodhound Crazy* 2025-03-15

Whether you currently own a Bloodhound or planning on getting one in the future, whether you intend to have them as a pet or a tracking dog- please read, understand, and fully grasp this. I promise if you understand what I am saying below it'll make not only your time better with this magnificent breed, but also their time better. This is not an opinion. This is a fact.

It makes me sad that so many people think Bloodhounds are stupid. They are one of the most intelligent and specialized working breeds, but their intelligence doesn't fit the traditional mold that people expect.

Many breeds, like Australian Shepherds or Border Collies, are bred to work for humans. They thrive on commands, direction, and the desire to please. Bloodhounds, however, are bred to work independently. Their intelligence isn't about obedience—it's about decision-making, problem-solving, and an unmatched ability to track scent over vast distances, even days or weeks old.

Bloodhounds have the largest number of scent receptors (300 million) of any dog breed. For comparison: Humans have about 5–6 million, and German Shepherds have 225 million—Bloodhounds have more than 300 million!

Their entire anatomy is built for tracking—their long, droopy ears funnel scent toward their nose, and their wrinkled skin traps scent particles to enhance detection.

When a Bloodhound is tracking, who's leading—the dog or the handler? It's the dog.

Bloodhounds make their own decisions, analyze scent trails, and determine the best course of action without human guidance. That level of autonomous problem-solving is an advanced form of intelligence that many breeds simply don't possess.

A Bloodhound's intelligence is unmatched in tracking. Their tracking ability is so precise that scent evidence from a Bloodhound has been upheld in U.S. courts for over 100 years. No other breed has this legal distinction.

They can follow trails that are days, sometimes weeks, old—even across water, busy streets, or in poor weather.

A trained Bloodhound can track a specific person over 100 miles with near 100% accuracy.

They don't just track—they analyze. Bloodhounds can detect scent variations, differentiate between fresh and old trails, and even determine the direction a person was traveling—all from just a scent article.

People need to stop thinking they can train Bloodhounds like an Aussie, German Shepherd, or other breed.

You can't force a Bloodhound into obedience-based training because they weren't bred to obey—they were bred to think independently and lead the way.

If you try to train a Bloodhound like an Australian Shepherd or German Shepherd—expecting them to please you and follow commands even a simple “sit” or “lay down” can be challenging—and you're going to be frustrated and unsuccessful. Instead of trying to “control” them, handlers and pet owners need to work with them as equals.

The best Bloodhound trainers and owners don't treat them like robots—they trust the dog and work with them instead of against them. If you respect a Bloodhound's instincts and allow them to do what they were bred to do- be independent dogs who problem solve with you- they will amaze you every time.

Bloodhounds are the ultimate problem solvers, but they only do what they think is worth their time. You must make it worth their time.

Unlike many working breeds that wait for human direction, Bloodhounds don't need you to tell them what to do—they already know. Their intelligence is in their self-reliance, their ability to analyze, and their refusal to be swayed by distractions or human interference to do their job. Not all of us use them for that though and that's ok- they're still not stupid when they won't “sit” because you tell them to.

A Bloodhound doesn't “work for you.” They work with you. And that makes them one of the most incredible dog breeds in the world.

Examples-

My Bloodhound, Willie, he was a foster I adopted was afraid of everything—and I mean everything. If a leaf fell during a walk? Nope. He would freeze and refuse to move forward. I remember one time when we were walking, and a single leaf drifted down in front of him. He reared up like a horse and completely shut down tugging to go back home (we were like .5 a mile from the house).

When we finally made it back home, his fear took over again—he wouldn't even go through the door. No amount of tugging, coaxing, or commanding could get that dog inside. I was beyond frustrated because I just didn't understand how to get him to move. But instead of forcing him, I sat with him and waited.

I didn't pet him, didn't try to soothe him, because I didn't want to reinforce the fear. I just gave him space to process it. And in his own time, when he was ready, he walked through that door. That moment changed everything—because I let him work through it instead of pushing him, he learned to trust me.

Then there was my other Bloodhound, Harley. Oh my god. I tried to teach her every trick in the book, and she picked up almost everything except for one—lay down. No matter what I tried, no matter what treats I used, she just refused.

One day, I decided I wasn't going to force it. Instead, I simply waited her out.

She sat in front of me, staring up at the treat in my hand, fully expecting to get her reward without laying down. Every few minutes, I calmly repeated, "Lay down." But she wouldn't do it. And I wouldn't give in.

We sat there for at least 30 to 45 minutes—me holding the treat, her refusing to lay down. I wouldn't release her from the sit and let her get her way- but I wasn't going to give her the treat either. Until finally, she got bored and laid down. The second she dropped to the floor into a full "down" I rewarded her instantly. And from that moment on, she had the most dramatic "lay down" ever. Anytime I gave the command, she wouldn't just lie down—she would collapse to the ground as if she'd just been shot, stretching her paws out in front of her and pressing her head to the floor. She wouldn't move until I released her. It was hilarious, and I have so many videos of it.

That's the thing with Bloodhounds—you cannot force them into anything. If you try, you'll just end up frustrated. But if you give them the time to figure it out themselves, they'll get there. It might take longer, but when they finally understand, they never forget.

This isn't just saying to let them get their way. It's about having patience, holding them accountable and not forcing them in a way that's going to cause more damage than good.

Note from Ray Jackson: Northeast Houndsmen - As Instructors of a national organization that instructs and certifies Bloodhound Teams (Handler and Hound) often tell our students – just go to the hardware store and pick up a rubber hammer to yourself, to help with the frustration. Be patient, the hound will figure it out!