



AFFILIATED WITH  
UNITED KENNEL CLUB, INC.

*"Conceived by hunters for hunters"*

AN INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION

# JUDGES/HANDLERS SEMINAR

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# HUNTING RETRIEVER CLUB, INC.



From: HRC Executive Committee

Subject: Welcome to the HRC Judges/Handlers Seminar

Fellow Members,

We want to welcome you to the HRC Judges/Handlers Seminar. We are committed to helping our judges maintain the highest testing standards and improve handler success by assisting them with a better understanding of the rules and guidelines governing HRC tests.

Development of this program is made possible through the generous donations of our National Sponsors and the HRC Foundation. HRC's dedication to the comprehensive and continued education of its members is evident in the continued improvement of this program.

Your dedication to HRC and participation in this seminar is what makes us unique. Reward yourself through active participation in our programs and most of all HAVE FUN!

Your Executive Committee,

Jim Reichman, President

Mike Witt, Vice President

Carol Ford, Secretary

Mike Dittrich, Treasurer

# FOREWORD

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The idea of HRC judging seminars was originally conceived and begun by our founding president, Omar Driskill, who understood that realistic hunting tests, judged fairly and consistently, would produce better hunting retrievers. Over the past few years, the seminar has evolved into a comprehensive judges training program using multimedia presentation equipment to enhance the learning experience. The seminar also welcomes handlers wanting to understand the judging process.

It's our hope that everyone attending will benefit from the knowledge and information shared, discussed and presented in the seminar. The Hunting Retriever Club, Inc. continues its strong commitment to a quality judges program, and thanks you for your support and participation.

*About the seminar handbook...*

The purpose of this manual is to supplement our HRC Rules and Guidelines for Hunting Retriever Tests booklet, not supplant or replace it. While the seminar manual contains several direct quotes from the HRC rulebook (in italics), it also contains valuable judging recommendations and judging tips not found in our rulebook. The seminar book offers explanations of judging terms and concepts to help judges set up realistic tests that properly evaluate retrievers and avoid problems. It will closely follow the slideshow presentation.

We wish to specifically thank *Purina* whose financial support and commitment to HRC helps make the printing and distribution of this manual possible. Also, a special thanks goes to your HRC Executive Committee, HRC Administrative Secretary Claudene Christopher, and the HRC Foundation for their advice and continued support, and for providing the resources and equipment to bring the seminar to the HRC membership. Finally, our thanks and gratitude goes to the HRC field representatives for their expertise, thoughts, comments and contributions to the content of the booklet, and especially to field reps Larry McMurry and Paul Ramponi who spent many hours editing and revising the seminar slideshow presentation and this seminar handbook.

We hope this manual helps you to become a better Hunting Retriever Club, Inc. judge and/or more knowledgeable handler.

Tim Gibson  
National Seminar Instructor



## 2011 HRC Judges/Handlers Seminar

### Overview:

HRC is committed to helping our judges continue to setup quality tests and make good decisions that fairly evaluate the performance of our retrievers. This seminar is designed to help HRC judges:

- Develop an understanding of the HRC purpose and philosophy of testing Hunting Retrievers at each level.
- Develop an understanding of why we test specific aspects of a Hunting Retriever's performance, the need to use realistic test scenarios and to judge consistently.
- Establish guidelines and recommendations for evaluating Hunting Retrievers.
- Establish guidelines and recommendations for setting up and executing hunting tests.
- Offer "Judging Tips" to help judges avoid problems that may cause difficulties in their tests, or in evaluating retrievers.

# Chapter 1

## ***SAFETY IN A HUNT TEST***

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When judges setup their hunt test there are several safety issues they must take into consideration. Foremost is Gun Safety which includes more than just how to handle a shotgun. The following pages will explain gun safety in more detail as well as present the *HRC Firearm Safety Policy (Appendix B)*.

As a judge you should also be very aware of the HRC Lightning Safety Policy and how it applies to your test location. The *HRC Lightning Safety Policy (Appendix C)* is also presented here.

### **Gun Safety in HRC Tests**

The HRC program revolves around the hunter, the retriever and the gun. Without the gun, you would not be a hunter. . Gun safety is critical to the continued success of the HRC program. Judges must have successfully completed a hunter safety course. Handlers are encouraged to take a hunter safety course.

The **judge** is the person primarily responsible for gun safety at the test site, but Handlers are being judged on gun safety **any time they are using a shotgun** as part of the test.

If a handler in Started shoots the gun, they will be evaluated for gun safety by the same criterion as handlers at the advanced test levels.

The rulebook states (all levels), *Mishandling of firearms will result in immediate disqualification of both the handler and the hunting retriever.* (Rulebook – Shotguns/Gun Safety at every level)

If the handler is disqualified for gun safety, the handler will not be allowed to run any more dogs during the hunt that day. A disqualified handler's other dogs may be run by someone else.

Warn handlers and/or gunners of potential problems before they occur. If you see a handler or other participant initiating an unsafe action, **stop it before it occurs**.

Proper gun safety is not only important for the handler, judges and gallery but is of critical importance to the health and safety of the retriever. If the retriever is in front of the muzzle when the gun is discharged, serious injury to the retriever may occur.

#### **Example:**

The retriever creeps out in front of the handler when a mark is thrown. In attempting to track and shoot the bird, the handler shoots too close to the retriever. This action could disqualify the handler for gun safety.

## Three Important Parts of the Gun

There are three parts of the gun judges recognize as critical to the safe handling of the gun.

- **THE MUZZLE**
- **THE BREECH**
- **THE SAFETY**

The **MUZZLE** is the most important part of the gun from a safety standpoint. Nothing can be harmed by an accidental discharge if the muzzle is never pointed at anything except an intended target.

The **BREECH** is the second most important part of the gun from a safety standpoint. If the breech is open, a gun is unable to discharge any load.

The **SAFETY** is the least important part of the gun from a safety standpoint. This is because the safety is a mechanical device and is subject to failure.

### When to Disqualify a Handler for Gun Safety

- If, during any portion of the test, the handler points the muzzle of the gun at any person, the handler should be immediately disqualified.
- If the handler returns the gun to the judge or to the gun rack with both the safety off and the breech closed the handler should be immediately disqualified.
- If the handler returns the gun to the judge or to the gun rack with the safety on and the breech closed or the breech open and the safety off, the handler should be warned. Any further incidence involving gun safety would be grounds for immediate disqualification.

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**If a handler is disqualified for gun safety, they will be told before leaving the retrieving line!**

**Also, no handler shall hold or operate a shotgun if they are also holding a dog on lead in any portion of the hunt test!**

## Popper Rule

“Popper” rule, under **Shotguns**, (at all testing levels)

*To minimize the possibility of an accidental discharge of a firearm while handling a dog during an U.K.C./HRC test, handlers should not be given more poppers, or permitted to load more poppers into the shotgun than are required to complete any given segment of a test. More poppers may be provided and/or loaded at a Judge’s discretion if they are required by the logistics of the test.*

HRC clubs can now elect to use safety poppers, described as a new unfired primed hull. Clubs must use the same type of popper at all testing levels for the hunt test.

## **Approved Guns at the Hunt Test**

*Only authorized guns will be allowed in the test area. Authorized guns are those shotguns inspected and found to be in proper working order and approved for use at the test site(s) by a hunt official(s). (Rulebook – Shotguns/Gun Safety at every level)*

Prior to the test, judges and/or the hunt test marshals should inspect each shotgun to be used for proper operation and magazine plug. Handlers wishing to use their own shotguns may do so for legitimate reasons (such as gun stock length) with permission of judges. Such use should be requested prior to the start of the test, and guns should also be inspected for proper operation and magazine plug.

It is not required, nor recommended that judges ask handlers to leave personal guns at the hunt site for the duration of the test.

## **Gun Stands**

Place a gun stand close to the area in which the handler will control the retriever. It is unreasonable to expect handlers to handle their retrievers and hold a shotgun. Remember to give handlers adequate time to pick up a gun and load for the diversion.

## **The following applies to ALL CATEGORIES OF 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 rulebook page 32)

## **Gun Safety Checklist**

Please review the Gun Safety Checklist located in the seminar appendix prior to judging.

[Appendix A](#)

## **HRC Firearm Safety Policy**

Please refer to the HRC Firearm Safety Policy located in the appendix.

[Appendix B](#)

## **HRC Lightning Policy**

Lightning strikes are a very serious concern when participating in outdoor activities. You should familiarize yourself with the “Flash-To-Bang Method” found in the HRC Lightning Policy located in the appendix.

[Appendix C](#)

# Chapter 2

## TESTING RETRIEVERS

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At each testing level, judges must understand several key elements, as listed below. These items will be discussed in detail as we proceed through the seminar.

- 1) Standard (and rules) and test objectives that apply at each level.
- 2) How to choose an appropriate test site.
- 3) How to set up a good test.
- 4) Use of the gun and safety at each testing level.
- 5) How to explain the test and objectives and safety to handlers.
- 6) Executing the hunt test
- 7) Required elements to be tested.
- 8) How to make a proper evaluation of the retriever's performance.
- 9) Issues, Problems, and Solutions at the Test

### **The Five Desirable Traits of a Hunting Retriever**

- 1. Marking Ability and Memory**
- 2. Nose**
- 3. Hunting Desire**
- 4. Control**
- 5. Hunting Style**

The rulebook states that, *"They will be judged according to the Test standard, but will vary between categories."* It is the judges responsibility to observe and evaluate these five traits with an impartial and educated eye. We'll explain how the standard and these traits vary for each testing level as we progress through the manual.

While these two “Desirable Traits” are applied to all levels they are judged more closely at the Seasoned, Finished and Grand levels.

## **Hunting Style**

*This is an open-ended category that includes style, sportsmanship, attitude and intelligence. These qualities will be more evident in the older retrievers that have hunted a season or two but nevertheless, important if we are to breed the best Hunting Retrievers. (HRC Rulebook)*

*Each breed has its own manner afield and retrievers from different parts of the country or world also are characteristically different. The judge must view the retriever’s entire performance before scoring on style. (HRC Rulebook)*

When evaluating style, the Judge should look for a retriever who is happy and enthusiastic. A stylish retriever is one who exhibits an explosion of energy when leaving the retrieving line. Regardless of the retriever’s age, breed or speed in the field, the Judge can see that the retriever wants to be afield hunting with their handler. The handler and retriever work together confidently as a team. It is both exhilarating and heartwarming to watch a stylish retriever perform in the field.

The retriever who leaves the line with its tail between its legs and its ears laid back does not demonstrate style. If the trainer has intimidated or pressured the retriever to the extent that it shows fear or uncertainty when sent into the field, this person has failed as a trainer. As an organization, this is not what the Hunting Retriever Club is all about. If a trainer has taken style away from a retriever in order to make it pass tests, this deserves a serious mark down, and if bad enough may constitute a failure.

### ***Recommendation***

It is very difficult to fail a retriever on style alone and is not recommended. If the trainer has taken the style away from the dog, it will usually surface in the dog’s performance.

## **Nose**

### ***What is it?***

The nose is a small, cold wet thing with two holes in it on the end of the dog’s face. It gives dogs the ability to scent downed game.

### ***Why are we evaluating it?***

The dog’s ability to scent a downed bird is one of the primary reasons we use dogs as retrievers.

## **What does the HRC rulebook say about nose?**

*A sharp, tuned nose is obviously a desirable characteristic of a hunting retriever; however, it is a difficult attribute to specifically test. Judges should be on constant alert for this trait during all tests. Judges should be careful, however, and not be quick to mark down a lack of nose on a particular test as scenting conditions can vary considerably from test to test. (HRC Rulebook)*

### **Recommendation**

The Judge should look for every opportunity to mark a retriever up for a good nose; however, failing a dog for lack of nose is not recommended unless the Hunting Retriever is specifically being tested for nose (i.e., tracking test).

#### **\*\* JUDGING TIP \*\***

When setting up a test, judges should pay particular attention to cross winds and how this may affect a dogs ability to cleanly retrieve multiple marks. A test may require a retriever to run past an old fall or scent area. Don't penalize the retriever for honoring its nose.

### **Test Setup Considerations...**

NOTE: Most of the following considerations will apply at any level of testing!

- 1) Is it LEGAL and SAFE?
- 2) Where will the retrieving line be and where does the test begin and end?
- 3) Does every bird thrown or retrieved serve a well-defined purpose?
- 4) Will the dogs see the marks thrown? (sun, shadows, splash, etc.)
- 5) Will the Started dogs see the marks hit the ground or water?
- 6) Will the dogs be able to find the birds after reaching the area of the fall?
- 7) Will anything interfere with the dog's ability to successfully complete the marked retrieves (wind direction, bird crates, and other distractions)?
- 8) At Started, how can we be assured of getting the required 90 degree separation?
- 9) Can the marks be thrown so the dog won't run down the bank to retrieve or return with them? We do not want to create training problems!
- 10) Are there duck or goose calls, gun stand(s), a bird drying rack, holding blinds, a gun and a designated gunner, decoys properly placed, and a pickup dog readily available (water test).
- 11) Is there a plan to keep the line free of old birds?
- 12) Can we hide the wingers and bird throwers well enough?
- 13) Will the handlers see their dog if it overruns the fall area?
- 14) Are there any terrain safety hazards (fences, wire, holes, ditches, roads, underwater obstacles, debris in water)?
- 15) Proximity to parking area or busy roads (noise distractions and safety)

- 16) Will the gallery location interfere with the test?
- 17) Will the test let us evaluate the retrievers properly?
- 18) Are we keeping REALISM in the test? Does it look like we are hunting, or are we using white buckets at the line, exposed wingers and throwers, and a test setup that does not look much different than our training sessions?

## Test Explanation and Objectives

Rulebook - Judges (all levels) *Judges will provide an explanation of each hunting test objective to the Handlers.*

Each required portion of every test has a specific objective, i.e. a goal the retriever and handler are attempting to reach to demonstrate acceptable performance. Clearly explaining these objectives gives handlers an understanding of what they and their dog are expected to accomplish during each phase of the test.

