

NAHRA JUDGE'S CLINIC HANDBOOK



Edition 1
January 2002

Preface

This is the first edition of the NAHRA Judge's Clinic Handbook. Production of this Handbook, as well as sponsorship of associated clinics, marks a renewed commitment by NAHRA to maintain a pool of highly qualified judges for licensed retriever field tests.

Although this handbook may provide a useful checklist for existing judges, it is not intended to be a stand-alone reference. Judging the performance of a working retriever is not a simple matter of applying clear-cut rules that can be listed in a book, no matter how large. The process of becoming a fair and impartial judge occurs in a much more dynamic setting, where we learn by doing, sharing ideas with other judges, and sometimes by making mistakes that are not recognized as such until much later. The Handbook was designed as a learning aid for use in a one-day clinic where there will be opportunities to discuss various concepts with the instructor as well as other clinic attendees. Hence, the Handbook is intended to facilitate discussions, rather than to provide the last word on how to judge a NAHRA event.

As with all first attempts, however, this Handbook can no doubt be improved on in many ways. All clinic attendees as well as NAHRA members who happen to obtain a copy of the Handbook are encouraged to suggest changes, additions, or other improvements to the NAHRA office at P.O. Box 5159, Fredericksburg, Virginia 22403 or by sending your suggestions to *Clinic Handbook Editor* at NAHRA@juno.com.

Table of Contents

	<u>Page</u>
Purpose of Judges Clinics.....	4
Judge's Responsibilities.....	5
Becoming a NAHRA Judge.....	6
Accepting a Judging Assignment.....	7
Field Test Planning: The Day before.....	9
Field Test Planning: Morning of the Test.....	11
NAHRA Test Levels in Brief.....	14
Marking Tests.....	15
Blind Retrieve Tests.....	17
Upland Hunting Tests.....	19
Trailing Tests.....	21
Firearm Safety.....	22
Code of Conduct.....	24
Acknowledgements.....	25

Purpose of Judges Clinics

NAHRA's goal is to educate the public in the use of hunting retrievers as conservation animals and to promote the testing of retrievers in simulated hunting situations.

To implement this goal, NAHRA licenses field tests to recognize dogs that perform in a manner consistent with the demands of actual hunting conditions.

NAHRA revolutionized the retriever world by testing dogs against a written hunting standard.

The key to this standardized testing program is the availability of qualified judges to apply the written standards in a consistent and fair manner in simulated hunting conditions.

Thus, achieving the NAHRA goal is dependent upon an organized program to attract, train, and maintain a pool of highly qualified judges. This clinic is the cornerstone of that program.

Judge's Responsibilities

Judging is voluntary, but it is also a serious responsibility. Judges, by their decisions, are in direct control of the future breeding stock of the hunting retriever. Judges have sole jurisdiction of the design of the tests and evaluation of the dogs. The decisions of the judges are final in all matters concerning the performance of the dogs under judgment, as specified by the General Procedures, Regulations and Field Procedures for NAHRA Hunting Retriever Field Tests. It is the Judge's responsibility to insure that all aspects of the test are in strict compliance with the NAHRA rulebook. (*Obvious violations of the rulebook may be reported to the field test committee.*)

- *Know the difference between the judge's authorities and responsibilities versus the FTC's.*

As a judge, you represent the entire NAHRA program to the public and the entrants. It is important to be well groomed and dressed in appropriate attire. Moreover, a judge must be knowledgeable of the rulebook and courteous. Your demeanor as a judge will set the tone for the test, and possibly the entire event.

- *You cast an impression of NAHRA and the host club*
- *You are not there to be everyone's pal - you are judging dogs - Don't let friendships cloud the importance of judging accurately and consistently. Any deviation will bring criticism and diminish the value of the program.*

Judges and club representatives must work together so that the mechanics of the Field Test for all tests (Started, Intermediate or Senior) work smoothly. Clubs must recognize that judges are responsible for the field test. At the same time judges must not make demands that are impossible for the club to accomplish. There may be some things that the club simply does not have and therefore you must work with what is available to accomplish the testing in the best way possible.

- *Judges and FTC's should work together but not be intimidated by each other and should hold their ground regarding pertinent issues.*

If you make a commitment to judge, stick to your commitment. Once you accept an assignment, it is your responsibility to be present and offer fair and unbiased evaluation of each dog's work. You are a NAHRA representative in the field. The dogs, handlers, and the entire program depend on you to uphold the NAHRA standard. After you accept a judging assignment, any withdrawal from that assignment must be submitted in writing to the NAHRA office. Repeated cancellations may result in the loss of your judging license.

