



Figure 16. The track picture.

Section IX. LAYING THE TRACK

106. General

a. A properly laid scent track for the dog to follow is absolutely essential for the conduct of effective training. This is especially important when turns in the track are introduced to the dog and when the animal is exposed to tripwires and ambushes. Although tracks will vary in length, age, and complexity, each track is, in itself, extremely important and should never be treated lightly by tracklayers.

b. Except during basic tracking exercises tracks should not follow an established pattern such as adhering to fence lines or known paths. Instead, each track should be laid in a manner that will preclude dogs from developing habits in relation to tracking.

107. Scuff Marks

a. During early training a strong, easily discernible scent trail is essential. This is accomplished best by leaving scuff marks along the track. Scuff marks are indentations in the ground cover made when the tracklayer deliberately drags his feet. Normally, scuff marks are approximately 18 inches long and 6 inches wide, and they serve two purposes: first, scuff marks reinforce the

scent picture for the dog; second, they inform the handler of the exact location of the track and allow him to evaluate his dog's progress accordingly.

b. The size of the scuff marks, and the frequency with which they are left along the track, will be determined by the instructor. Their use should be discontinued as soon as possible in order to develop the tracking potential of the dog and increase the handler's confidence in his dog's ability. To expedite training, however, scuff marks should always be left by the tracklayer when he enters and leaves streams, as well as prior to and after crossing roads and trails.

108. Scent Pads

Scent pads differ from scuff marks in that they are used only at the start of the track to identify the starting point and enable the dog to develop a scent picture of the quarry. Scent pads are generally a rectangular scuff mark in which the tracklayer stands for a few moments prior to laying the track. Items of clothing or equipment belonging to the quarry may also be used as scent pads. The decision as to when to discontinue the use of scent pads will be made by the in-