At every level, the HRC rulebook states under **GUIDELINES FOR JUDGES AND CONDUCTING HUNTS:**

20. *A complete test description should be given to Handlers assembled before each test dog is run.*
21. *Judges should greet each Handler in a friendly and courteous manner and discuss:*
  - A. *If the Handler understands the test;*
  - B. *That a loaded shotgun will be used and that it must be handled with care;*
  - C. *That true hunting form should be used (i.e. a bird should be tracked and shot at the top of its arc - STARTED, SEASONED, FINISHED, UPLAND AND GRAND; and*
  - D. *Areas where dogs are allowed to be worked while at the point of origin.*

**Note: Suggested Test Briefings for each level are provided in the Appendix of this seminar manual.**

## Considerations When Executing the Test

Most of the following items will apply at all testing levels:

- 1) Placement and accuracy of wingers – Wingers should be placed so as not to startle or distract the retriever. The target area should be big enough to minimize no-birds.
- 2) Signaling for throws – It's strongly recommended that all HRC judges signal for each throw, preferably by radio or a quiet hand signal out of sight of the retriever. Controlling timing of the throws provides a more consistent test for retrievers and can help eliminate no-bird situations. Advise bird throwers in advance that if a duck falls out of a winger pouch, pick it up immediately and throw it unless the judges say otherwise. Especially at **Started**, judges should make sure the retriever is ready before signaling for the bird.
- 3) Stopping a test – Advise handlers that only a judge will stop a test in the event of gun problems or bird problems, or interference issues. If a problem occurs that will

adversely affect a retriever's performance or the judges' ability to evaluate the performance, the test should be halted.

- 4) Calling no-bird – Advise handlers that only the judges will call a no-bird.
- 5) Re-runs – When a test is stopped or a no-bird is called, the judges should follow the rulebook recommendations under **GUIDELINES FOR JUDGES AND CONDUCTING HUNTS:**  
*Reruns should be placed at least three dogs down the line instead of being brought back to the line immediately. Judges should also give instruction on the rerun to the Marshal.*
- 6) Handlers should be advised that they cannot point out the bird throwers before the birds are thrown as indicated under

**SPORTSMANSHIP:**

*The Judge is to assess the retriever not the Handler, but there are numerous things that fall under the heading of “unsportsmanlike conduct” and should result in either failure or a major mark down. They include but are not limited to: 4. Pointing out the bird throwers and/or gunners to the retriever by the Handler prior to birds being thrown.*

- 7) Releasing the retriever - In most cases judges should not call for release of the dog when it is time for the dog to retrieve. The dog may be distracted by a judge's voice, or the judge may forget to call for the release. It's recommended that handlers be told that they may send their dog when the bird (or last bird of multiple marks) is on the ground. Advise handlers that if the dog goes before then, or before it is verbally sent, it must return to heel.
- 8) Watching the dog and the test - **GUIDELINES FOR JUDGES AND CONDUCTION HUNTS:**  
*Before a test begins, it should be decided which Judge shall signal for birds and watch for no-birds while the other Judge watches the dog for manners, marking, etc.*

# Chapter 3

## ***STARTED HUNT TESTS***

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### **Standard: PURPOSE AND PHILOSOPHY**

*Judges will look for natural ability rather than trained performance.*

*The Started Hunt Test is for young or inexperienced hunting retrievers.*

*A Started Hunting Retriever should be able to do a simple dove or waterfowl hunt and retrieve game from land and water.*

### **Started Test Objectives**

From *Started Guidelines - Judging Started Hunt Tests*

*“This is a test designed to assess the ability of the dog to follow the flight of the shot bird to the area of the fall, and its ability to go directly to the area of the fall, retrieve the bird and return it to the Handler.”*

### **Picking the Started Test Site**

Question: **Very Important - Is the site safe?**

Question: Would you take a Started retriever and hunt at this site? Why or why not?

**Land:** Cover and terrain must be appropriate for each level being tested! Throwing birds into tall cover should be avoided at the Started level. It should be very easy for a Started retriever to find the bird if they reach the fall area. Do not throw Started marks on hilltops. They should be placed such that where the retriever perceives the bird hits is where it actually does fall.

Unacceptable: Golf course type cover (very short, mowed grass), cover changes, tall cover, ditches, and roads across path to bird, excessive rolling terrain

**Water:** Ideal pond is wide enough to get two throws, shallow banks to promote easy entry, no debris to navigate through or to influence marks.

Unacceptable: Excessive vegetation, steep bank to climb up, stickups and logs.

## Gun Safety Specifically at the Started Test

### Started - Test Rules

- III. *If the hunting retriever is hand held, the Handler will not handle the shotgun. The Handler may request the gunner to move a distance away to avoid scaring an inexperienced dog.*

### Started - Guidelines

- II. *If the Started Handler opts to shoot the shotgun, the dog may not be restrained.*

Remember: If a handler holds the gun, they are judged for gun safety.

Safe and proper shooting form is as important in the Started category as in the Seasoned and Finished categories.

Although the gunner in the Started Category should be positioned so as not to startle or distract the retriever, the retriever should have a clear view of the gun and where it is aiming.

**Recommendation** - Judges should advise gunners that after the shot, the gunner should hold perfectly still until the retriever has been sent and is well clear of the line. The gunner can then quietly open the breech and remove the empty shell.

## Setup and Executing the Started Hunt Test

**IMPORTANT NOTE: A good test setup is the real key to fair and proper evaluation of the retrievers at all levels. If a retriever fails, make sure it's the dog's own lack of skills or performance that fails it, not a bad set up or poor test mechanics!**

## TEST DESCRIPTION

*The Started Hunt will have four tests. Two tests shall be marked water retrieves. Two tests will be marked land retrieves. The Started Hunting Retriever can participate in all four tests regardless of whether or not it passes each test.*

*Dead pheasants, pigeons, ducks or other game must be used for all hunting tests...*  
(rulebook, Started Hunting Tests) Shot flyers shall not be used in the Started class.

Distances: Land – 75 yards or less

Water – 60 yards or less

*On consecutive singles from the same retrieving line, the line to the falls should not be less than 90 degrees.*

Question: How do we comply with the 90 degree rule on a small test site?

Answer: Move the retrieving line!

### **Started Water Recommendation:**

The retrieves should be set up to have dogs “square” the entry when possible to avoid encouraging bank running. Started dogs should not be expected to ignore an attractive shoreline!

### **Other Started Test Set Up Considerations:**

1) Visible gunners during a test: The *Started Guidelines* state that...

- V. *Gunners and Bird Boys should be inconspicuous in keeping with the hunting situation. At the discretion of the Judges, not more than once in each event the Gunners may be visible in order to simulate specific hunting situations, such as dove hunting. It is the intent of these regulations to provide the dog with adequate opportunity to focus attention on the area of the fall.*

2) Attention-getting devices: Required at Started per *Started Test Rules*:

- IX. *Gunners and Bird Boys must be inconspicuous and blend in with the local hunting conditions. When Bird Boys and Gunners are hidden, an attention getting shot or shots may be used or a duck or goose call must be used before the birds are thrown. A shot must be fired when the bird is at the top of its arc.*

**NOTE:** A bird thrower yelling “hey, hey” is not an acceptable attention-getting device.

### **Started Test Briefing**

Judges should print out, carry and use the briefing ([Appendix D](#)) during the handlers meeting.

Started Handler Meeting Recommendations:

- 1) Ask who is running their first HRC event.
- 2) Make the handlers feel at ease and welcome.
- 3) Explain everything slowly, especially about handlers bringing their dog to the line on lead with a collar, leash or line and being able to hand-hold their dogs to assist in steadiness.
- 4) Tell handlers that you will explain exactly what they are to do and when, and what their dog will be evaluated on.
- 5) Run the test dog then answer questions on logistics and objectives only.

# EVALUATING THE STARTED RETRIEVER

Required Elements to be tested: **Desire - Marking - Control**

## JUDGING STARTED DESIRE

The HRC rulebook says; *A test may be failed if a retriever:*

1. *Stops and gives up hunting;*
2. *Refuses to enter rough cover, water, ice, mud or any situation involving difficult or unpleasant going after being commanded to do so, or;*
3. *Shows no interest in hunting a bird or picking it up. A retriever should be marked lower for reluctance to enter unfavorable terrain or water, and hunting in a disinterested lackadaisical manner.*

When judging desire in a Started dog, it's recommended the judges look for the following. These items will also apply to dogs at every testing level!

- The Started retriever should want to go get the bird when released.
- It should not run out to the bird and refuse to pick it up, or act disinterested.
- It should not refuse to get in the water to get a duck it clearly saw fall.
- It should not run or swim out to a duck and then ignore it to pursue something more interesting.

## JUDGING STARTED MARKING

Started dogs are evaluated for marking ability with single retrieves. Marking tests increase in difficulty at each successive testing level because of increased distances, multiple birds, more difficult cover and terrain, and distractions or other factors in the test. However, to show they have successfully marked the bird(s) at the hunt test, retrievers at every test level must demonstrate the same basic skills, which are evaluated in the same manner. **Season, Finished, and Grand dogs are therefore evaluated for marking ability exactly the same way a Started dog is judged on marking, and vice-versa.**

When describing marking as one of the desirable traits of a retriever at all testing levels, our rulebook states:

### **1. MARKING ABILITY - The following applies to every testing level....**

*The Judge must score on whether the retriever truly marked and remembered the bird, or if it merely stumbled upon it while wildly running around the field. Also, a retriever that must be handled to a marked fall does not demonstrate marking ability. Serious faults, which would be grounds for failure, would include:*

1. *Failure to find a bird;*
2. *Throwing an object to aid the dog; and*

3. *Excessive handling to marks that the retriever should have seen*

*The judge should score a retriever lower for poor marking, repeated handling on marks, leaving the hunt area, and disturbing too much cover.*

The Started Guidelines tell us what is expected of a Started retriever when it is demonstrating marking ability:

**GUIDELINES - JUDGING STARTED HUNT TESTS**

*This is a test designed to assess the ability of the dog to follow the flight of the shot bird to the area of the fall, and its ability to go directly to the area of the fall, retrieve the bird and return it to the Handler. Also:*

4. *Did the dog proceed directly to the area of the fall?*
5. *Did the dog hunt the area of the fall?*

**Question: What is the Area Of the Fall (AOF)?**

Simply – it is the area in which a thrown bird has landed. The size of the area of the fall will change with different variables, such as distance to the fall, cover and whether the mark is a memory bird.

**Question: What do we mean by “proceed directly”?**

The dog should not initiate a hunt for the bird until it reaches the AOF. It should not run about the test site hunting elsewhere until it comes upon scent in the AOF.

**Started marking step by step:** Let's follow a Started retriever through a typical single mark:

- 1) **On the line:** Dog is brought to the retrieving line on lead.... handler holds dog and signals when ready.... dog alerts to attention getting call from bird thrower.... sees bird thrown and watches it land in the area of fall.
- 2) **Marking:** Dog is released to retrieve and proceeds directly toward bird.... reaches area of the fall....establishes hunt for the bird in the area of the fall.
- 3) **Completing the retrieve:** Dog finds the bird, picks it up, and begins to return to handler....dog brings bird back to immediate area of the handler.

**Recommendation for Started Marking:**

- Don't signal for the throw if it is obvious that the dog and handler are not ready!
- Remember – a mark should not be difficult to find if a dog reaches the AOF.

NOTE: Going directly to the area of the fall and establishing a hunt for the bird we can say; “this dog marked the bird”. In most cases the dog will find the bird and complete the retrieve.

While rare, dogs that have “marked” a bird well can still have problems finding it.

Most common reasons a Started dog that has “marked” a bird can’t find it:

- 1) At a land test – the bird has landed in heavy cover in the AOF
- 2) At a water test – the duck is sitting too low in the water
- 3) The dog does not diligently hunt for the bird in the AOF

The first two problems are caused by a poor setup or poor birds and aren’t the fault of the dog. If at all possible, these two problems should be fixed before running more dogs. Judges should expect extended hunts and/or handling or re-casting on these marks to complete the retrieves. Dogs should not be penalized for lack of marking skills in these difficult situations. The third item requires a judgment call. The judges will have to decide if the retriever adequately hunted the area of the fall.

**Question: What is the Hunt Area? How is it different than the AOF?**

Dogs that don’t immediately find a bird in the AOF will often expand their hunt to a larger area in an effort to find it. This larger area around the AOF, which is left up to the judges’ discretion, is called the hunt area. When searching for a mark, if the dog stays within the hunt area, this is acceptable.

If the dog begins to leave the hunt area, the Started handler has to make one of two choices:

- 1) Handle the dog to the bird, or...
- 2) Recall the dog and send it for the mark again.

What does the rulebook say about these things?

### **Handling on Started Marks**

*Should excessive handling or noise occur, which in the opinion of the Judges would disturb the hunt, then at the Judges discretion, they may declare failure of the test.*

*The dog is being tested for its marking ability, not handling. However, a clean handle is preferable to an extended hunt.*

Although it’s not being tested specifically for handling, the Started dog must still be under some control (discussed later in this seminar manual). Once the marking requirements have been met, it is acceptable to handle a Started dog to pick up a mark without penalty.

However, if the Started dog did not adequately mark the bird (did not reach the AOF and establish a hunt) and is handled to pick the bird up, **it should receive a markdown for lack of marking**. When any handling on a marked retrieve begins, the marking test is essentially over on that bird and the dog is being judged on control. Handlers should be advised to handle to the bird if they can.

**Recommendation: If a Started retriever receives a markdown for lack of marking on two or more retrieves for the day, the dog should be failed for lack of marking skills.**

IMPORTANT: Many judges note on their score sheets if a retriever is handled “to” the AOF or “in” the AOF to help determine if a markdown for lack of marking is warranted. Be sure you understand the difference.

### **Re-casting a Started Dog**

The rulebook states:

*VIII. The hunting retriever can be cast from the retrieving line a maximum of two (2) times. If the hunting retriever is unproductive after a second attempt, the Judge will instruct the Handler to pick up the hunting retriever and that the test is failed.*

In the event the Started dog can't find the bird and is leaving the Hunt Area, the judges might want to advise the handler to recall the dog and re-send it. This does not mean the bird is re-thrown, nor does it mean a dog gets two chances to mark a bird!

