



2009 HRC Grand – Upland Hunt Outline

The following applies to ALL TESTING:

***GUNNERS**

If a designated Gunner is used, the individual should: 1) be at least 16 years of age; 2) have completed a certified Hunter Safety Course; and 3) be approved by the Judges of the Test where the Gunner is being used. (*revised 1-1-07 HRC rulebook)

UPLAND HUNT TESTS

Standard: PURPOSE AND PHILOSOPHY

This hunt test is for Hunting Retriever Champions (HRCH). It duplicates actual hunting conditions found throughout the country. This test will be conducted according to the rules already established in the rulebook for the Grand Hunting Retriever when evaluating the standards of control throughout this test. This test will duplicate actual Upland Hunting conditions found throughout the country. The successful completion of this test leads to qualification of the Grand Hunting Retriever Title, (GRHRCH). The Grand Hunting Retriever is expected to be steady, under control at all times and demonstrate an eager and prompt response to all commands with style and precision. The Grand Hunting Retriever Champion should represent the best of the breed.

Grand Upland Required Test Elements:

1. Simulated Walk-Up
2. Quartering Test (will include Steady to Wing and Steady to Shot)
3. (Optional) Tracking Test
4. Honor of another Retriever

Simulated Upland Walk-up Test:

One of the three required elements in the Grand Upland test is the walk-up. This is a test to evaluate if the Upland dog can remain under reasonable control when it is walking into a hunting scenario. *The Grand Hunting Retriever should walk quietly at heel off lead.*

During this test, a bird is thrown or released while the dog is walking at heel. As the handler approaches the flushing area, the bird is released. The handler shoots a popper at the simulated flushing bird. The dog is to remain steady through the shot or shots.

Once the bird is on the ground, the handler may release the dog to make the retrieve of this bird. The dog should pick up the bird and promptly deliver it to hand. Live shot flyers or dead birds may be used during the Grand Upland walk-up test.

NOTE: If live birds are used, only the approved gunners may shoot live ammo.

Walk-Up Test Objectives:

The Handler should bring the Retriever to and from the Retrieving line off lead.

The Judge should look for the dog that walks attentively at heel and does not have to be loudly reminded to stay in position.

This test is to simulate a hunter sneaking up on resting birds to get a flush and shot. A dog that runs ahead or has to be loudly controlled will most likely scare off the birds before the hunter can get within gun range.

It is not necessary for the dog to sit when the bird is flushed or released, but it should not leave the retrieving line before being commanded to do so. The retrieving line in the Walk-up test is the point where the Handler and dog are when the bird is flushed.

Setting up the Upland Walk-up:

The dog should be able to walk a sufficient distance before the walk-up is thrown so the judges are satisfied they can properly evaluate its ability to remain under reasonable Grand control while walking off lead.

The handler should be informed of the area where the walk-up bird will be thrown. It's suggested that a double set of ribbons be marked and handlers told that the walk-up bird will be launched when the **dog and handler are somewhere between the two marked spots on the ground.** This will allow the

judge's to launch the bird when they have the best opportunity to fairly evaluate each dog's performance.

Judges should find a way to call for the bird without having to loudly yell, "There goes one," from behind, which might startle the dog.

There should be sufficient distance from the dog to the landing area of the bird so as not to entice the dog to break.

The bird should be thrown high enough to give handlers a chance to steady the dog, then shoulder, aim and shoot at the escaping bird.

The handler and dog should be walking toward the landing area of the walk-up bird when it is thrown. Handlers may have difficulty watching the dog and seeing a bird thrown from the side. Birds that fall well to the side of the dog and Handler's path may encourage the dog to reposition itself and promote unsteadiness.

The dog should see the walk-up bird as it falls to the ground!

It's recommended that judges **not call for the release of the dog** on the Walk-up, but to advise handlers the dog can be sent only after the bird is on the ground and the dog is in the heel position.

Evaluating the Upland Walk-up:

Judges must decide if the retriever is demonstrating a Grand level of control. If the dog were off-lead walking into a dove field or a pheasant field, it would be expected to stay with the handler without noisy or frequent restraint.

Handlers may talk to the retriever without verbally intimidating it or disturbing the hunt. And they may use the whistle or voice commands to steady the dog. However, handler involvement to stop forward progress of the dog may be considered a controlled break.