- *Standards - not too high and not too low*
- *Withdrawals - Not a well known fact and not enforced mostly because we don't have enough judges.*

Becoming a NAHRA Judge

The first step in becoming a NAHRA judge is to take and pass a written test. A copy of the test is available from the NAHRA office. The NAHRA office will mail results of your test score to you. If you pass the test your Judge's card will be sent to you by mail; however, if you do not pass, you must wait 6 months to re-test.

- *Reference NAHRA Policy document and explain of the proposals for future judging requirements.*

Passing the written test starts you on the road to becoming a NAHRA judge, but becoming a skilled judge requires practice. NAHRA uses a point system for its judges (see rulebook, page 5). Each time that you judge a licensed field test you receive one point in that category (Started, Intermediate, or Senior). Furthermore, a combined total of three points between the two principal judges is required in order to hold a NAHRA approved event. Thus, this system guarantees that each sanctioned event will be judged by experienced individuals.

- *Guarantees?*

To maintain high quality judging at sanctioned events, NAHRA also supports a continuing education program for all its judges. This handbook is the basis for NAHRA Judges Clinics that will be offered periodically by all NAHRA Regions. Each judge is encouraged to attend one of these clinics every three years. NAHRA will maintain a database of current judges, including the number of points earned in each of the testing categories and the date of the last clinic attended by each judge. The Regions must also support this training program by periodically sponsoring Judges Clinics in their geographic area. Everyone in the organization must support this program if we are to maintain the high quality of NAHRA judging.

Accepting a Judging Assignment

When you are approached by phone or e-mail to judge, you should clarify the following:

- With whom are you speaking? What is the name and location of the club that is inviting you? Is the caller a member of the judges selection committee? What is the date of the event?
- Will your expenses be covered? Which expenses will be covered?
- With whom are you judging? Get the phone number of your co-judge and try to determine if you are compatible (Do not accept an assignment without knowing this). If your co judge has not been selected you may ask to be notified before you accept.
- Where will the event be held?

- What are the grounds like? (This may help you plan the type of test you want to set up.)
- How many and what species of birds will be used?
- How much help will be available?
- When do they want you to arrive?
- Who is your contact person?
- Will transportation be available to and from the test grounds?

Look at your calendar for potential conflicts before accepting any judging assignments. Remember that you will have to arrive at the grounds on the afternoon before the test in order to set up the tests. Please do not accept the assignment if you are doubtful about being able to attend.

- *Anyone ever done this?*

Judge's Equipment

You should plan on providing the following items for your judging assignment. The Club may provide some of these items, but you should try to clarify this ahead of time.

- NAHRA rulebook.
- Score book with waterproof sheets and poly bag.
- Pencils and eraser.
- Sunscreen, insect repellent and headache medication.
- Clothing for all four seasons (spring, summer, fall and winter). This includes rain-suit and sunglasses.
- Flagging tape.
- A chair, an umbrella, and perhaps a weather radio.
- *Extras to allow you more freedom to start (i.e. popper gun and poppers)*

Be Prepared!

- Number your judge's sheets (i.e., with dogs' running numbers) ahead of time, and place them in numerical order. This makes it easier to locate the sheet when a dog comes to run or when determining callbacks or qualifiers.

Field Test Planning:

The Day Before

When you arrive, you will meet with the club representatives who will outline the areas, workers, birds and equipment available to judges. You and your co-judge must then perform the following:

- Select the specific location for your test. You may be given the opportunity to select your own test site within the test grounds; however, if you are not given such a choice, try to utilize the grounds that you are assigned.
 - The host committee usually knows the grounds better than the judges and normally has more than one test to accommodate. They will often offer the Senior judges first choice because Senior tests require more room and time than the other tests.
 - If the assigned location is impossible to use, ask the committee for another site, but be prepared to explain why the assigned location is not suitable.