*Started Test Rules: Only one bird is allowed per mark.*

**NOTE: Every dog is judged the entire time it is in the field at the hunt test.** The recast **does not eliminate** the performance on the first attempt. Judges should note if a retrieve is a re-cast on their score sheets.

### **IMPORTANT POINTS on JUDGING STARTED MARKING**

The following also apply to all other testing levels:

- a) Remember - to demonstrate it marked a bird successfully, the Started retriever must perform the following two tasks: 1) go directly to the AOF and 2) establish a hunt for the bird in the AOF, both without handler aid or intervention. Having done that, it should not be marked down for lack of marking on the bird.
- b) Running all over the test site, and/or hunting in places other than the AOF, i.e., essentially stumbling into the AOF or onto the bird cannot be considered going directly to the AOF, or properly marking the bird. The retriever should be marked down for “lack of marking” on this bird.
- c) A dog that is stopped by a whistle while running through the AOF did not mark the bird. It should be marked down for “lack of marking”.
- d) A dog that is handled **to the AOF** has not marked the bird. It should be marked down for “lack of marking”.

## Judging “Accordingly”

Almost everyone at one time or another has heard HRC judges say, “We’ll judge it accordingly” when faced with “what if” or “what are you going to do about that” type questions from the hunt committee or a handler. Sometimes the test is underway and a problem surfaces and the judges will respond, “We’ll judge it accordingly”. Should they?

### Recommendation:

**Any test problem or incident that can be avoided with a simple change in setup. Mechanics or logistics should not be “judged accordingly”. It should be fixed!**

Examples:      Problem:      Hard to see mark because of trees or sun.  
                         Solution:      Move the mark!

                         Problem:      Throws inconsistent – some splash, some hit bank.  
                         Solution:      Move the winger to increase the target area.

**It is better to stop a test even if a few dogs have run and fix a problem, rather than to go on “judging accordingly”.**

“Judging accordingly” should only be acceptable in one of these circumstances:

- 1) A test changes due to factors totally beyond the control of the judges (usually weather related)
- 2) An isolated incident unique to one particular dog, (blind not planted, etc.)

Other examples of common problems in the marking test that should be fixed:

- 1) A mark might be difficult to see or might not be landing in the targeted area each time.
- 2) The dogs might be running the shoreline on the water test, or the ducks may be sinking and hard to find.

## **JUDGING STARTED CONTROL**

We are primarily testing Started retrievers on desire and marking ability, but we evaluate some elements of control at all levels, beginning with Started because:

*A retriever must be under some degree of control if it is to be a useful tool in retrieving downed game.*

The level of control we expect from retrievers progressively increases with each testing level, however:

4. Control - ... *At the Started level, a good deal of leeway is granted the retriever.*

Control covers most of the trainable attributes of a good Hunting Retriever, including **manners, obedience, steadiness, response to directions, and delivery.**

Under *Manners and Obedience* the HRC rulebook states:

*Failure may result from:*

1. A Handler touching the retriever after they signal ready (except at the Started level);
2. A retriever out of control;
3. Breaking; or
4. Excessive noise at the line by the retriever or the Handler.

*The retriever can be marked down for poor line manners, creeping, and requiring numerous commands at the line to steady.*

## **Evaluating Started Manners and Obedience**

The Started retriever **will be** brought to the retrieving line on-lead. It may have a collar on.

**We are not judging the Started dog coming to the retrieving line; however it is being judged for manners and obedience while on the line, as evidenced by the following from the HRC rulebook:**

*The Judges should evaluate the dog's temperament as displayed in its spontaneous behavior in order to assess its suitability as a hunting companion. Hyperactivity, wildness, jumping about, barking, excessive disobedience, lethargy or lack of interest are undesirable.*

### **Recommendations:**

- Handlers at all testing levels are encouraged to bring retrievers to the holding blind **ON** lead.
- It's important that the judge define the location of the retrieving line, and the point where the test is completed when leaving the line.
- The path from the holding blind to the retrieving line should be free of spectators, birds or other obstructions.
- The judges should have a clear view of the dog coming to the retrieving line from the holding blind.
- Spectators and Gallery: Don't ask handlers to bring their dogs through the gallery when coming to the line.
- Keep the gallery a reasonable distance away to avoid interference with the retrievers. Make sure spectators don't have white or light colored clothing on that might interfere with the test.

Safety should be the judge's main concern in setting up the most realistic hunting test for the dog and handler. Other things such as convenience, gallery, etc. come second. What does the rulebook say about a Started dog "sitting"?

No specific reference is made to the retriever being required to sit.

## Evaluating Noise

The judge must make a determination as to whether or not the noise level being made by either the handler or the retriever is at a level that would flare incoming game, disrupt the hunt, or intimidate the retriever. If the judge determines that a noise level is excessive or that the retriever has been verbally intimidated, the test may be failed.

### **Rulebook References to Noise:**

General test Guidelines - Manners and Obedience: *"Failure may result from: 4. **excessive noise** at the line by the retriever or the Handler".*

Started Guidelines - *"Hyperactivity, wildness, jumping about, **barking**, excessive disobedience, lethargy or lack of interest are undesirable".*

Every test level, under Handlers: - *"The Handler shall not intimidate the hunting retriever at the retrieving line. Handlers are expected to conduct themselves in such a manner that they do not disturb game or the Hunt".*

Every test level, under Guidelines, item I: *"Hand signals, voice and whistle commands may be utilized by the Handler to encourage the \_\_\_\_\_ Retriever to perform. However, should excessive handling or **noise occur**, which in the opinion of the Judges, would disturb the hunt, the Judges may declare the test a failure".*

## Evaluating Started Steadiness

Do we evaluate a Started dog for steadiness? Yes...

A dog that leaves the line early is not under control. At all levels of testing, breaking (when a dog leaves before it is sent) may adversely affect a retriever's ability to mark multiple falls and is a **SERIOUS SAFETY ISSUE**. **The retriever will be failed for a break at all levels of testing.**

### **\*\* JUDGING TIP \*\***

Encourage Started handlers to hold their retrievers. While the Started retriever is not expected to be steady **on its own**, it is still required to be steady! It may have a collar, leash or line around its neck or may be hand-held to assist in achieving steadiness. (See rulebook, page 37, Guidelines - item II for more information)

The HRC rulebook states: *“The hunting retriever is not required to be steady at the retrieving line. The retriever may be hand held at the retrieving line.”*

**Controlled break at Started:** The retriever leaves without being commanded to do so, usually when a bird is thrown, or shot fired, but stops and returns to heel on the handler’s command. This will not occur often at Started, but if it does it is a markdown only – not a failure

## Evaluating Started Handling

*GUIDELINES - JUDGING STARTED HUNT TESTS:*

*“Hand signals, voice, and whistle commands may be utilized by the Handler...; however, should excessive handling or noise occur, which in the opinion of the Judges would disturb the hunt, then at the Judges discretion, they may declare failure of the test. The dog is being tested for its marking ability, not handling.”*

### **Recommendation:**

Do not expect a Started dog to handle during a test. If a Started handler attempts to handle to a marked fall and it is obvious that the dog is not responding, encourage the handler to call the dog in and re-cast it before it gets out of control.

## Evaluating Started Delivery

### **Retrieving the birds**

Delivery is the act of returning the bird to the handler. It begins as soon as the dog picks up the bird.

The HRC rulebook states: *“The bird must be delivered to the immediate area of Handler. It is not necessary to deliver to hand. The Judges should define “immediate area” of each specific Test.”*

The Started Guidelines state: *“Delivery to hand is desirable. Consistent failure to deliver or consistent reluctance to deliver can result in failure.”*

- At all testing levels, the retriever should be marked down for failure to return promptly to the line with the bird.

Delivery: *“A retriever should return promptly to the Handler area in Started with the bird and deliver it in such a manner as to not risk losing it if it were a cripple, or damaging the meat.”*

- At all levels, beginning with Started, a retriever should be marked down for repeated dropping or mouthing of the bird, and can be failed if dropping or mouthing is “excessive”.
- Reluctance to deliver may be considered excessive if, in the Judge’s opinion, the retriever would not complete the retrieve without continual coaxing from the handler.

## Recommendations

Prior to running the test, judges at the Started level should establish a reasonable area to deliver the bird. The following are started delivery considerations:

- It is reasonable for the Started dog to bring the bird out of the water
- Do not expect the Started dog to bring the bird up a steep bank, or into a duck blind.
- If a mark is set up so the dogs beach early on the return, expect delivery problems with some dogs that have to carry the duck down a shoreline.

## Hardmouth

Hardmouth is when the dog willfully and purposely damages the retrieved bird in a manner that renders it unfit for the table.

Why are we evaluating it?

*A retriever who finds the game but either eats it or runs off with it is sometimes worse than no retriever. (Rulebook - Delivery)*

What does the rulebook say about hardmouth?

*Hardmouth at any level is grounds for immediate failure; however, a Judge must carefully consider the situation, examine the bird, and discuss the matter with the Co-Judge. In any event, the bird in question must be removed from the pool of usable birds. If the retriever is failed for hardmouth, it should be done at the time and the handler notified. The bird must then be tagged with the retriever's number and saved until the hunt is over. (Rulebook - Delivery)*

## Recommendations

- In order to be failed for hardmouth, a dog must practically eat the bird. If you intend to fail a dog for hardmouth then you should peel back the breast skin so you can properly evaluate the condition of the breast meat. Inspect it for missing chunks (tooth punctures and cuts are okay).
- Killing a bird is not in itself hardmouth. Remember the definition – “unfit for the table”.

# Chapter 4

## SEASONED HUNT TESTS

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### **Standard:** PURPOSE AND PHILOSOPHY

*Judges will look for **style and natural ability** and evidence that the Seasoned Hunting Retriever exhibits a **reasonable degree of control**.*

*The Seasoned Hunting Retriever must be **steady and retrieve to hand**.*

### **Seasoned Test Objectives**

**Marking and Memory:** To evaluate the Seasoned dog's ability to retrieve double marks both on land and on water.

### **Control:**

Coming to the line - Judges will assess the dog's ability to walk obediently on lead to the retrieving line.

Steadiness – A Seasoned dog's steadiness will be judged according to the degree that it would interfere with a normal day's hunting.

Delivery – The judge will evaluate the Seasoned dog's ability to promptly deliver birds to hand.

Diversion – Judges will determine if the dog will deliver the bird it has in its mouth without dropping it and picking up another.

Walk-up – Judges will evaluate the dog on its ability to walk off lead and remain under control when a bird is thrown and shot.

Blind Retrieve – The Seasoned dog must demonstrate reasonable control while retrieving a bird it has not seen fall on both land and water.

### **The Seasoned Test Site**

The HRC rulebook offers little specific information about what judges should be looking for when choosing a Seasoned test site. In the Seasoned Test Rules, it does say that: *“Blind retrieves should be through easy cover and relatively open water.”*

However, we know that; 1) there are several new elements we test at Seasoned; and 2) the Seasoned dog, while required to show reasonable control is not expected to perform with the precision of a Finished or Grand level dog.

It follows that judges at the Seasoned level must choose a site and design their tests to insure that no one part of a test will cause interference with another portion of the test. This is one of the Seasoned judges' biggest challenge. With that in mind, we can offer some general recommendations when choosing a Seasoned test site.

### **Seasoned Test Site Recommendations:**

- Judges should ask themselves, "Would I hunt here?"
- Some cover is desirable, and cover changes are acceptable.
- The Seasoned dog can handle terrain that a Started dog can't.
- As distances are longer than Started, judges should carefully consider the background when setting up the marking test to insure the birds are visible. The Seasoned retriever should be able to easily find the bird after reaching the area of the fall.
- It will almost always be necessary to do a lot of walking during the Seasoned test as the retrieving line will move to keep test elements well separated.
- Judges should choose a site which allows handlers to see and control their dogs.
- Logistics will also play a role in site selection. Judges and the hunt committee must decide if the site is accessible enough, if it's possible to get the wingers and bird throwers where they are needed, how re-birding will be accomplished and if the sun will be a problem when throwing the marks or handling a dog.

### **Gun Safety at the Seasoned Test:**

This is the first time some handlers will have used a gun in the test. They'll be swinging on multiple marks and shooting over a dog that is off-lead, and not expected to be under the same level of control as higher classes. And because even experienced handlers need to be constantly reminded of the importance of gun safety, and how the gun will be specifically used in the Seasoned test, HRC offers the following recommendations:

#### **Recommendations:**

Seasoned judges should review and carefully explain the Gun Safety portion of the Seasoned Test Briefing available in this manual and on the HRC website with all handlers prior to the test.

Remind handlers to load no more poppers than are needed for each portion of the test, i.e. two poppers only are loaded for the double mark, then another can be loaded for the diversion, etc.

If their dog is having difficulty, remind Seasoned handlers that making the gun safe is a priority above everything else.

## **Set-up and Executing the Seasoned Test:**

**TEST DESCRIPTION:** *The Seasoned hunt will have five (5) tests. These five tests shall consist of at least the following: (1) a double-marked land retrieve, (2) a double-marked water retrieve, (3) a walk-up, or tracking, or quartering test, (4) a blind land retrieve, and (5) a blind water retrieve. Part of the test must include a diversion.*

Distances: Land marks - 100 yards or less Water marks – 75 yards or less  
Blind retrieves – 60 yards maximum land and water

# **EVALUATING THE SEASONED RETRIEVER**

## **JUDGING SEASONED MARKING ABILITY**

The distances are increased slightly from Started and double marks are thrown at both land and water, but a Seasoned dog **must demonstrate the same** marking skills as a Started retriever on each bird it retrieves in the test. The dog must proceed directly to the area of the fall of a mark and establish a hunt for the bird.

Judges should note the order of the retrieves on their score sheets. If a retriever is handled on a marked retrieve, judges should note whether the dog was handled in the AOF or to the AOF. Handling to an AOF on a mark should result in a markdown for lack of marking. The seminar recommendation for failing a Seasoned dog for marking ability is the same as it was for the Started retriever.