Excessive verbal commands will be judged as lack of control and may be grounds for failure.

The retriever will be evaluated for steadiness exactly as it is on the retrieving line. A dog will be failed for either a break, or a controlled break at the Grand level. Handlers should be reminded if the dog creeps forward during this test, past the muzzle of the shotgun, the dog must be re-called to heel position before being sent.

The walk-up bird must be retrieved to hand unless a flyaway is produced that is un-retrievable.

Upland Quartering Test:

This test is to simulate a day of Upland hunting in the field. The dog is required to hunt the field in the attempt to find birds. Ideally the dog would hunt 10 to 30 yards to the front of the Handler. Once the bird is located, the Upland retriever is **expected to flush the bird** and remain steady throughout the flush and shot. Once the bird is on the ground the Retriever is then expected to retrieve the shot bird to hand.

The dog should be eager to hunt all available cover diligently and be under control. The intent of the quartering test is not to demonstrate running a pattern, but to demonstrate a natural tendency to hunt and be under control.

Setting up the Quartering Test:

Natural flushes are the "preferred testing method".

During this portion of the test a live bird is to be planted to achieve a **natural flush**. *"In all cases a natural flush is preferred to the use of traps, pens, cages, or other devices designed to **contain and release** birds during the quartering test. However, when conditions exist that prohibit the use of natural flushes (e.g., weather, poor birds, insufficient cover, etc.), such devices may be utilized but must be sufficiently camouflaged. When such devices must be used, the live bird is released (or thrown) in full view of the dog."*

During previous Grand's the normal practice was to natural plant Chukars and to use holding baskets when planting Pheasants. These holding baskets are constructed of a wire mesh in approximately 18" in diameter and 24" tall. They also have a bottom of the same mesh construction. These baskets will be grassed with the same cover located in the flushing field. These baskets are open on the top and will allow the contained bird to escape at will. The intent of the basket is to prevent running pheasants that can make for long extended hunts but still allow the bird to flush at will. Once the dog locates the bird, the dog must actively attempt to flush the bird into the air.

NOTE: At times a retriever may trap a bird on the ground or a bird will not flush from the containment basket. If either of these situations happens on two consecutive attempts, the retriever will be sent back three dogs and will return for a re-run in the opposite field if at all possible.

Beginning the Quartering Test:

The dog should be able to quarter a sufficient distance before entering the area where the flush shall occur. In general the dog should use its nose to hunt the cover, with eyes attentive, ears erect, and tail up. *“The dog does not need to run a pattern, but should show a natural ability to hunt the cover and be under control. Hand, voice or whistle commands are acceptable to begin the dog hunting, change the dog’s direction or hunt areas, or keep the dog in gun range.”* **It is recommended that a few set-up birds be used in the quartering area to put scent on the ground to help the early dogs to begin to demonstrate their quartering technique.**

“However, a markdown should occur and the test may be failed if the dog is directed by the Handler for every change of direction and to every patch of cover.”

The Grand Upland game dog must first demonstrate the ability to search for game before continuing on with the test. The dog must demonstrate Grand control while attempting to find the bird. If the dog will not leave the Handlers side or hunt the field without excess commands from the handler to demonstrate the ability to properly search for game, the test **will be failed** at this point.

Planting the first bird:

Once the Upland dog has demonstrated its ability to search for game, the bird being used shall be planted in cover recommended in the Upland guide. This will normally be cover that is head height to the game bird being used. Cover that is too tall or dense for birds to escape will only produce trapped birds by the dog requiring repeated unnecessary no-bird calls.

Having a bird planter prepared with an additional bird should it be needed, can save valuable time during an event. Especially in the event of a wild flushed bird.

Birds shall be randomly planted throughout the field. Every effort should be taken to prevent the retriever from seeing the bird being planted. This will help to avoid a dog running directly to the planted bird possibly aiding in a dog becoming out of control.

Beginning the Quartering test:

At this point the Handler will work his Upland dog into the planting area searching for the planted bird. The handler should be informed of the area to search and how to proceed while searching for the planted bird. It’s suggested that ribbon markers be placed in the quartering field as guide makers to aid the handlers on how to proceed through the field. These guides allow you to bring the Upland dog

into the wind as conditions may change throughout the event while allowing the best opportunity to fairly evaluate each dog's performance.