- *If the site is not acceptable, find or ask for another area. This is critical.*
- Set up all tests in strict compliance with the NAHRA rulebook. Any deviation is not acceptable and has the potential to invalidate the test, which would be embarrassing to the judges and to the host club. *This is where a FTC should review and approve of the test prior to the start*
- Discuss philosophies and plan specific tests and the order of the tests, including alternate tests in the event of changes in weather or unforeseen circumstances. *Have a backup plan*
- Consider the sun and likely wind direction the following morning. *What might change?*
- Define the area of the falls for the marks and the parameters for the blinds, upland hunt, and trail.
- **Check for hazards**, inspect the grounds for dangerous objects (glass, tests under water, cactus, holes, briars etc.), and run a test dog if possible.
- Avoid setups where 'trails' will develop to aid later running dogs. *Not a lot of consideration given here.*
- **Locate the gallery**; consider traffic, noise and other distractions. A test layout that allows the gallery and handlers to remain in one parking area for all events will save considerable time. *Work with your marshal closely on these issues!*
- When both judges are happy, make out a wish list for items that are needed and give it to your marshal or club representative. (bird boys, shells, birds, calls, wingers, boats, guns, seats, drinks, holding blinds, bird release, drag line etc.).
- Meet with the other judges and marshals to coordinate between tests for the next day. This is the time to double check the availability of birds, gunners, equipment and workers.
- Review the proposed test setup with the appropriate club representatives to avoid possible conflicts. *This is another chance to avoid problems.*
- REMEMBER, keep the test straightforward. The more complex, the more likely you will be to encounter difficulties. Inventiveness is fun but tricks should be avoided.

☹ DON'T PARTY TOO MUCH

Field Test Planning:

Morning of the Test

- **Arrive early** to meet with the person who organizes equipment and workers.
- Confirm your request for birds, equipment and workers for the day (try to get fresh birds for water). **Don't kill birds in front of gallery!** *Be discreet!*

- Is the wind direction and sun different than you anticipated? Does this require changes to the setup?
- Discuss the first test in detail and let the workers start setting up.
- Discuss your plans for later tests with the Marshal in order to minimize set-up delays.
- Explain each job to your workers in the final stage of the set-up. Do a dry run. *Try to get it right before you run the test dog.*
- Insure that all workers have protective equipment (ear plugs, eyewear) and review firearm safety with all (see **Firearm Safety**, page 22). *Take extra time and care if you are using kids!*

Meet with your test Marshal.

- Explain the need to keep dogs coming – especially with cross-entered handlers.
- **Follow the running order if possible and practical.**
- **Remind the Marshal to check each dog's number as it comes to run and to inform the judges of the number.**
- **Remind the Marshal that he/she is the communication link between the handlers and the judges.**
- **Meet with handlers, give your scenario, instructions on firearm safety, and run the test dog.** *It's a good idea to ask handlers if they see any hazards or rules violations instead of having them go back into the gallery and snipe at you.*
- **Give handlers your expectations for the test:** e.g., the width of the path the dog must stay within during the blind etc.
 - *Also, remember to ask the handlers if they have problems or questions about the scenario.*
 - *Don't over do it and tell them how to run the test.*
- **Begin on Time!** *0800 starting times are usually unrealistic unless the help is there at 0630*

Test Dog

- **A test dog is not required by the rules.** However, a test dog is the judge's last chance to evaluate the test with respect to hidden factors not anticipated during setup. A test dog will let your workers practice the test and may show you subtle difficulties that you can improve before the test begins. *Decide how marks are to be thrown (height, distance, etc.) and what is acceptable, and stick to it. This is your last chance to get it right.*
- A test dog will also allow the handlers to preview pitfalls that they must face when they run their dog.

- The ideal test dog is one that will be proficient, but not necessarily perfect. This is not the time to exercise the judge's dog, and some clubs discourage the use of judge's dogs as test dogs because poor performance may cast the judge or the test in a bad light. *Some clubs actually pre-determine who the test dog shall be.*

Score Book

- The scorebook is used to record the work of each dog.
- It is helpful to have waterproof paper and a large plastic bag to cover the book in rainy weather.
- Always pre-number the pages in your book.
- Always carry a copy of the rulebook.

Scoring

- Scoring concept – each test is scored on a 1-10 basis.
- Be sure of each dog's number – the marshal should call out the number as the dog comes to run.
- Draw dog's course accurately and consistently, and mark important features (e.g., pond edges, islands, etc). Make notes on important details – dog peed on 3 bushes on way to bird, or shots fired at next test, dog stops... needed cast, then went directly to mark, or happy worker etc.
- Carefully watch each throw and the performance of each dog. Be aware of any distraction or circumstance that might cause a dog to be unfairly evaluated. Don't be afraid to stop a test or call a "no bird". Grant a "rerun" if this occurs.
- Confer with co-judge on unusual things that need immediate discussion, but NOT within earshot of handlers.
- Don't assume co-judge has your interpretation. Review scores together for callbacks.