**RECOMMENDATION: If a Seasoned retriever receives a markdown for lack of marking on two or more retrieves for the day, the dog should be failed for lack of marking skills.**

### **Seasoned marking test considerations:**

- The Seasoned double marked retrieve test should be conducted with no distractions or interference from any other part of the test!
- When bird boys are hidden, Seasoned judges **may use** an attention getting shot or shots or a duck or goose call before the birds are thrown.
- **Visible gunners** may be used no more than once in the event, the same as Started.
- The **re-cast** rules in Seasoned are the same as in Started.

- There should be **adequate time** between throws to allow the dog to mark and remember the first bird, and swing toward the second bird before it is thrown, and for the handler to operate the gun!

### **Area of the Fall and Hunt Areas:**

The area of the falls of a Seasoned double mark should be well defined. Judges should not throw birds near areas of heavy cover or terrain where a Seasoned dog who is staying in a hunt area could easily disappear. Remember, if a mark is thrown on top of a hill, a portion of the area of the fall is over the hill and may be out of sight.

Area of falls should be well separated and hunt areas should not overlap!

The throws should be far enough apart so as not to entice a Seasoned dog to switch hunting areas from one mark to the other.

The swing between birds should not be so great as to promote undesirable movement by the Seasoned dog on the line.

## **JUDGING SEASONED CONTROL**

*....at the Seasoned, Finished, Grand and Upland level, control must be considered with increasing importance. Judges must ask themselves if they would spend time in a blind or boat with this retriever. (HRC rulebook)*

*These retrievers should not require frequent and noisy restraints by the Handler. Failure may result from:*

1. *A Handler touching the retriever after they signal ready (except at Started);*
2. *A retriever out of control;*
3. *Breaking; or*
4. *Excessive noise at the line by the retriever or the Handler.*

*The retriever can be marked down for poor line manners, creeping, and requiring numerous commands at the line to steady. (HRC rulebook)*

*.... poor obedience and poor manners should be noted and when excessive or repeated, should be cause for failure. (Seasoned Guidelines)*

## **Evaluating Seasoned Manners and Obedience**

### **Coming to the retrieving line:**

The Seasoned dog will be brought to the retrieving line on lead. Judges should advise handlers that the dog will be under judgment when it is coming to the line.

From the Seasoned Guidelines: ***The Judges should look for the dog that walks obediently to the line, sits obediently, and exhibits an attentive attitude.***

The retriever should walk with the handler and not drag the handler to the line on a tight lead! A Seasoned retriever may be marked down or failed if; in the Judges opinions it is not under reasonable control walking to the line.

## Evaluating Seasoned Steadiness

### Steadiness Terminology:

*Seasoned, Finished and Grand Retrievers are required to be steady at the line without physical or excessive verbal restraint. (Rulebook – Steadiness)*

We've chosen this point in the seminar to discuss steadiness in detail because Seasoned is the first testing level where a dog is expected to be steady at the retrieving line on its own. Seasoned dogs are not run with a collar, nor are they restrained by a leash or line or hand-held. To properly evaluate a dog on steadiness, judges must have a good understanding of the terms associated with steadiness, or more appropriately, lack of steadiness. **This terminology applies at all levels of testing.** The penalties for lack of steadiness will vary at different levels because a dog is expected to be under better control at each higher level of testing.

**Steady** - a dog is "steady" when it stays where it is placed by the handler and does not leave the position until released. When a dog is not steady it should be given a markdown, and depending on severity, it can fail the test.

**Repositioning** - a dog moves to swing with the gun, to follow the movement of the handler, or moves to get in a better position to see a bird. A retriever who is repositioning itself will often move between throws as the handler moves to shoot another bird. After repositioning itself, the dog will stop on its own volition. Test mechanics may lead to dogs repositioning.

Repositioning is not penalized at any HRC testing level. Judges must be able to recognize the difference between repositioning and movement by the retriever that should be marked down such as creeping.

**Creeping** - A dog creeps when it moves forward, usually as a bird is thrown or shot. When a dog creeps, 1) it is not steady; 2) the movement is not warranted as repositioning might be, and 3) it can find itself in a very dangerous position! A dog that is creeping stops itself.

The Seasoned Guidelines state: *Creeping to an excessive degree puts the dog in the blast cone of the shotgun and can deafen or inadvertently kill it.*

**Recommendation: Creeping should be considered excessive when the dog moves out beyond the muzzle of the gun. Handlers should have been advised in the briefing that they must re-heel a creeping dog prior to releasing it to retrieve.**

**Controlled Break** - The dog leaves the retrieving line before being released. It is “breaking”, and is **not going to stop on its own accord**, but stops and returns to heel on the handlers command. The dog is not steady, but by returning on command, shows some degree of control. Leaving before being sent is a serious safety issue.

**Break** – The dog leaves before being released and won’t stop and return to heel. A failure at all levels of testing.

### **Evaluating Creeping at Seasoned**

*Excessive or consistent creeping by a Seasoned Hunting Retriever will be treated as a controlled break and the retriever must be brought to heel on the Judge’s command.*  
(Seasoned Test Rules)

### **Evaluating controlled breaks at Seasoned**

The Seasoned Test Rules states: *If a Seasoned Hunting Retriever leaves the retrieving line before being signaled to do so, it must be stopped and return to heel.*

*Controlled breaks... should be noted and when excessive or repeated, should be cause for failure.* (Seasoned Guidelines) A controlled break is a markdown at Seasoned.

Note: A retriever can be marked down at any testing level for requiring numerous commands at the line to steady it. Creeping one time or one controlled break should be a markdown at Seasoned. But the dog may be failed if it consistently creeps or has multiple controlled breaks. The dog is not under reasonable control.

### **Evaluating Delivery at Seasoned**

*The bird must be delivered to hand.* (Seasoned Test Rules)

We learned in the Started Guidelines that consistent failure to deliver or consistent reluctance to deliver can result in failure. As better control is expected at each higher testing level, it follows that the same guidelines should apply to a Seasoned dog as well.

Some verbal encouragement at this level to get a dog to hold and properly deliver a bird is reasonable. On occasion a Seasoned dog might drop a bird to get a better hold and the delivery usually continues promptly without handler intervention. Judges should note on their sheets however, when a dog drops a bird for reasons other than to get a better hold and note the extent the handler has to get involved to get the dog to complete the delivery.

### **Recommendation – Seasoned Delivery:**

**Seasoned dogs that drop several birds in the tests have a delivery problem that should earn a mark down. If the dog requires consistent handler coaxing or other intervention to pick up these birds and complete delivery, this may warrant failure for lack of control on delivery.**

**Note:** A dog may come in and inadvertently drop the bird before the handler takes it. Good judges quickly remind the handler to have the dog pick it up so the delivery can be to “hand”.

## **Seasoned Diversion**

*Part of the test must include a diversion. (Seasoned Test Description)*

*The purpose of this test is to require the retriever to demonstrate some degree of control on the return from a retrieve. (Seasoned Guidelines)*

A diversion bird is thrown to evaluate if a dog will deliver the bird it has in its mouth in such a manner as to not risk losing it if it were a cripple!

### **Setting up the Seasoned diversion:**

*A diversionary bird can be thrown after walk-up, blind, or last retrieve of double mark.*

*The diversionary bird should be thrown where the dog can see it, but not in its return path. (Seasoned Guidelines)*

Don't throw the diversionary bird such that it lands too close to the retriever. It is unreasonable to expect a hard driving hunting dog to ignore a bird thrown directly in its path. The dog should have to go out of its way to switch to the diversion bird!

**Recommendation:** Judges should flag the diversion bird to identify it.

If a diversion is used on the land test, it should be thrown where it has the least influence on other parts of the test. Judges must make sure there is adequate time for the handler to load the gun and swing and shoot the diversion.

### **Evaluating the Seasoned diversion:**

*If a Seasoned Hunting Retriever switches to the diversionary bird, it will not fail but will be scored lower by the Judge. (Seasoned Test Rules)*

*A switch is defined as the dog dropping one bird and picking up the other bird. (Seasoned Guidelines) This definition will apply at any testing level.*

Remember: Handlers should be advised of the objective of the diversion bird and that it is not judged like a mark. It is acceptable to handle to this bird.

## **Seasoned Walk-up**

One of the five required tests at Seasoned is the walk-up. This is a test to evaluate if a Seasoned dog can remain under reasonable control when it is walking into a hunting

scenario. *Seasoned, Finished, Grand and Upland Hunting Retrievers should walk quietly at heel off lead...* (Rulebook - Manners and Obedience).

At either the land or water test, a bird is thrown while the dog is walking at heel. The dog handler shoots the bird and then the dog is released. It should pick up the bird easily and promptly deliver it.

### **Walk-up 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.

Handlers should be advised that when the bird is thrown, they should steady their retriever and only then take the safety off the firearm, aim, track and shoot the bird.

Handlers may be holding the gun when the dog delivers the bird so they should be reminded the gun should be safe (safety on, breech open) and the muzzle pointed in a safe direction as they accept the bird.

### **Setting up the Seasoned Walk-up:**

This is a separate test so a primary consideration when setting it up is the walk-up bird **should be thrown where it will have no influence** on any other part of the Seasoned test!

The dog should 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 control while walking off lead.

The handler should know when the walk-up bird will be thrown. It's suggested a line (better yet – a double line) be marked and handlers told that the walk-up will come when the **dog has reached the line** (or thrown at some point when it's between the lines).

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 bird so as not to entice the Seasoned dog to break.

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

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

The dog should see the walk-up bird hit the ground or water! Young dogs will want to move forward if the bird falls over a hill or bank.

### **Evaluating the Seasoned Walk-up:**

Judges must decide if the retriever is demonstrating Seasoned level control. If the dog was off-lead walking into a dove field or up into a duck or goose hunting scenario, 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.

The retriever will be evaluated for steadiness exactly as it is on the retrieving line. A dog will be failed for breaking, and marked down for a controlled break. Handlers should be reminded if the dog moves forward, it must be called to heel before being sent.

It's recommended that judges not call for the release of the dog, but advise handlers the dog can be sent only after the bird is on the ground (or water).

### **Seasoned Blind Retrieve**

*The Seasoned test will have .... (4) a blind land retrieve, and (5) a blind water retrieve. (Seasoned Test Description)*

*The land blind retrieve maximum test distance will not exceed sixty (60) yards. The water blind retrieve maximum test distance will not exceed sixty (60) yards. (Seasoned Test Rules)*

### **Gun considerations at the Seasoned blind:**

*A dry shot popper **shall** be fired by the Handler in the direction of the blind **while the dog is at heel prior** to the dog's running the blind retrieve. The intent is to encourage the dog to run the blind. (Seasoned Test Rules)*

This shot shall come immediately prior to the dog running the blind. Handlers should be provided a gun stand to place the gun in. It is preferable that they set the gun in the stand prior to casting the dog. Handlers should be advised that for safety purposes, they should set the gun down prior to handling the dog.

### **Setting up Seasoned blinds:**

This is a separate test so a primary consideration when setting up a Seasoned blind is its location **should have no influence** on any other part of the Seasoned test!

*Blind retrieves should be through **easy cover** and **relatively open** water. (Seasoned Test Rules)*

## **Set-up Recommendations:**

Handlers must be able to see and control their dogs!

Avoid placing the blind where a dog that gets only a few yards off line can go out of sight easily.

Avoid setting up water blinds with tight angles to the bank. A well-planned blind placement should encourage the Seasoned retriever to take a good initial line.

Cover changes and other “factors” that may not be a problem for dogs with advanced blind running skills should be avoided at the Seasoned level.

## **Evaluating Seasoned Blind Retrieves:**

Reasonable control is the standard that will be applied at the Seasoned level. The HRC rulebook on page 31 under Response to Direction says: *When a Handler chooses to direct their retriever with voice, whistle, and/or hand signals, the retriever should respond. ....in all cases, excessive refusals by the retriever can result in failure. The Judges must decide in each test what is excessive and judge accordingly.*

*The standards of control and performance on blinds for Seasoned dogs are less than that for Finished and Grand. Less control and more whistle and cast refusals can be accepted for the Seasoned dogs as compared to more advanced categories. (Seasoned Guidelines)*

*Sitting on the whistle is not a necessity, but Seasoned dogs should demonstrate the capability to respond to directional control. (Seasoned Guidelines)*

*Lining the blind is not required. It is preferable that the dog exhibit the ability to be under control. (Seasoned Guidelines)*

*Popping, (looking to the Handler for direction without a signal), shall not be penalized. (Seasoned Guidelines)*

Look for the retriever to respond to whistles and directional control and for the handler to participate in the retrieve.

The retriever who exhibits no ability to take an initial line, and no willingness to respond to directional commands, but “stumbles” on the bird has not met the objectives of the test.

# Chapter 5

## FAILING A TEST

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### Advising a Handler their test is failed....

One of the most difficult tasks our HRC judges face is telling a handler their dog has failed a test. The last sentence of the Seasoned Test Description (essentially repeated in the Finished Test Description as well) states:

*“Failure of a hunting retriever to pass any of the hunting tests will not prevent the hunting retriever from participating in subsequent tests unless the Handler is unsafe in handling a gun.*

This wording simply means a dog who has failed any portion of an HRC test may run the other parts of the test. It's the reason entries are limited. However, judges who are already reluctant to say anything on the retrieving line about the dog's performance, often use this wording to support their decision to simply remain quiet after a dog has clearly failed.

In this section of the seminar, we will look at what the HRC rulebook says about when a test **must** be declared as failed before the handler leaves the retrieving line and when judges **should** ask the handler to pick up the dog. We will make recommendations for when a handler should be told their test is failed while they are at the retrieving line. This will apply to all levels of testing.

Judges must first understand the distinction between a failure and a disqualification.

#### **The Difference between Being Failed or Disqualified**

When a handler or retriever is **failed**, they are eligible to continue to run any remaining tests during the hunt.

When a handler or retriever is **disqualified**, they cannot run any remaining tests (the test is also considered failed). The handler cannot handle any other dogs at the hunt test.

## The HRC Rulebook states that while they are on the retrieving line:

Handlers must be immediately notified if they have been disqualified for

- 1) Gun safety violations
- 2) Physical abuse of a retriever.

And immediately notified that they have been failed for....

- 3) Hardmouth
- 4) Unproductive retrieve after the second attempt at Started or Seasoned and after the first attempt at Finished and the Grand.