Once the Upland dog finds the bird, it is **expected to flush the bird** into the air. **The dog must actively participate in the flush** to receive credit for the flush. A bird that flushes wildly **out of the view of the dog** due to nervousness of the bird or noise on the part of the Handler **shall not be counted**. The dog that will not readily flush the bird or one that has to be continually coaxed in order to obtain a proper flush has not demonstrated the desirable traits necessary to obtain the Grand title.

Remember: This is a flushing test of natural ability, not a handling test such as that used during a blind retrieve.

Care should be taken to keep the Handler a sufficient distance away from the planted bird and dog being tested to avoid the Handler inadvertently flushing the planted bird with excessive Handler commands to the dog.

"Each Grand Upland Dog must be presented with a minimum of one (1) bird to "flush" in the quartering test."

Steady to Wing:

"After the flush is made the dog should come to a stop on its own or on command from the Handler. It is not necessary for the dog to sit, but it should come to a stop within a reasonable distance after the flush to allow the Handler and gunners a clean and safe shot."

Voice and whistle commands may be used in order to achieve steadiness to wing on the Grand dog. The number of whistles or commands needed in order to achieve steadiness are not in of itself the determining factor during evaluation of steadiness.

The factors that must be determined are these:

1. Was the dog stopped on the flush within gun range of the escaping bird to allow a safe shot of the Handler and gunners?
2. Did the dog demonstrate Grand level control throughout the steadiness process, or were unnecessary commands or whistles needed in order to achieve steadiness of the dog?
3. Did the dog's inability to hunt within gun range contribute to the unsuccessful attempt at steadiness?
4. Did the Handler even attempt to stop the dog during the flush?

5. Was the bird a hard flier or was the bird weak and un-fairly presented to the dog in order to determine a fair judgment of steadiness?

“A dog that does not stop on each of the Handlers whistle or voice command should be assessed a markdown for a refusal, the severity of which will be determined by the conditions of the test and the individual flush.”

“For example, a dog that is merely repositioning or moving out of heavy cover to mark the fall better, and then stops on its own or on command, should not be marked down.”

“Any subsequent refusals by the dog to stop will place the dog in increasing jeopardy of failure.”

Steady to Shot:

Once the dog has flushed the bird and demonstrated the ability to stop on the flush. The dog will then be tested on its ability to remain steady through the shot or shots. Steady to shot will begin the moment the dog comes to a complete stop, and the Handler then fires a popper shot.

*“A **Controlled Break** will result if the dog stops after the flush, then leaves, before being sent by the Handler, to retrieve the downed bird or chase a fly away bird, and then is stopped by the Handler.”*

The dog is to remain steady until the shot bird has fallen to the ground. In the case of a fly away the dog is to remain steady until given a signal from the judges to re-heel the dog and continue hunting. **Any handler involvement to stop a dog from attempting to retrieve a downed bird or chase an escaping bird, or handler involvement prior to the judges calling for a re-heel,** will be considered a controlled break.

A **break** will result in an automatic failure at this level of testing.

Judges should instruct the Handler to get credit for each flush as described in Steady to Wing & Shot, the Handler must shoot a shot in the direction of the escaping bird. Handlers may shoot up into the air if it is unsafe to shoot toward the bird.

Recommendation for re-heeling the dog:

In the case of a fly away, when instructed by the Judges to re-heel the dog, it's possible the dog may take off on the first sound from anyone. This action should

not be penalized once the time line for steadiness has been met and there shall be no mark down from that point for a dog that inadvertently leaves with the attempt to retrieve. The dog must however remain under control and return immediately to the handler on command. Failure to immediately respond to the Handler's command will result in a markdown for lack of control and may result in a failure of the test.

Finishing the Quartering test:

At the completion of the required flushed bird, the dog must immediately return to hunting for more game. The dog must demonstrate the ability to be under control and return to hunting after each bird was either shot and retrieved or missed as in a fly away.

To perform this act we recommend that you turn and quarter the dog away from the last escaping bird or flyaway in order to give the dog the best opportunity for success.

If the dog then bolts in an effort to chase a fly away and does not immediately return to hunting area the test would be failed at this point.

Remember: Always immediately quarter the dog again after the flushed bird in order to fulfill the Quartering test requirements.