I feel that handlers should be notified that a dog has been eliminated before they leave the line area. Explain! Everyone has the performance fresh in his or her mind at that point.

REMEMBER...

Judges need to think about the location of the gallery and how effective its placement can be for the education of handlers, visibility of spectators, and fairness to participants. The gallery may be eliminated if in the opinion of the judges it will distract dogs under evaluation.

Provide good viewing for the gallery whenever possible but don't compromise the test. You are trying to sell the NAHRA program to any onlookers and this is the perfect way to do it.

Judges should not try to instruct handlers or tell them what they are doing wrong while they are running. Judges need to quietly observe and mark their books, and offer advice only if the handler asks for it later. *Remember however this is a hunting scenario and you are the handler's companion. Helpful hints, particularly in the lower tests will be appreciated and may set a nervous handler at ease. Wait until the dog has finished before stepping in with any advice.*

Don't be afraid to change the test if something goes wrong. Good judging often requires the ability to size up a difficult situation correctly, and either tough it out or adjust quickly if the problem is an aspect of the test, workers, or mechanics. Be flexible; weather and workers aren't always ideal. Callbacks should be communicated through the test marshal.

- *Actually, the rulebook requires that if a dog is no longer in contention the handler be immediately advised of their situation.*
- *Many judges think this is strictly for pick up and not pointed out situations. You will and the handler dropped will feel better at the end of the day by informing them on the spot they have been dropped.*
- *Furthermore, this is really the best time since the infractions, performance, etc. is fresh in everyone's mind. A handler who goes back to the gallery unaware that he or she is out will have a lot of time until callbacks to convince themselves, or have others convince them, that their job was not so bad. This makes your job explaining more difficult after the fact.*

Judges are required to sign all qualifying dog official entry forms (Sometimes the Field Test Secretaries are new and don't realize this.)

When in doubt give the benefit of the doubt to the handler and the dog. You can't fail any dog unless you can point to a specific reason in the rulebook.

NAHRA Test Levels in Brief

These three test levels are discussed in detail in the rulebook, Chapters III, IV, and V.

Started basic tests to get people interested in the program, and offer them a guideline to measure their dog's trained and natural abilities.

Intermediate tests are to encourage people to continue training their dogs and bring them to a higher standard of performance.

Senior tests are for truly finished HUNTING dogs as opposed to Field Trial dogs.

Started	Intermediate	Senior
Five single marked retrieves on land & water	Double marks on land & water	Triple marks on land and water
Not to exceed 75 yards land, 50 yards water	Not to exceed 100 yards land, 75 yards water	100 yards maximum for marks and blinds
"Steady", but may be held	Steady – must deliver to hand	Steady- must deliver to hand
Realistic-basic hunting cover, decoys, boats, etc.	Water blind – 50 yd maximum	Blind retrieves land and water blind, 1 incorporated with the marks
Be reasonable – no tricks	Blind NOT incorporated with marks	Upland hunt with flushed bird – steady to shot and fall
	Upland hunt – no flush	Trailing test
	Trailing test	

Hunting realism and goals in all three tests – remember NAHRA's purpose.

Marking Tests:

Philosophy: A marking test evaluates a dog's natural and trained ability to watch where birds fall and to remember the area of the fall. The rulebook states that "a crisp cast is preferable to a long hunt" (pages 29, 31, 36), but if a dog needs to be handled on all or most marks, its marking ability may be questioned.

The wording here allows for many differing interpretations. There are many ways to assess if a dog has properly marked a bird. Ask yourself is the dog breaking down en route to mark or blowing thru? Did the dog lineup immediately and confidently? Did handler have trouble lining dog up?

Test Categories:

Started 5 single bird marking tests.

Intermediate Land double and water double.

Senior Water triple and land triple.