The HRC Rulebook states that judges should tell a handler to pick up their dog:

- 1) After an unproductive retrieve (see Guidelines – all testing levels) and
- 2) *“...if that dog has, in the Judge’s mind, already failed and is creating bad habits or endangering itself”.* (Guidelines for Judges and Conducting Hunts)

In addition to the rulebook references above, it makes no sense **at any time in the test** not to tell a handler when their dog has clearly failed! Judges who avoid doing this are simply putting off the inevitable until the end of the day when awards are given (or not given as the case may be). This does not apply to dogs that might be on the bubble with marginal work, but only to those who have without question failed a portion of a test. With that said, the HRC Field reps make the following recommendations.....

### Recommendations for Advising Handlers a Dog Has Failed While On the Line:

- Anytime a dog has clearly failed any portion of a test, judges should advise the handler immediately that the test is failed and briefly explain why.
- Objectives of each part of the test should have been clearly stated in the handler briefing so everyone knows what is expected on each portion of the test.
- Both judges must be in agreement (judges may need to pause to converse with each other) that the dog has failed and there is no chance it can recover to earn a passing grade.
- The decision that a dog has clearly failed will be based on the dog’s performance, not changing test conditions, a poor throw, a sunken duck, or any other mitigating factors.

- The dog will be allowed to run other portions of the test until such time as it has failed and is creating bad habits or endangering itself per the rulebook.

\* These recommendations apply to those dogs that both judges agree have clearly failed the test and have no chance of passing for the day! HRC is not advocating that judges make a pass/fail decision at the retrieving line for every dog! That is not the purpose of the above recommendations. However, where a dog has clearly failed, it is far better for a handler to learn it immediately. The dog's performance is fresh in both the handler and judge's minds, and the standard for performance deemed acceptable by the judges is immediately clear to all. The handler does not have to wait all day for possible disappointment and a ribbon that won't be awarded. The following are examples of advising handlers a dog has failed:

### **Examples: Control**

1) A Seasoned dog is walking to the retrieving line on lead. The Handler was given the instruction that the Seasoned dog should walk from the holding blind to the retrieving line demonstrating reasonable Seasoned level control (the dog should walk with the Handler without pulling on the lead the entire way to the retrieving line). During this test this retriever would not walk with the handler but instead pulled the handler as if a sled the entire way to the retrieving line. The handler tried numerous times to jerk on the lead in an effort to get the dogs attention and to show some degree of Seasoned control. These efforts were ignored by the dog as he continued to drag the Handler the entire way to the retrieving line.

This dog would be failed at this point! The handler would be informed in a friendly manner that this performance was unacceptable at the Seasoned level. However the Handler would be informed that he could continue with the remaining portions of the test if he so chooses.

2) A Finished dog is walking to the retrieving line off lead. The Judges instructed the handlers that the objective of this portion of the test was to show Finished level control by having their dog walk with them to the line. The dog in question breaks away from the Handler and runs up to the line, despite numerous and loud commands to "heel".

This dog would be failed at this point! The handler would be informed in a friendly manner that this performance is unacceptable and the judges have the dog failed, that he could continue with the remaining portions of the test if he so chooses.

Further Control examples might involve a dog that drops and mouths every bird before delivery, or a dog that creeps excessively on every bird thrown despite loud verbal commands to "fetch it up", or "heel" respectively. If both judges deem the performance failing, the handlers should be told before leaving the line.

### **Example: Marking**

1) The Finished retriever locks on the first bird thrown. It does not swing nor see the second or third marks thrown. It picks up the first bird and is handled to the AOF on the second retrieve. The handler sends the dog in the direction of the third mark and the dog wanders about hunting here and there and finally stumbles upon the bird.

These judges agree the dog has failed for lack of marking at this point! There are no extenuating circumstances such as a change in test conditions or a poor throw. The dog handled to the second bird, and while it was not “handled” on the third bird, it showed no marking on this bird. The handler would be informed at this point that the dog has failed for lack of marking but could still run the blind if he or she so chooses.

**Recommendation: Honor Dog on Lead**

**It is recommended that a Finished dog that has failed the test be put on lead to honor.**

It makes no sense to allow a dog who is not in contention a chance to interfere with a working dog that is presumably in contention. Remember, if the honor dog is on lead, the handler shall not handle the gun. It is also advisable to put a “by” honor dog on lead for a working dog that is in contention.

# Chapter 6

## **FINISHED HUNT TESTS**

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**Standard:** PURPOSE AND PHILOSOPHY

*Judges will look for natural ability and a trained performance.*

*The Finished Hunting Retriever must respond promptly to either voice or whistle commands and remain steady and under control at all times.*

### **Finished Test Objectives**

**Marking and Memory:** To evaluate the Finished dog's ability to retrieve multiple marks on both land and on water.

**Control:**

**Coming to and from the line** - Judges will assess the dog's ability to walk obediently off lead to and from the retrieving line.

**Steadiness** – Judges will assess the steadiness of the Finished dog.

**Delivery** – The judge will evaluate the Finished dog's ability to promptly deliver birds to hand.

**Diversion** – Judges will determine if the dog will deliver the bird it has in its mouth without dropping it and picking up another.

**Honor** – Judges will assess the Finished dog's ability to watch another dog work while remaining steady, quiet, and under control.

**Blind Retrieve** – The Finished dog should demonstrate an ability to take a line to a bird it has not seen fall on both land and water, and to respond to voice, hand signals and whistle commands promptly and with precision

### **The Finished Test Site**

Most of the recommendations for choosing a good Seasoned test site outlined earlier would apply to a Finished site as well. By the time an individual earns a Finished judging license, they should have developed a good eye for appropriate terrain and cover that is suitable to evaluate a Finished retriever.

*This hunt test is for Finished retrievers. It duplicates actual hunting conditions found throughout the country. (Finished Hunt Test Purpose and Philosophy)*

A Finished judge might consider that if a potential site; 1) makes it difficult to duplicate any type of hunting conditions; and 2) it's not really suitable for any type of Finished level training, it could be a difficult site to adequately evaluate a dog to the Finished standard.

## **Gun Safety at the Finished Test:**

There are some gun safety considerations unique to the Finished test. As handlers will be shooting **multiple marks** during this test, judges must take extra care in their briefing so every handler understands:

- a) When to load and shoot during each portion of the test
- b) That they must use proper shooting form; safety off when the bird is sighted and the gun goes to their shoulder, and aim, track, fire at the top of the arc.
- c) What to do as respects gun safety if their retriever is unsteady
- d) What to do in the event of a gun malfunction or if judges call a no-bird

At some point in the Finished test there will be an **honor** required. This means two handlers and dogs on the line. Depending on the scenario, both may have a gun and be using it during the test. The judges' first priority is to ensure that neither handler finds themselves or their dog in the blast cone of the other handler during this portion of the test.

## **Set-up and Executing the Finished Test:**

**TEST DESCRIPTION:** *The Finished Hunt will have at least four (4) tests. These four tests shall consist of the following: (1) a multiple marked water retrieve, (2) a multiple marked land retrieve (either or both the multiple marked water retrieve or the multiple marked land retrieve must include an honor), (3) a water blind retrieve, and (4) a land blind retrieve. These blinds may or may not be included in one of the required multiple marked retrieves. Part of the test must include a diversion as the dog returns to the retrieving line from a blind, walk-up or return from a marked retrieve. (Rulebook, page 43)*

Distances: Land marks - 150 yards or less Water marks – 125 yards or less  
Blind retrieves – 100 yards maximum land and water

# EVALUATING THE FINISHED RETRIEVER

## JUDGING FINISHED MARKING ABILITY

The Finished test description uses the term “multiple marks” to describe the land and water marking tests for Finished retrievers. Item V of the Finished Test Rules states: *Testing will consist of double or triple marks for both land and water.* While double marks are acceptable, and may be necessary in some unique circumstances, **judges should strive to throw triple marks in both tests!** Being able to successfully complete a triple mark is what sets the Finished retriever apart from a Seasoned dog!

The Finished retriever is judged on marking skills exactly as was the Started and Seasoned dog. The retriever must proceed directly to the area of each fall and establish a hunt for the bird in the area of the fall. If a handler elects to handle a dog on a marked retrieve, judges must decide if these requirements were met before the handling began.

In other words, judges should note whether the dog was handled in the AOF or to the AOF. Remember, handling to an AOF on any mark should result in a markdown for lack of marking. The seminar recommendation for failing a Finished dog for marking ability is the same as it was for the Started and Seasoned retriever:

**RECOMMENDATION: If a Finished retriever receives a markdown for lack of marking on two or more retrieves for the day, the dog should be failed for lack of marking skills.**

This recommendation assumes of course that the birds were visible, adequate timing was allowed between throws for the retriever to mark and remember the falls, and the fall areas were distinct, and retrievers can find the birds in the fall areas. The recommendation also assumes the retriever was allowed to pick up the triple mark uninterrupted.

**Experienced HRC judges agree that when terrain, cover, and distances used are appropriate to the Finished level, a set of triple marks that meets the criteria above is the preferred way to evaluate Finished marking and memory skills. It puts the burden of demonstrating marking ability squarely on the shoulders of the handler and dog team.**

### **Other Finished Marking Considerations:**

Besides adding an extra memory bird, there are some other factors that sets the Finished marking test apart from a Seasoned marking test:

*At the Judges discretion, the Finished Hunting Retriever may be required to make retrieves in an established sequence.* (Finished Test Rules)

*A diversion bird is required as the dog returns to the retrieving line from a blind, walk-up or return from a marked retrieve.* (Finished Guidelines)

*These blinds may or may not be included in one of the required multiple marked retrieves.*  
(Finished Test Description)

When Finished judges elect to designate the pickup order, decide they want to throw a diversion bird on the return of the first or second marked retrieve, put a hot blind close to a hunt area, etc., they should carefully consider the following questions: Am I properly evaluating Finished marking with this test setup? Do I have a marking test or a handling test?

### **Attention Getting Shots:**

When bird boys are hidden, Finished judges **may use** an attention getting shot or shots or a duck or goose call before the birds are thrown.

### **Re-cast at Finished:**

*The Finished Hunting Retriever can be cast from the retrieving line only once. If the Finished Hunting Retriever is unproductive after the single attempt, the Judge will instruct the Handler to pick up the hunting retriever and that the test is failed.*  
(Finished Test Rules)

*After a dog leaves the line on a retrieve, he cannot return and be re-cast.* (Finished Guidelines)

## **JUDGING FINISHED CONTROL**

*The Finished Hunting Retriever must respond promptly to either voice or whistle commands and remain steady and under control at all times. The Finished Hunting Retriever should be a pleasure to hunt with under any conditions.* (Finished Hunt Test Purpose and Philosophy, page 43)

## **Evaluating Finished Manners and Obedience**

### **Coming to and from the retrieving line:**

The Finished dog will be brought to and from the retrieving line off lead. It will not wear a collar. Its test begins when the dog comes out of the holding blind and the dog remains under judgment throughout the entire test unless told otherwise.

*The Judge should look for the dog that walks obediently to the line, sits obediently, and exhibits an attentive attitude.* (Finished Guidelines)

The Finished retriever should walk with the handler under control. A retriever should be marked down if it requires frequent and loud commands to stay under control. The dog and handler should arrive together at the retrieving line. A dog that breaks away from its handler and runs up to the retrieving line is not under control. This lack of control is grounds for failure.

## Evaluating Finished Steadiness:

*The Finished Hunting Retriever is required to be steady at the retrieving line.*  
(Finished Test Rules)

The steadiness terminology and definitions discussed in the Seasoned section of this seminar manual all apply at Finished. There are a few differences in the degree of steadiness required of a Finished dog versus the lower testing levels.

**Controlled Break:** *A “controlled break” may result in failure.* (Finished Guidelines page 47, item II)

**Break:** The Finished dog will be failed for breaking, and: *Excessive noise or intimidation to prevent a “break” should result in failure.* (Finished Guidelines)

## Evaluating Delivery at Finished:

*The bird must be delivered to hand.* (Finished Test Rules)

The Finished retriever should be willing to pick up each bird and return promptly with it. Little verbal encouragement should be needed at this level to get a dog to hold and properly deliver the birds. Judges should note dropped birds on their judges' sheet and record the extent the handler has to intervene to get the dog to complete the delivery.

If a dog drops a number of birds in the tests, it has a delivery problem the dog should be marked down for it. Excessive and consistent lack of delivery should be grounds for failure at the Finished level.

## Finished Diversion

*Part of the test must include a diversion as the dog returns to the retrieving line from a blind, walk-up or return from a marked retrieve.* (Finished Test Description)

The purpose of this test is the same as the Seasoned diversion. The Finished retriever must demonstrate more control when a diversion is thrown.

*If the hunting retriever switches to the diversionary bird on the return, it shall fail the test.* (Finished Test Rules)

Remember: HRC defines a switch as dropping one bird and picking up another.

## Finished Diversion Considerations:

Many of the same considerations from Seasoned apply at Finished; 1) the dog should see the bird; 2) handlers must be given time to load and properly shoot at it; and 3) it is acceptable to handle to the diversion.

A dog should have to go out of its way to switch. It's not necessary to throw close to a dog and judges may declare a no-bird if they determine a throw was unfair.

## Finished Honor

*(either or both the multiple marked water retrieve or the multiple marked land retrieve must include an honor) (Finished Test Description)*

*During the hunting tests, a Finished Hunting Retriever must be required to honor another hunting retriever at or near the retrieving line. When the Finished Hunting Retriever is honoring, its view of the hunting test cannot be obstructed. **\*A Finished Hunting Retriever shall not be required to honor during another dog's blind retrieve.** (Finished Test Rules)*

A Finished dog should be able to watch another dog work while remaining steady and under control.

## Honor Setup Considerations:

Gun safety is a major concern as noted earlier. Handlers must be positioned where there is no chance either can shoot toward the other, and should be reminded not to shoot if a shot is unsafe.

An honor dog must honor during the marking test. If possible, an honor dog should be put in a position to see all the marks thrown. Often however, logistics or safety makes that impossible. Since a double mark is the minimum number of marks allowed in Finished, if a Finished honor dog can see at least two marks clearly, we will accept this as satisfying the honor requirements.

