

This lecture will cover how to handle, prepare and store odor and will answer some common questions people have. One thing I like about Nosework is that you don't need to have a lot of equipment (or large equipment!) to start. Eventually you will find you've become a collector of many boxes and containers! What you do have to be mindful of is how to properly handle and store your oils.

We refer to containers/items that have odor in them as "hot" and containers/items that do not (will never) have odor in them as "cold".

The **most important aspect** is to avoid contamination!! If you get oil on your hands and then touch objects in your environment or search area, the scent can linger for months. This can cause your dog to alert on odor when not intended or have them around odor when not training. Neither are what we want! Once a container has been used as a hot container, **IT MUST ALWAYS REMAIN A HOT CONTAINER**. Even if it just had a hot tin in it, odor will linger and if qtips ever fall out of tin or you handle the hot box after preparing odor, it's more likely it has scent on it and into the material. *So ALWAYS use tweezers when you handle your Qtips!*

The **second most important aspect** is to never leave odor out when you are not training your dog. We never want our dog to be around odor when not working since they aren't getting rewarded or will start thinking odor doesn't pay! Store your kits and hot boxes/containers in a room/basement/garage where your dog never goes. You can also put your kit in another container to help contain the odor. I also store my cold containers separately from my hot containers!

You all should have your kits for starting the class. The kit will have a jar of already scented qtips (unless you purchased from Leerburg; they don't pre-scent their Qtips). They should last up to 3 months or so without refreshing. Your kit should also include a small tin with holes and tweezers.

**If you are making your own kits, I would put 3-4 drops of oil on a cotton ball (preferably a flat one) and place on the bottom of the jar. Place the qtips cotton down in the jar (cut in half first) and then drop 2-3 drops of oil on the inside of the lid. Close and shake. Give it at least 24 hours to sit before using. The smell should not be overpowering, but enough for you to smell when you place the qtips in your qtip container for training. Another method is to have an extra jar just for making scented qtips. Coat that jar with oil and extract out the extra so there is no pooling of liquid odor. Place your new cut qtips in char and let sit for 24-48 hours. Transfer the qtips to your main jar to use from.**

When making new Qtips, always use plain Qtips with a normal cardboard stick and pure cotton swabs. Don't use the kind with a plastic stick for several reasons... (1) Birch can melt plastic, (2) plastic comes with its own odor and we don't want to pair that odor with the target odor and (3) these types of Qtips might not be 100% cotton.

When training Nosework, the qtips will always be in some type of "container" so that the qtips are not exposed. Also, we don't want the dogs to chew or swallow the scented qtips either! The small tin in your kit is used for this purpose. I would also recommend having a plastic version of the small "tin" that you put the 3-5 qtips in for training. We will call these **"qtip**

**containers".** Sometimes a dog can get used to looking for/smelling a tin with odor. Eventually we will move to other qtip containers like straws or heat shrink tubes. I have found some dogs have difficulty with the transition from the metal tin to other types of qtip containers if they stay on the tin for a long time. Usually it's a visual thing when they can't "see" the tin, they aren't sure or will alert on something that looks like a tin if they are near source.

When you are preparing your qtip containers to place the qtips in, always work in an area where you can safely take the qtips out of the jar and into the container. Use tweezers!

- Avoid dropping qtips on the floor or work surface.
- Avoid getting odor on the outside of the tin
- Avoid getting odor on your hands. You can use disposable gloves or wash your hands immediately after preparing your tins. Vinegar is recommended to get odor off your hands.
- Use a table cloth or mat in case you do drop one.

When we start using large containers for searching, we will call these "**search containers**". You'll put the qtip container (with qtips inside) inside the vented container. Examples of search containers are the ORT boxes, plastic tupperware containers and eventually luggage, bags, etc that can be used in the container element searches.

One of the other common questions is how often to refresh the jar of qtips and how?? You'll find many different methods discussed on the various forums.

- I usually refresh about every 3 months or sooner if I think they are weak. I want to be able to smell the odor but not be overwhelmed by it. If you use TOO much and your dog is used to A LOT of odor, your dog may struggle on less odor at tests and trials.
- I refresh by taking the lid off, dropping 2-3 drops on the inside of the lid, place it back on the jar (quickly) and shake! Whala - refreshed!
- I've also read of or recieved kits where there is a flat cotton ball on the bottom of the jar that is scented with the odor and the qtips cotton down so they rest on the cotton ball.

How many qtips do we use in training? When starting out, you can increase odor by having 4 or 5 qtips in the tin, but as with anything you should vary the number you use as it can vary at a test. For your ORT, the rules explicitly state that 3 qtips are taped inside the box (underneath the top lid). I tend to train with 3 most of the time. But I also go down to 1 for a bit challenging, or use more than 3 if I'm setting up a difficult hide.

Another frequent question is how to take your odor on the road when training. I will prepare my tins/containers before leaving the house so that I'm not messing with the odor/jars away from home. I put qtips in the qtip containers and put the container in a zip lock baggie or a more sealed item like a glass jar and off I go!

***I will also store my prepared tins/holders in the refrigerator or freezer between sessions to save on prep time. This prevents the qtips from drying out.***

Over time you will find what methods work for you and it will become easier and easier to

manage the kits and odors. It will all make sense once you get started!