

PROCEDURES FOR PILOT “HUNTER” FIELD TESTS

with descriptive text in italics

SECTION 1: The Hunter Level Field Test is proposed to consist of three (3) tests, which shall include the following:

1. A double marked land retrieve;
2. A double marked water retrieve;
3. A trailing test.

The purpose of the Hunter Level Test is proposed to bridge the gap between the Started and Working Retriever levels. This is the level of performance where teamwork becomes an ever increasingly important quality in the handler and their dog. At a level just below Intermediate, the expectation of this level is a retriever that can meet many of the basic needs of the hunter as well as stay within the NAHRA concept of a conservation tool.

SECTION 2: A dog shall be steady at the point of origin (see subparagraph c of this Section. For marks, the point of origin is the point at which the dog is located at the time the first bird becomes visible.)

- a. A dog may be brought to the point of origin on lead but must be off lead before signaling ready. How the dog is brought to the line is at the discretion of the handler. Judges shall not require otherwise.
- b. Moderate commands shall be allowed to steady a dog at the point of origin.
- c. A dog shall not be touched or patted at the point of origin.
- d. A controlled break shall not fail a dog, but it shall be considered a fault. (As soon as the dog leaves the point of origin and manifests the intent to make the retrieve without being so ordered, it must be stopped. If a dog is immediately brought under control, it shall be considered a minor infraction. Repeated evidence of this fault may be considered serious and, in the opinion of the judges, an eliminating factor.)

SECTION 3: A dog shall deliver all birds to hand. (The dog shall return to the handler without delay.)

SECTION 4: A dog may be handled on marked retrieves with voice/whistle/hand signals, if, in the opinion of the handler, the dog cannot find or has missed the mark. (The dog is being tested for its marking ability and memory, not handling; however, a crisp cast is preferable to a long hunt. Repeated evidence of lack of memory, marking ability or lack of control may be grounds for elimination.)

SECTION 5: A dog may be cast from the point of origin only once. (If the attempt is unsuccessful, the judges shall step in and direct the handler to pick up his/her dog. However, if in the judge's opinion, the dog exhibits confusion at the point of origin, the judges may allow a recast. After a second unsuccessful attempt, the judges shall step in and direct the handler to pick up his/her dog. See Chapter II, Section 17 for "no-goes.")

SECTION 6: The handler may be required to handle an empty shotgun with both hands on the firearm and in the firing position. Handlers may not be required to fire a gun at any time.

SECTION 7: Tests for this event shall be held in appropriate cover on land and water.

- a. Maximum test distance on land for double marked retrieves shall not exceed 75 yards.
- b. Maximum test distance on water double marked retrieves shall not exceed 50 yards.
- c. Minimum degree of separation for double marks shall be no less than 45 degrees.

At this level, it is our intent to test the dog's ability to perform introductory multiple marks. Concepts that require a higher level of training such as "in line" or "wipe out" birds are prohibited.

The intent of paragraph c is to keep the presentation of marks at the introductory level and prevent the use of complex concepts reducing the number of skill concepts required to meet the standard.

SECTION 8: Tests for this event shall consist of double marked retrieves on both land and water.

- a. Both birds must be down before the dog is released to retrieve.
- b. Triple marks shall not be used.
- c. Dogs shall not be required to honor another dog.
- d. Simultaneous falls of birds shall not be used.
- e. Judges cannot determine the order and sequence ("selection") of the retrieves.
- f. Dogs shall not be placed at a point of origin at a distance from the handler.
- g. The trailing test shall not be used off of marks.

SECTION 9: No diversions of any kind shall be utilized.

Again, it is the intent of this level to test the introductory multiple marking skills of retrievers. More diverse hunting situations will be added at the higher levels of testing. The amount of control that a handler possesses at this level is a step below the Intermediate.

SECTION 10: Walkups to simulate jump shooting shall not be used at this level.

Because the dogs may be brought to line on lead, this test is not appropriate.

SECTION 11: Blind retrieves shall not be used in this event.

This is the main difference between this and the Intermediate level. The standard at the Hunter Level is by design lower than the expectation of the Intermediate dog. The intent is to reduce the total number of skills a dog must master before reaching the Intermediate Level.

SECTION 12: No upland hunting test will be used at this level.

SECTION 13: A trailing test shall be used.

- a. The dog shall be required to trail, locate a bird and deliver it to hand.
- b. The dog shall be scored on its natural ability and the use of its nose to locate and follow the trail.
- c. It shall not matter in what manner the dog follows the trail, e.g. The dog may stay precisely on the trail with nose down, or close quarter back and forth across the trail with head up, or run a few yards downwind of the trail with his head held high. It is the intent of this test to have a dog indicate scent, follow the trail and locate the bird in a natural hunting manner.
- d. A dog may be urged to hunt by moderate voice or whistle commands.
- e. Judges may restrict entry of the handlers into the area of the trail.
- f. Hand signals are inappropriate and shall not be used other than to put the dog onto the beginning of the trail.
- g. Dogs shall be required to trail a minimum distance of 30 yards and shall not exceed 50 yards.

Judges are urged to create a trail that simulates a realistic scenario and not to simply go through the motions with a straight-line drag.