Remember: The honor dog must watch another dog work. At minimum, it should see the working dog leave the line for a retrieve before it is dismissed from the honor position.

And the honor dog should walk off the line off lead, obediently and under control to a designated point where its test has ended.

Judges should keep the honor dog and working dog separated. It makes no sense to have both in close proximity to each other.

One judge should be in a position to watch the honor dog.

\*(new rule effective January 1, 2011)

## Evaluating the Honor:

The Finished honor dog is evaluated under the same standards of steadiness and control as the working dog. It may be failed for a controlled break.

*If another dog interferes with a working dog and causes a bad performance, the dog interfered with should be given a rerun.”* (Guidelines for Judges and Conducting Hunts)

## Finished Blind Retrieve

*The hunt tests will consist of a water blind retrieve and a land blind retrieve. These blinds may or may not be included in one of the required multiple marked retrieves.* (Finished Test Description)

## Finished Blind Retrieve Considerations:

*Lining the blind is not required.* (Finished Test Rules) but it is perfectly acceptable for a retriever to line a Finished blind.

*The judge will not require the retriever to run a predefined route or channel.* (Finished Test Rules)

A predefined route or channel is a specific track or course the judge is requiring the retriever to run.

## Recommendations:

- Ask handlers to cast their dogs toward the blind. Asking that the dog take a good initial line is not the same as requiring them to run a predefined route or channel.
- If the blind is included in one of the multiple marked retrieves, understand how other elements in the test can affect the retriever’s performance on the blind.
- If a retriever “winds” a blind bird, it should have been handled to the position where it winded the bird, not gotten there by ignoring whistles and casts.
- Consider the retriever’s **recovery** when responding to directional control away from factors.
- Place blind where handlers have an adequate opportunity to see and control their dogs.
- Judges should understand the difference between literal and improvement casting.
- Judges should be able to differentiate a scallop from a cast refusal.

## Evaluating the Finished Blind:

*The Finished Hunting Retriever should demonstrate a prompt and precise response to all voice, whistle and directional commands. (Finished Test Rules – page 44, item II)*

*The Finished Hunting Retriever should demonstrate the ability to take an initial line toward the blind and a willingness and ability to respond to the commands from the handler. (Finished Test Rules)*

*The finished Hunting Retriever must stay under control and pick up the bird quickly and efficiently. (Finished Test Rules)*

Judges should advise handlers of the objective of the blind and that they must demonstrate Finished level control.

Remember: If a dog gets out of control at any point in the blind retrieve, it has failed the test.

# Chapter 7

## ***JUDGE/HANDLER RELATIONSHIP***

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A judge must build a good working relationship between themselves and their co-judge (s), the hunt test committee, marshal (s), bird throwers, game steward, and hunt site workers if the event is to be successful, and an enjoyable experience.

Successful relationships depend on many factors, including **attitude** and **communication**.

### **ATTITUDE**

The HRC Rulebook, under **Guidelines For Judges & Conducting Events** offers these statements that involve “attitude”:

*“...it should be remembered that the Licensed Judge should guide, train, and assist the apprentice Judge in every way possible.”*

*“Judges should utilize club-prepared blinds and equipment and cooperate with the Hunt Committee in preparation for the hunt”.*

*“Judges should greet each Handler in a friendly and courteous manner...”*

*“A Judge’s disposition can make or break a Hunt. Please make every effort to settle down a nervous Handler.”*

### **COMMUNICATION**

**Handlers Briefing** (Please see the Handlers Briefing Appendix)

#### **Speaking with Handlers Before the Test Begins**

Start by introducing yourself, your co-judge, and the site test marshal. Welcome everyone to the event.

Review gun safety procedures, requirements, and handler instructions.

The HRC rulebook states:

*A complete test description should be given to handlers assembled before each test dog is run.*

Judges will provide an explanation of each hunt test objective to the Handlers. (Rulebook – at all testing level - **Judges**)

Judges should greet each Handler in a friendly and courteous manner and discuss:

- a. If the Handler understands the test;
- b. That a loaded shotgun will be used and that it should be handled with care;
- c. That true hunting form should be used (i.e., a bird should be tracked and shot at the top of its arc - *STARTED, SEASONED, FINISHED, UPLAND and GRAND*);
- d. Areas where dogs are allowed to be worked while at the point of origin.

Judges should courteously advise Handlers of desirable dress, if necessary. (Rulebook Test Rules – all levels)

Remember to state where the gallery and holding blinds are located.

### ***Accommodating Handlers with Physical Handicaps***

The HRC rulebook states:

*Handlers with physical handicaps should advise the Hunt Secretary of their special needs prior to the hunt date. The hunt committee and Judges will make every reasonable effort to accommodate the needs of the handicapped so they can enjoy and participate in all HRC / U.K.C. hunt tests.*

This obligation includes allowing a “gunner” to shoot the shotgun for handlers with a physical handicap (incapacitation or injury – whether permanent or temporary) that precludes them from safely and properly operating the shotgun in the test.

### **Recommendations When Speaking with Handlers During the Test**

- In general, it is best to keep conversations with handlers to a minimum during the test, especially when the dog is working. You don't want to distract the handler with idle conversation that might take the handlers mind off the dog and test. You also don't want to give the impression to the gallery that you are helping one handler more than others.
- While a dog and handler are on the retrieving line, confine conversations with your co-judge and hunt site personnel to as little as necessary and be as quiet and least disruptive as possible.
- Judges should stay in control, be good observers and recorders, but strive to keep their test participation to a minimum.

- It is not good practice to help a handler by giving hints or trying to be kind by offering suggestions like: “the bird is farther out” or “farther left.” If the handler puts the dog where you told them to and you are wrong, it is a difficult position to be in.
- ***Always think SAFETY, and don’t hesitate to stop a handler from shooting, or stop the test when an unsafe condition exists.***
- Be non-committal about a dog’s performance. Do not confuse this with “advising a handler he/she has failed” as discussed in Chapter 5. Your co-judge might have seen something you missed!

<b>Table VII-1</b>			
<b>Fail vs. Disqualified: <i>Handlers</i></b>			
<b>Handlers</b>	<b>Handler Failed</b>	<b>Handler Disqualified</b>	<b>Rulebook reference</b>
*Sportsmanship issues	Yes	No	Sportsmanship
Gun safety		Yes	Shotguns Disqualifications
Physical abuse of retriever		Yes	Disqualifications
**Handler interference		Yes	Disqualifications

\* Carrying exposed training equipment, threatening retriever, deliberate blocking so retriever will not see birds fall, pointing out bird throwers prior to birds being thrown.

\*\* Handlers will be asked to leave the test grounds if the handler interferes with the test, Judges, Hunt Marshal, Gunners, Bird Boys, UKC/HRC officials, or any other participants.

<b>Table VII-2</b>			
<b>Fail vs. Disqualified: <i>Retrievers</i></b>			
<b>Retrievers</b>	<b>Retriever Failed</b>	<b>Retriever Disqualified</b>	<b>Rulebook reference</b>
Hardmouth	Yes	No	Delivery
Judging Issues	Yes	No	Judges Decisions on Performance
Fighting		Yes	Disqualifications
Gun Safety		Yes	Shotguns Disqualifications
*Unproductive Retrieve	Yes		All Categories

\* Not completing a retrieve after second attempt at a bird for the Started and Seasoned dog, or after the first attempt for Finished and Grand dogs.

## Before they leave the retrieving line, judges must inform the handlers if:

- The dog has been failed for hardmouth or an unproductive retrieve.
- The handler and dog have been disqualified for gun safety or fighting.
- The handler has been disqualified for physical abuse of the retriever.

## Speaking with Handlers After the Hunt

The HRC rulebook states:

*All judges are expected to remain at the hunt site so that the test results may be discussed. Judges notebooks shall be open for review by any Handler. Judges are to keep the score sheets for one (1) year.*

### **Recommendations**

- Only the handler may be permitted to review the judge's sheets for a dog they handled. Since the dogs are judged against a standard and not dog against dog, sheets of another have no bearing in the decision and other dogs' work is not to be discussed.
- Pass or fail decisions should be made jointly by both judges. The judges must mutually agree on each dog's performance. **This is a decision the judges alone must make, and they must agree!** All communication with a handler about the dog's performance should be done with both judges present.
- Discuss the sheet with one handler at a time, with both judges present. It's difficult enough to diplomatically speak with a dissatisfied handler, without having a group of handlers listening.

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**Field representatives and the hunt committee  
are entitled to review all judges' sheets for completeness and consistency.**

### **\*\* JUDGING TIPS \*\***

Don't "nit-pick" the dog's performance. Get to the point, and tell the handler why the dog failed.

Be specific and accurate in your terminology. Examples:

- Don't tell the handler they failed for too many whistle and cast refusals. Instead, say "lack of control".
- Don't tell a handler they failed for handling on the marks. Instead, say "lack of marking and memory".
- Don't tell a handler how to train their dog, or correct a "problem".

Above all, be friendly and non argumentative.

# Chapter 8

## ***UPLAND HUNT TESTS***

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The following applies to ALL CATEGORIES OF 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 any purebred Gun Dog of any age or sex. These are established primarily for the flushing breeds such as Spaniels and Retrievers. These tests will be conducted according to the rules already established in the rulebook for the Finished Hunting Retriever when evaluating the standards of control throughout this test. These tests will duplicate actual Upland Hunting conditions found throughout the country. The successful completion of these tests leads to qualification of the Upland Hunter Title, (UH). To pass these hunting tests the Upland Retriever must accomplish the tasks required with both style and accuracy. Judges will look for natural ability and a trained performance. The Upland Retriever must respond promptly to either voice or whistle commands and remain steady and under control at all times. The Upland Retriever should be a pleasure to hunt with under any conditions.

#### **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 tests in the Upland 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. *Seasoned, Finished, Grand and Upland Hunting Retrievers should walk quietly at heel off lead...* (Rulebook - Manners and Obedience).

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 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 Finished 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 you as a judge to launch the bird when you 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 Upland 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 Handlers 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 Finish 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.

The retriever will be evaluated for steadiness exactly as it is on the retrieving line. A dog will be failed for breaking, and may be failed for a controlled break. Handlers should be reminded if the dog creeps forward 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. (Upland Hunt Test Rules)*

### **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.” (Upland Hunt Test Rules)*

### **(NOTE)**

**It is the responsibility of the club to understand this rule and to make every effort to purchase the proper quality of birds in order to produce natural flushes for this event. Traps, cages, or other devices should be only used as a last resort after all other means of natural flushes have been exhausted. As with a regular hunt test where quality ducks are required, the same principals should be applied to the Upland event.**

### **Beginning the Quartering Test:**

The dog should be able to quarter a sufficient distance before entering the area where the natural 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.” (HRC Rulebook - Guidelines for Judging Upland Hunt Tests)*

**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.” (HRC Rulebook - Guidelines for Judging Upland Hunt Tests)*

The Upland game dog must first demonstrate the ability to search for game before continuing on with the test. The Upland dog must demonstrate Finish control while attempting to find the bird. If the dog will not leave the Handler's 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 Upland 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 Upland Gun Dog must be presented with a minimum of two (2) birds to “flush” in the quartering test.” (Upland Hunt Test Rules)

### **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.” (HRC Rulebook - Guidelines for Judging Upland Hunt Tests)

Voice and whistle commands may be used in order to achieve steadiness to wing on the Upland 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 Finish level control throughout the steadiness process, or were unnecessary commands or whistles needed in order to achieve steadiness of the Upland 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 unfairly presented to the dog in order to determine a fair judgment of steadiness?

*“A dog that does not stop on 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.”* (HRC Rulebook - Guidelines for Judging Upland Hunt Tests)

### **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.”* (HRC Rulebook - Guidelines for Judging Upland Hunt Tests)

During a controlled break, the dog must show immediate response to stop on the Handlers command. Failure to do so will result in failure of the test.

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 each of the two required Upland flushed birds, 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 each flushed bird in order to fulfill the Quartering test requirements.

### **When to call a No-Bird?**

Anytime during the Walk-up when a bird can not 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 unsafe 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 performed during the walk-up portion of the test. This allows for the best ability to control this portion of the testing process.

Honoring of dogs during the Quartering test while working in the field may work, however this sequence can provide many draw backs. It may require many more flushes in order to have both dogs aware of the bird as it flushes to fulfill the requirements of the honor.

Many times you may have two different types of dogs in the field working at different speeds. We must make every effort to not allow the performance of one dog's quartering to affect the performance of another dog.

### **Example:**

Two dogs enter the field. The dog to the left is very fast and quarters the field very well. The dog to the right is somewhat over weight and works the field very slow. In order for the line of hunters to work the field and stay in a straight line for safety, the fast dog has to be constantly stopped and called back to the handler to allow the slow dog to catch up.

This constant calling back on the part of the fast dog handler has not allow this dog to be tested properly as would happen if the dogs were to have run separately.

Also many times you will be working two strange dogs together in a free environment. Although we do not expect Finish level dogs to be out of control, many times during the flush or retrieve they can be.

## **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.” (Upland Hunt Test Rules)*

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's 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 maybe 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 advise 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.

## **GUN SAFETY CHECKLIST**

- √ Inspect and approve all guns to be used in hunt test (and for proper plug).
- √ Keep popper and live ammunition (if any) separated.
- √ Advise handlers that they are being judged on gun safety anytime they are holding a gun during the test.
- √ Provide adequate gun stands and encourage handlers to set gun down after shooting when handling retrievers during the test.
- √ Remind handlers to open breech and put safety on before setting gun down.
- √ Instruct all gunners in proper gun safety procedures and requirements.
- √ Be aware of gallery, bird throwers and other personnel at hunt site when planning shooting sequences during the test.
- √ Do not require handlers to carry gun down steep bank or into boats, etc.
- √ Be aware of gun safety when guns are being carried to and from retrieving line, or during walk-ups.
- √ Instruct all handlers to shoulder, aim, track, and shoot bird at top of arc when instructed.
- √ Instruct handlers not to take safety off until birds are thrown.
- √ Instruct handlers to stand up, or don't shoot when conditions warrant.
- √ Instruct handlers to check their hunting clothes for live ammo before running their dog.
- √ In the event of a no-bird, or other test disruptions, recognize there may be unfired shells in gun.
- √ Follow rulebook guidelines about number of poppers provided and gun loading instructions.
- √ Give handlers adequate time to load shells for diversion birds. The test should not be set-up to see how fast handlers can load and operate a shotgun.