Setting up a marking test

- Dogs must see the mark well; get down on the dog's level for a look. Be sure that calls and/or shots are sufficient to get the dogs' attention. *Instruct bird throwers what you want and insist on it. Decide what is acceptable.*
- Scent the fall areas before the test dog runs. *Not always performed but it does level the playing field for all dogs.*
 - Potential troubles include: weak throws, straight in or straight back throws, and dark/light birds against a dark/light background. *Decide how marks are to be thrown (height, distance, etc.) and what is acceptable, and stick to it.*
- Beaten down path in cover – very difficult for later dogs – can spoil test. *Try to avoid this by thinking about what will happen to the cover as test progresses and what can you do to prevent dogs from being evaluated differently.*
- Echoes, high wind, noise and other tests can distract dogs. *Think about how to deal with these factors before you start. But you cannot anticipate everything.*
- Flyers - what do they test? Flyers add realism to a test. But they are difficult to use consistently to give each dog the same test. Hence, their use should be carefully evaluated. *Same test? Probably not but try to give a fair evaluation to each dog. Example – FPRC Test.*
- Dog's position: remote or next to handler. Consider the hunting scenario and the dog's ability to mark all birds.

Hunting Scenario

- Explain the hunting situation you are simulating and tell the handlers precisely what you expect.

Scoring a Marking Test

- Straight lines vs. confident, reasonable path to bird.
- *Discuss with your co-judge what you are looking for and know how you will judge various performances beforehand*
- Pinpoint mark vs. thorough hunt in area
- *Some dogs can do a great line but do not mark the depth of the fall – how do you judge this?*

- Fast vs. slow dogs. *Retrieves are not timed but the hunt must be reasonable!*

- Switching vs. passing through the area without a hunt. *Explain the differences.*

- Handling to the mark vs. handling on the mark – **indication of memory**.
- *Don't lose sight that this is a marking test – if you are setting up a scenario where handling on marks is anticipated, then you probably should change it or decide ahead of time what is acceptable work.*
- Handling on marks – How much handling is allowable? Make your thoughts clear to the handlers.
- *This can be one of the biggest mistakes a judge can make!*
 - Be aware of any distraction or circumstance that might unfairly reduce a dog's score.

Blind Retrieve Tests:

Philosophy: **Control is the key factor being judged – the dog must be under handler control.** There are specific guidelines and more information on judging guidelines in Chapter VI of the rulebook

Setting up a Blind Retrieve Test

- Tests to consider: Angle entry, Inside or outside of the marks, Scented areas, Channel
 - Swim by point, Poison bird
- Make sure **handler and dog can be visible** to each other throughout the test.
- **Check from a dog's perspective** for sun or extreme background. *Give LHRA example.*
- Avoid dangerous conditions (e.g., steep ditch banks, beaver cuttings). *Give PIRC example.*
- **Keep gallery quiet and unobtrusive.**

Scoring a Blind Retrieve Test

- **Initial line.** *Handlers need retrievers who take a good initial line and carry it at least to the first point of suction. Handling from your feet all the way to the bird does not cut it. An example would be dogs who take the bank 10 feet or so in front of the handler instead of charging right in. These dogs are exhibiting avoidance (a refusal in fact), which is a control issue that should be marked down. Handlers who, after several whistles eventually get their dogs in the water have not shown nearly as much control and cooperation (on the dog's part) and should not be scored as high as a dog who charges ahead for some distance into the water.*

- **Straight line and staying within a specified corridor.** *A corridor approach is preferred to avoid the laser line mentality. It gives the handler a chance to control the dog in response to suction you have provided (as the judge) within a reasonable area (the corridor which you the judge should have a mental picture of prior to running the first dog). If you have done your job, the dog will get to the edge or out of the corridor one or more times while running the blind. The job of the handler is to control the dog by keeping it within or directing the dog back into the corridor. Channel blinds frame this the best.*
- Number of whistles (distance and degree of difficulty). *There is an anticipated number of whistles, exceeding this is how you determine the overall job.*
- Cast – From the origin, in the field, handling styles and techniques. *Don't try to judge a handler for his methods, only the results!*
- Cast refusal – why? (Blatant refusal, weak cast, single refusal, multiple refusals).
- Whistle refusals – why? Did the dog hear the whistle? (dry grass, running water.)
- Verbal commands (back, sit, over, hear or come, no, dogs name). *Do they count?*
- **Intimidation.** *This is one of the most serious infractions!*
- Would I hunt with this dog?

It is the belief of some that every whistle and cast reduces the score. **If the dog sits to every whistle and takes every cast there should be no significant reduction in score.**

Isolated whistle or cast refusals are acceptable; **multiple refusals usually indicate a lack of control and may be grounds for elimination.**

Judges get too hung up on the numerical value of a refusal should be (i.e. one point, two points, etc.). What was the overall job like?

Hunting Scenario

- Always give a hunting scenario and detail what you expect.