When to call a No-Bird?

Anytime during the Walk-up when a bird cannot be judged properly.

Anytime a bird will not flush to a reasonable height during the flushing test to allow proper judgment of the retriever's ability to become steady or to be properly evaluated on the flush.

Anytime a dog traps a live bird on the ground.

Note: after two such trapped birds in a row, the dog will be placed back three dogs in line and come back for a re-run to complete the flushing portion of the test.

Anytime a bird flushes in an un-safe direction preventing the handler to act on the flushing bird.

During the Upland test, events will happen very fast. It is up to each judge to be ready to act in an appropriate manner in order to give every dog an equal chance to be evaluated properly while keeping everyone safe. Trapped birds, weak flyers, or runners are all a fact of Upland game hunting. During this event we must do everything possible to obtain the best birds possible to prevent these problems from occurring.

Honor of another Upland Dog:

Honoring of another dog is required at this level of testing. This usually is preformed during the walk-up portion of the test. This allows for the best ability to control this portion of the testing process.

Tracking:

“If the Judges use a drag scented path, it should not be less than forty (40) yards in length nor more than seventy-five (75). It should also contain at least one distinguishable change in direction.”

The Upland dog should be evaluated on its ability to find a scent trail and follow it to the bird. The dog is not required to stay exactly on the scent trail, but should demonstrate progress along the scented path to the dead bird or along the route of a running bird.

Voice or whistle commands may be used to encourage the dog to hunt, but hand signals should not be used once the dog is set on the beginning of the trail.

Sufficient time should be given for the dog to work out the scent trail as long as it is making progress along the trail. However, if the dog aimlessly hunts with no direction along the scent trail and has to continually be reset on the track the test may be failed.

Once the bird is found it should be retrieved and delivered to hand.

Upland Hunt Test Gun Safety Considerations:

A single popper only should be loaded and handlers admonished to carry the firearm in a safe manner, i.e. safety on, muzzle up and pointed forward during each portion of the Upland test.

Handlers should be advised that when the bird is flushed, they should steady their retriever first and only then take the safety off the firearm, to aim, track and shoot the bird. **(Removing the safety prior to the bird flushing into the air or the Handler shooting prior to completely stopping the dog will result in a gun safety warning). A second occurrence of either of these infractions will result in Handler disqualification for gun safety.**

Handlers should be reminded the gun should be safe (safety on, breech open) and the muzzle pointed in a safe direction as they accept the retrieved bird.

If live shot flyers are used during the walk-up, the gunners and bird thrower must be placed at least 90 degrees to the walk-up line. This set-up shall be used to avoid accidental spray of lead pellets.

When using live flyers for the walk-up, placing the live gunners on each side of the hand tossed flyer station will enable the most consistent placement of the walk-up thrown bird as well as the least amount of birds getting away. These gunners shall be well hidden from the Handlers view during the walk-up and will be shooting at 90 degrees to the walk-up handler.

Live gunners may also walk to each side of the Handler during the walk-up in order to shoot the live flyer, however this set-up may produce very erratic results. Also a launcher must be used to avoid having a person out in the field possibly located in the line of fire.

Gun Safety Recommendations for Live Gunners:

Official gunners with live rounds shall be instructed to only discharge their firearms after the handler has safely fired their popper round.

Gunners should understand **Gun Safety** is the first priority. It is not necessary that the bird be killed during the flush in order to adequately judge the dog and handler.

Live gunners should be advised they are to:

Always safe their guns until advised by the judges that the test is proceeding.

Always carry their guns in a safe manner, i.e. muzzle up, safety on.

Never take the safety off until ready to fire.

Never shoot at any birds on the ground.

Never shoot in an unsafe direction.

Never shoot unless the bird flushes high enough for a safe shot.

Never shoot unless the working dog has completely stopped.

Never shoot until the Handler has fired their popper load.

Judges should advice gunners that after the shot or shots, the gunners should hold perfectly still until the retriever has been sent on the retrieve and is well clear of the line. At that time the gunners can then quietly open the breech and remove any empty shells and remain open until instructed again to load.

Clothing:

It is recommended that all personnel located in the field wear both a blaze orange vest and hat. Handlers should have a vest capable of holding those shot birds released during their run.