## HRC FIREARM SAFETY POLICY

***All HRC Judges are required to PROVE each firearm used in their Hunt Test.***

Hunting Retriever Club, Inc. adopts the policy of the International Hunter Safety Association. HRC strongly recommends that all participants at a HRC, UKC Licensed event have an approved Hunter Safety Course.

**Basic Safety Rules** - Safe handling of firearms begins with the four basic rules listed below. An easy way to remember these rules is to **ACTT** responsibly around firearms. **ACTT** stands for:

1. **Assume every gun to be loaded** - Consider any firearm you have not just unloaded to be loaded and treat it accordingly.
2. **Control the muzzle-point guns in a safe direction** - You must decide what the safest available muzzle direction is and keep your firearm pointed in that direction. Never point a firearm at yourself or others.
3. **Trigger Finger-keep your finger off the trigger until ready to fire** - The natural instinct when picking up a firearm is to put your finger in the trigger guard. **DON'T!** This could cause an accidental discharge if the gun is loaded.
4. **Target-be sure of your target and beyond.** - Never point your firearm at something you do not intend to shoot. Make sure you positively identify what you are shooting at and know what lies in front of and beyond it. Do not use telescopic sights as a substitute for binoculars when identifying persons, animals or objects.

**Accepting a Firearm:** Any time you pick up or are handed a firearm you must **VERIFY** it is unloaded and safe to handle. Grasp the firearm with both hands, keeping the muzzle pointed in a safe direction and **VERIFY OR MAKE** it safe.

***All HRC Judges are required to PROVE each firearm used in their Hunt Test.***

- P** 1. **Point** the firearm in the safest available direction. Normally this is at the ground in a direction away from other people including you. Maintain constant control of the muzzle direction.
- R** 2. **Remove** all ammunition. If the firearm is a semi-automatic with a detachable magazine, remove the magazine from the firearm first. Open the action to remove any cartridges from the chamber. Removing the magazine first prevents a semi-automatic from chambering another round if the action closes.
- O** 3. **Observe** the chamber. Check your firearm's chamber to ensure no ammunition or empty casings are present and if so remove by hand or by working the firearm's action.
- V** 4. **Verify** the feeding path. A firearm's feeding path is the route by which ammunition stored in its magazine is moved to the chamber where it will be fired. Only repeating firearms will have a mechanical feeding path. To verify it is free of ammunition, you must work the firearm's action and visually check the feeding mechanism and magazine.
- E** 5. **Examine** the bore for rust, excessive oil, or any obstructions. If present, the firearm must not be fired until it is properly cleaned.

## ***Loading Firearms***

Keep in mind that a firearm should not be loaded until you are able to safely and legally discharge it. Follow the steps below to safely load a firearm:

1. Make sure there is no ammunition in the firearm or any obstructions in the barrel.  
**PROVE** it safe.
2. Point the firearm in the safest available direction. Know the location of other persons or dogs around you.
3. Determine if the firearm can be loaded with the safety on. If it can, apply the safety.
4. Make sure to use the correct cartridge(s) or shell(s) for the firearm by matching the data stamp on the firearm with the head stamp on the ammunition.
5. Load the firearm. How you do this will be determined by the type of firearm you are using. As a general rule:
  - Single shot firearms: place the ammunition directly in the chamber and then close the action.
  - Lever action firearms having a tubular magazine: make sure the action is closed, load the magazine, and then cycle the action to bring a round from the magazine to the chamber.
  - Firearms with a removable box magazine: load the magazine first and then insert it into the firearm. Close the action to load the chamber.
  - Firearms with a non-removable box magazine: load directly into the magazine and then close the action to load the chamber.
6. If you were not able to do so before, **put the safety on.**
7. **Always keep your safety on until ready to fire your gun.**

**The firearm is now loaded and ready to use.  
It requires continuous care and attention until unloaded.**

During an HRC test, when placing the gun in a gun stand or handing the firearm to an approved designated person, the individual must insure that the safety is on and the breach is open. It is strongly encouraged that after insuring the gun is safe that the individual announce “the gun is safe” or “breach open; safety on” or “open and on”.

## HRC POLICY REGARDING LIGHTNING SAFETY

The Hunt Chairman, in consultation with the Club's Hunt Committee, will make the final determination to suspend, continue or resume a Hunt based on the following guidelines:

### FLASH-TO-BANG METHOD

Be aware of how close lightning is occurring. The flash-to-bang method is the easiest and most convenient way to estimate how far away lightning is occurring. Thunder always accompanies lightning, even though its audible range can be diminished due to background noise in the immediate environment, and its distance from the observer. To use the flash-to-bang method, count the seconds from the time the lightning is sighted to when the clap of thunder is heard. Divide this number by five to obtain how far away (in miles) the lightning is occurring. For example, if an individual counts 15 seconds between seeing the flash and hearing the bang, 15 divided by five equals three; therefore, the lightning flash is approximately three miles away.

Lightning awareness should be increased with the first flash of lightning or the first clap of thunder, no matter how far away. This activity must be treated as a wake-up call. The most important aspect to monitor is how far away the lightning is occurring, and how fast the storm is approaching, relative to the distance of a safe shelter.

1. *As a minimum, HRC, INC. strongly recommends that by the time a flash-to-bang count of 30 seconds, all individuals should have left the test site and reached a safe structure or location.*

Safe structure or location is defined as:

- a. Any building normally occupied or frequently used by people, i.e., a building with plumbing and/or electrical wiring that acts to electrically ground the structure. Avoid using shower facilities for safe shelter and **do not use** the showers or plumbing facilities during a thunderstorm.
  - b. In the absence of a sturdy, frequently inhabited building, any vehicle with a hard metal roof (not a convertible or golf cart) and rolled-up windows can provide a measure of safety. A vehicle is certainly better than remaining outdoors. It is not the rubber tires that make a vehicle a safe shelter, but the hard metal roof which dissipates the lightning strike around the vehicle. **DO NOT TOUCH THE SIDES OF THE VEHICLE!**
2. The existence of blue sky and the absence of rain are not protection from lightning. Lightning can, and does, strike as far as 10 miles away from the rain shaft. It does not have to be raining for lightning to strike.
  3. If no safe structure or location is within a reasonable distance, find a thick grove of small trees surrounded by taller trees or a dry ditch. Assume a crouched position on the ground with only the balls of the feet touching the ground, wrap your arms around your knees and lower your head. Minimize contact with the ground because lightning current often enters a victim through the ground rather than by a direct overhead strike. **MINIMIZE YOUR BODY'S SURFACE AREA, AND MINIMIZE CONTACT WITH THE GROUND! DO NOT LIE FLAT!** If unable to reach safe shelter, stay away from the tallest trees or objects such as light poles or flag poles), metal objects (such as fences or bleachers), individual trees, standing pools of water, and open fields. Avoid being the highest object in a field. Do not take shelter under a single, tall tree.

4. A person who feels his or her hair stand on end, or skin tingle, should immediately crouch, as described in item 3.
5. Avoid using the telephone, except in emergency situations. People have been struck by lightning while using a land-line telephone. A cellular phone or a portable remote phone is a safe alternative to land-line phones, if the person and the antenna are located within a safe structure or location, and if all other precautions are followed.
6. When considering resumption of activity, HRC, Inc. recommends that everyone should ideally wait at least 30 minutes after the last flash of lightning or sound of thunder before returning to the field.
7. People who have been struck by lightning do not carry an electrical charge. Therefore, cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) is safe for the responder. **If possible, an injured person should be moved to a safer location before starting CPR.** Lightning-strike victims who show signs of cardiac or respiratory arrest need emergency help quickly. Prompt, aggressive CPR has been highly effective for the survival of victims of lightning strikes.

REMEMBER – SAFETY FIRST & FOREMOST!

COPY

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## STARTED TEST BRIEFING

**Welcome Handlers**  
**Introduce yourself and your co-judge**

### **Gun Safety:**

- Gunner Location
- Muzzle-Breach & Safety
- If the handler decides to shoot the shotgun, the dog may not be hand held and the handler will be judged for gun safety.
- Popper loading sequence
- When is the safety removed?
- Only the Judges may stop the test during a gun malfunction or at any other time.

**Purpose:** This test is designed to assess the ability of the dog to follow the flight of the shot bird to the area of the fall, retrieve the bird and return it to the handler.

### **Mechanics & Logistics:**

- Location where judgment will begin and end?
- Keep the dog on lead to and from the retrieving line.
- Where will the marks come from?
- Proper use of the attention getting device.
- Dog may be hand held to steady.
- When will the dog be released to retrieve the bird?
- Define a controlled break.
- The retriever may be cast from the retrieving line a maximum of two (2) times.
- Actions if the retriever is unproductive after the second attempt.
- The dog must deliver the bird to the handler area.
- Introduce Test Marshal.
- Cover acceptable attire.

### **Objectives:**

- Testing marking ability, not handling.
- The dog will be expected to follow the flight of the shot bird and proceed directly to the area of the fall and establish a hunt without aid from the handler.
- The dog must retrieve the bird and deliver it to the handler area.

### **Undesirable Traits**

- Hyperactivity, wildness, jumping about, barking, excessive disobedience, lethargy, or lack of interest.
- Consistent failure or reluctance to deliver.

### **Run a Test Dog**

### **Answer Questions**

- Make sure all handlers hear all questions.
- Avoid "what if" questions.

**Wish the handlers *Good Luck* and Have a Great Day!!**

## TEST DISTANCES

Land Marks - 75 yards or less.

Water Marks - 60 yards or less

Fold @ Dotted Line

COPY FOR USE

Cut on Dotted Line to fit inside Rulebook

COPY

Cut on Dotted Line to fit inside Rulebook

## SEASONED TEST BRIEFING

### Welcome Handlers

### Introduce yourself and your co-judge

### Gun Safety:

- Muzzle-Breach & Safety
- Popper loading sequence
- Proper shooting form: shoulder the gun, aim, track, & shoot at the top of the arc.
- When is the safety removed?
- Only the Judges may stop the test during a gun malfunction or at any other time.
- Judge's expectations if dog creeps
- "Other shotguns"
- Courtesy "the gun is safe"
- Set gun down in stand when handling dog.

**Purpose:** This test is designed to assess the ability of the dog to perform under actual hunting conditions found in the local area. Look for style and natural ability and evidence of a reasonable degree of control.

### Mechanics & Logistics:

- Location where judgment will begin and end.
- What point is the lead removed?
- The dog may not run with a collar.
- Where will the marks come from?
- Proper use of the attention getting device. (if used)
- Dog is required to be steady at the retrieving line.
- When will the dog be released to retrieve the bird?
- Define a controlled break.
- A popper must be fired while the dog is at heel just prior to running the blind.
- When will the diversion bird be thrown?
- The retriever may be cast from the retrieving line a maximum of two (2) times.
- Actions if the retriever is unproductive after the second attempt.
- Introduce Test Marshal.
- Cover acceptable attire.

Fold @ Dotted Line

### Objectives:

- The dog should walk obediently to the line, sit obediently, and exhibit an attentive attitude.
- Testing marking ability, not handling. However, clean handle is preferable to an extended hunt.
- The dog will be expected to follow the flight of the shot bird, proceed directly to the area of the fall and establish a hunt for the bird without aid from the handler.
- Once the dog finds the bird, it will be expected to retrieve the bird and deliver the bird to hand.
- Dogs should demonstrate the capability to respond to directional control.

### Undesirable Traits:

- Controlled breaks, poor obedience and poor manners.
- Consistent failure to deliver or consistent reluctance to deliver.

### Run a Test Dog

### Answer Questions

- Make sure all handlers hear all questions.
- Avoid "what if" questions.

**Wish the handlers Good Luck and have a Great Day!!**

### TEST DISTANCES

Land Marks - 100 yards or less.

Water Marks - 75 yards or less.

Blind Retrieves - 60 yards max land and water.

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**FINISHED TEST BRIEFING**

**Welcome Handlers**

**Introduce yourself and your co-judge**

**Gun Safety:**

- Muzzle-Breach & Safety
- Popper loading sequence
- Proper shooting form: shoulder the gun, aim, track, and shoot at the top of the arc
- When is the safety removed?
- Only the Judges may stop the test
- Judge's expectations if dog creeps
- "Other shotguns"
- Courtesy "the gun is safe"
- Set gun down in stand when handling dog.

**Purpose:** This test is designed to duplicate actual hunting conditions found throughout the country. Look for natural ability and a trained performance.

**NOTE:** Effective January 1, 2011 - The hunting retriever shall not be required to honor during another dog's blind retrieve.

**Mechanics & Logistics:**

- Location where judgment will begin and end
- What point is the lead removed?
- The dog may not run with a collar.
- Explain sequencing of test elements and retrieves.
- Where will the marks come from?
- Proper use of the attention getting device. (if used)
- Dog is required to be steady at the retrieving line.
- When will the dog be released to retrieve the bird?
- Define a controlled break.
- When will the diversion bird be thrown?
- The retriever may be cast from the retrieving line only once.
- Actions if the retriever is unproductive after the first attempt.
- Location and dismiss time for honor dog.
- Introduce Test Marshal.
- Cover acceptable attire.

**Objectives:**

- The dog should walk obediently to the line, sit obediently, and exhibit an attentive attitude.
- Testing both marking ability and handling. However, a clean handle is preferable to an extended hunt.
- The dog will be expected to follow the flight of the shot bird, proceed directly to the area of the fall and establish a hunt for the bird without aid from the handler.
- Once the dog finds the bird, it will be expected to retrieve the bird and deliver the bird to hand.
- Dogs should demonstrate prompt and precise response to voice, whistle and directional commands.

**Undesirable Traits:**

- Controlled breaks, poor obedience and poor manners.
- Consistent failure to deliver or consistent reluctance to deliver.
- Poor response to directional commands.

**Run a Test Dog**

**Answer Questions**

- Make sure all handlers hear all questions.
- Avoid "what if" questions.

**Wish the handlers Good Luck and Have a Great Day!**

**TEST DISTANCES**

Land Marks - 150 yards or less.

Water Marks - 125 yards or less.

Blind Retrieves - 100 yards max land and water.

Fold @ Dotted Line

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## **Frequently Asked Questions at the HRC Started Testing Level**

### 1) Must my dog be steady?

Answer: A Started dog is not expected to be steady on its own. Because we don't want to encourage poor habits, and because steadiness is a safety issue, Started handlers are allowed to use a lead or hand-hold their dogs when birds are thrown to assist in achieving steadiness.

### 2) Do I have to hold my dog with a lead if it is steady?

Answer: No, you do not have to hold your dog if he is steady. However we encourage everyone to hold the dog because if he should break and get the bird, this dog will fail at that point.

### 3) Do I have to have it on a lead?

Answer: No, you may hold your dog by a bear hug if you would like as long as you are not hurting the dog in the process. We suggest you wrap a lead around the dogs neck and when ready to release the dog, you just let loose of one end of the lead and the dog is free to run.

### 4) Will they use live ducks or other game and how many birds will my dog have to retrieve?

Answer: No, in the Started class only dead birds shall be used. These birds may be pheasants, pigeons, ducks, or other game birds such as quail. In Started you will have four single retrieves to perform. Two of those marked retrieves will be on water and two will be on land.

### 5) What if my dog has never seen a dead duck?

Answer: Before running any test you must be prepared. You will need to work your dog on the process of retrieving game birds. Many times you may ask one of the Judges if you can take a bird being used in the test to familiarize your dog with that bird. However coming to the test properly prepared will turn out to be your best choice.

### 6) Can I shoot the gun or will someone shoot for me?

Answer: Normally there will be a gunner used in all Started tests. He will do the shooting at the retrieving line. You may also choose to shoot the gun yourself. In this case you will not be able to hold you dog and the dog will be required to be steady without the aid of a lead. You will also be judged on gun-safety while handling the gun throughout the test.

### 7) My dog has not been around a lot of gunfire – how close will the gunner be?

Answer: In Started you may ask the judges to have the gunner move away from the dog given his inability to have experienced gun fire prior to this test. This distance while slight, must still give the dog the opportunity to realize a gun is still in the picture and is pointing in the direction of each throw. The best advise would be to once again come prepared for a Started test knowing that this dog will witness gunfire at the retrieving line. Surprising a young dog with his first gunfire in this manner may not always become the best first experience.

### 8) Will they always use attention-getting devices before a throw?

Answer: Yes, in the Started class a shot or attention getting devise such as a duck or goose call shall be used before each thrown bird appears. The intent here is to focus the dog's attention in the direction of each throw.

### 9) What do the judges mean by deliver to an area?

Answer: In the Started class the dog is not required to deliver the birds to hand but instead to bring the bird back to the immediate area of the handler. This is normally within a few steps of the handler.

### 10) What if my dog didn't see the bird, will they re-throw it?

Answer: No, in the Started class each of the birds thrown in each of the single marking tests may be thrown only one time. This is also why the attention getting devise is so important to the success of this level of test.

11) If my dog is having trouble finding the bird, can I handle it to the fall?

Answer: Yes, you may handle the dog to complete the retrieve but this is a marking test. Once you determine that handling is your best chance to pick up the bird, the marking test is over at that point. Most Started dogs will not properly handle at this level. When preparing for this test, solid instruction on proper marking is your best option for success.

12) Can I re-send my dog if it comes back without the bird?

Answer: Yes, a Started dog may be re-cast a second time for any of the four single retrieves. The intent of the re-cast is to correct situations like a poor initial line taken by the dog on the initial cast. It should not be interpreted as a second chance to complete every retrieve at the Started level of testing. Even though a second cast has been taken with success, the result of the first cast will also enter into the final outcome of the overall test.

13) If my dog does not complete a retrieve, can I ask the bird boy to help?

Answer: Yes & No. Anytime you feel the need to ask the bird boy for help, the test is failed at that point. Many times you have no other option and this may actually become better for the dog at that time. Letting a dog just run around in the field may cause more problems for you in the future.

14) Can I run the other parts of the test if my dog fails to pick up a bird?

Answer: Yes, In the Started class if your dog has failed the first mark of the land test. He may continue to complete the other mark of the land test. He may also come back in the afternoon and try the two water retrieves for practice. A word of caution at this point, if your dog has serious control issues, allowing this dog to complete additional marks could possibly cause even more problems for you in the future. In this case running additional marks would not be advised.

15) Sometimes my dog chews on the bird slightly – is this okay?

Answer: No, mouthing of the birds is not ok. You will be judged in the Started class on delivery of which hard mouth or chewing of the birds when excessive will be grounds for failure. It is best to correct problems in a dog instead of asking judges to make a tough decision whether to fail your dog for hardmouth.

16) Sometimes my dog does not want to bring the bird back – is this a problem and what do I do?

Answer: Yes, this is a problem. On every bird of the Started test a dog is to proceed directly to the area of the thrown bird and establish a hunt for each bird. Once the dog finds the bird, he is to proceed directly back to the handler area with the bird and deliver it to the handler. If your dog finds the bird but chooses to run all over the field at that point. He has demonstrated a lack of control necessary to complete the Started test. The best advice would be to correct this problem before ever attempting to enter a Started test.

17) When will I know how my dog did?

Answer: Throughout the test the Judges are making an evaluation on your dog's performance. At anytime that you dog reaches a point of failure during the test you will be informed at the retrieving line that the test is failed. You will also be informed that you may continue to complete the remainder of the tests as long as your dog remains under control to avoid future problems.

18) Will my dog's temperament be judged at the Started level? He tends to be a bit noisy at the line.

Answer: Yes, a Started dog is being tested on its natural abilities. The Judges will evaluate your dog on its spontaneous behavior in order to judge its usefulness as a hunting companion. Hyperactivity, wildness, jumping about, barking, excessive disobedience, lethargy or lack of interest, are all undesirable traits of the Started dog. If you dog's barking is excessive, such as barking during all the marks, he will be failed for that undesirable trait at this level.

## **Frequently Asked Questions at the HRC Seasoned Testing Level**

1) Do I have to have a lead on my dog?

Yes. Seasoned dogs will come to the retrieving line on lead and judges may ask handlers to put the dog on lead between various parts of the test

2) Can I have a collar on the dog?

Not at the Seasoned level unless required by local ordinance. A slip lead should be used.

3) Does it have to be steady?

Yes. The Seasoned dog must demonstrate steadiness at the retrieving line.

4) Can I hold my dog to keep it from going?

No. The Seasoned dog cannot be restrained by leash or line or hand-held.

5) Can I talk to my dog?

Yes, in a quiet manner and so as not to intimidate the retriever.

6) Will I need to blow a duck call?

Yes. It is very possible judges will ask a handler to call during part of the test.

7) Will I shoot the gun or can I have someone else do it?

Handlers will shoot the gun at Seasoned, unless a physical handicap prevents it.

8) What happens if I don't shoot (or the gun jams between marks)?

During the test briefing, the judges will advise handlers about what to do in the event of a gun malfunction.

9) What are the differences between creeping and a controlled break?

When a dog creeps, it stops its own forward movement. When a dog is breaking, the handler stops the dog's movement with a voice or whistle command.

10) What if my dog breaks?

It will fail the test.

11) How many birds will my dog mark and retrieve?

At Seasoned, double marks will be thrown at both land and water.

12) What if it does not see the second bird of the double-mark?

The mark will have to be picked up by handling to it. Judges will assess the dog's marking skills accordingly.

13) Will the judge designate which mark to retrieve first?

No. Judges cannot designate the order of retrieves at Seasoned.

14) What if my dog is going for one bird, then decides to get the other first?

This is acceptable if the dog has not reached the area of fall of the first bird or established a hunt for it.

15) What if my dog switches to the diversion?

The dog will receive a markdown at Seasoned for dropping one bird and picking up another.

16) How much control do I need on the blind retrieves?

Reasonable control is the standard at the Seasoned level. Judges make that determination.

17) My dog usually lines short blind retrieves. Is this okay?

Yes.

18) Does my dog have to “sit” on the whistle?

No. It must demonstrate that it has responded, which can mean stop and stand still.

19) What if it does not sit, or take my hand signals?

The dog must demonstrate reasonable control and a willingness to be guided by the handler. If it does not, it may fail the test for lack of control.

20) My dog “pops” sometimes – is this okay?

Popping – looking to the handler for direction without a signal will not be penalized

21) How many tries do I get to retrieve a bird?

The Seasoned retriever can be cast twice to attempt to pick up a bird.

22) If I fail in the morning, can I (should I) run the afternoon test?

Yes you can. Should you? If you failed for lack of control, you may be creating bad habits by letting the dog continue to run. It is your choice.

23) If I fail on part of the test, such as the walk-up, can I still run the marks or the blind?

Yes. Failure of a part of the Seasoned test won't prevent a dog from participating in the other parts. But remember: Judges may ask you to pick up your dog if it has failed and is creating bad habits or endangering itself.

## **Frequently Asked Questions at the HRC Finished Testing Level**

1) Do I have to wear camo?

Yes. Camo should be consistent with the type of hunt test you are performing. Camo is considered appropriate for duck and dove hunting while browns or khaki, with an orange hat and vest, would be appropriate for an upland hunt.

2) When do I take my dog off lead? Is this when my test starts?

You should take your dog off lead when leaving the holding blind. This is where your test begins. You are being judged from this point in the test.

3) When do I have to put my dog back on lead?

You put your dog back on lead at the conclusion of the test after leaving the retrieving line at a place where the judge designates. You and your dog are being judged until the dog is back on lead.

4) Can I talk to my dog?

Yes. You can talk to your dog before and during the test as long as you do not intimidate your dog or disturb the hunt.

5) Will there be a walk-up?

There could be, but it is not required at the finished level.

6) When will you throw the diversion?

Judges can throw the diversion at any time while the dog is returning from any retrieve.

7) What if my dog switches to the diversion?

At the finished level, your dog is failed for switching to the diversion bird.

8) What if he breaks?

At any level all dogs are failed for a break.

9) My dog gets really excited at Hunt Tests so he might bark a lot when he sees a duck flying. Is that okay?

Your retriever can be failed for excessive noise. If the judges determine it's disturbing the hunt, you can be failed.

10) Sometimes during the excitement at the line my dog may run out in front of me a little. Can he be failed for a controlled break?

Yes. If the judges consider it to be excessive, your retriever can be failed for a controlled break.

11) Do I have to sit on the bucket?

While in most cases you are not required to sit on the bucket, there may be a safety reason or unique feature of the test that requires you to do so.

12) Will you tell me when to send my dog?

No. The judges are looking for your dog to be steady. Once all the birds are shot and on the ground you can typically release your dog for the retrieve.

13) Will you tell me which bird to pick up first?

Possibly. There may be a hunting scenario where the last bird down (go bird) is considered dead and a previous bird is representing a cripple that needs to be retrieved first.

14) Does my dog have to actually "sit" when I blow the whistle?

No. However, when you blow the whistle your dog should stop and look to you for a command.

15) How many refusals do I get on the blind?

Technically, none. At the finished level the rulebook says the retriever should respond to all commands. However, there are times when a judge should consider a various number of distractions that can affect your dog's ability to execute a command.

16) How many tries do I get to retrieve each bird?

At the finished level you get one attempt to retrieve each bird.

17) How big is the area of the fall?  
Should I blow a whistle on a mark?

It depends. The AOF is smaller on the last bird down compared to the first bird down. Wind direction, cover and distance all play a roll in determining how big the AOF is.

18) If I handle on two marks, does that mean I'm out?

Probably. However the judge must determine why you handled or where the dog was when you began handling. It is not always that simple. Remember, once you start handling it is your responsibility to put the dog on the bird.

19) Sometimes I get really confused during the test so, can I go ahead and load all my shells now so I don't forget?

NO! Listen to the judge's instructions. Load the correct number of shells when the judge tells you. Safety is the most important part of the test.

20) Does my dog have to honor? What does he have to do while honoring?

Yes. This is required at the finished level. The honor dog should sit quietly at the designated area and not disturb the hunt. The honor dog must sit and see multiple marks.

21) Will you let me shoot the shotgun on the honor bucket if my dog is out?

No. If the judges determine you have failed the test prior to honoring, you will be asked to put your dog on lead while sitting at the honor position. Since the dog is on lead you are not allowed to operate a shotgun

22) Will you tell me if I'm out so I can go home early?

The intention is for every dog to run both morning and afternoon hunts. This requires judges to stay on a tight schedule throughout the day. Before deciding whether a dog has failed or passed each test, judges must confer about each dog. It is not recommended that judges stop the normal sequence of running dogs to hold judges/handlers conferences during the test. If you need to leave and should you pass, the club will be happy to mail your point receipt and ribbon to you.

STARTED \_\_\_ SEASONED \_\_\_ FINISHED \_\_\_

Club/Date: \_\_\_\_\_

DOG # \_\_\_\_\_

# LAND TEST

Judge: \_\_\_\_\_

Time: AM \_\_\_\_\_ PM \_\_\_\_\_

Land/Water Combined Score: FAIL  $\ddot{Y}$  PASS  $\ddot{Y}$

## LAND MARKS

PASS

MARGINAL

FAIL

Wind / Direction:

Speed:

## LAND BLIND

PASS

MARGINAL

FAIL

### Areas to be judged:

Nose \_\_\_\_\_ Desire \_\_\_\_\_ Style \_\_\_\_\_

Pass Marginal Fail

Control / Manners:  $\ddot{Y}$   $\ddot{Y}$   $\ddot{Y}$

Delivery:  $\ddot{Y}$   $\ddot{Y}$   $\ddot{Y}$

Diversion:  $\ddot{Y}$   $\ddot{Y}$   $\ddot{Y}$

Honor:  $\ddot{Y}$   $\ddot{Y}$   $\ddot{Y}$

Walk Up  $\ddot{Y}$   $\ddot{Y}$   $\ddot{Y}$

### Disqualification

Gun Safety / Other: \_\_\_\_\_  $\ddot{Y}$

### Remarks:

Wind / Direction:

Speed:

Symbols:

W - Whistle

WR - Whistle Refusal

C - Cast

CR - Cast Refusal



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