Upland Hunting Tests

Philosophy: Dogs should hunt within **reasonable gun range** of the handler and his hunting companions. Senior dogs should quarter the field **without excessive whistling or handling** while Intermediate dogs should be given more leeway. There is no flush in Intermediate and Senior dogs must be steady to shot and fall. *See the rulebook Judging Guidelines, Chapter VI. What is your interpretation of reasonable gun range? Avoid personal preference here! Dogs that get out and hunt vigorously will get out of range occasionally mostly in response to the factors within the test area. If you scent the field and run into the wind, you are asking for trouble!*

Setting Up an Upland Hunting Test.

- Make sure your vantage point is good.
- Give the dog plenty of room to warm up, and then let the dog show his stuff.
- Choose realistic cover.
- Scent some areas but avoid the **Easter egg hunt** – i.e., too much scent after several dogs. Hunting for scent versus hunting the scent.

- Work into the wind or with the wind? *Potential troubles explain hunting this way. "I always hunt into the wind!"*
- Hand thrown, launcher, or natural flushes? *Natural flush with chukar. Must be a live bird (Virginia example)*
- Fly away or shot flyer? *I prefer shot flyer.*
- Quartering in brace? This is a serious liability in a test format for potential dog fights. Dogs should be fairly evaluated by both judges, which rarely happens in this scenario. Dogs and handlers often interfere with each other's performance. *Best done from a high vantage point where possible. Time constraints often force this scenario with a large field.*
- **Release launcher when dog is within reasonable distance** (dog's safety is a priority).
- **STRESS GUN SAFETY WITH EVERYONE!** *Guns must fire a shot to be a legal test but it should be a safe shot.*

Scoring an Upland test:

- Did the dog hunt vigorously? *Did the dog go out with purpose and intent? Did it stop frequently and look for direction?*
- Did it cover most of the likely areas? *Did the dog seek out the birdy areas?*
- Was it under control and in range – even conspicuously cooperative?
- Was it constantly hacked, encouraged, or held in too tight?
 - *Likes and dislikes or indifference can play into this too much.*
- Steady-to-shot is required in Senior. A dog should be under control when the first shot is fired or should have been fired. The dog may be sitting or standing **with limited movement**. If the dog breaks and is immediately stopped it is considered a minor infraction.
 - *Know the difference between creeping versus controlled break versus a break.*
- Before you score the dog take into consideration the dogs speed relative to the size of the test area, distractions such as wind changes, location of bird crates, judges' position, gallery, scent build up, noise, poor flush, close fall, etc.

Be Fair! A dog that is unfairly evaluated should be granted a re-run.

Providing a warm up area leading into the area of judgement is recommended. Dogs right out of the truck are pretty wired. Give them a chance to get the "wiggles" out!

Selection area is very important. Medium cover dotted with shrubs is a good option. The edge of medium cover or variable cover is another. Make sure you can see the dog or its movements most of the time.

If you are appointed an area by the FTC committee that is inappropriate, insist on another area.

Have the guns walk along or be concealed if stationary. Sometimes the best evaluation is to watch from a distance or "downfield and have concealed guns.

Trailing Tests:

Philosophy: Locating a bird on command. Indicate the origin of the scent trail and then let the dog demonstrate its intelligence in locating a crippled bird. Also see rulebook Judging Guidelines, Chapter VI. *This is the single most independent function that the dog has to perform in a NAHRA test. The dog is under the least amount of control than in any other test. It is also the most critical need of the hunter in terms of conservation and is what makes the NAHRA program unique! Do not just go through the motions. Learn how to judge and perform this test. Handling and hunting experience are of paramount importance here.*

Setting Up a Trailing Test

- Assess the scenting conditions: wind, vegetation, heat, humidity, rain, etc.
- Start the trail downwind or within 45 degrees of downwind and make it long enough to evaluate the dog's ability. Drag in one direction, then make a crosswind turn for the final leg - never double back.
- Live released bird – condition of birds and grounds, also time of day. *This can pose scoring problems so be prepared. You don't know where the bird went and the dog may be out of sight most of the time. So how can you score them?*
- A dragged bird - the most common method of laying the trail. Don't over drag the trail, re-dragging after every third or fourth dog usually results in the most favorable results. You will know when a trail breaks down and if in doubt re-drag or relocate the trail and rerun the dog in question.
- Scenting factors: wet plumage, blood trail, type of bird (male or female).

Without a doubt, the blood trail is the best choice provided a fresh bird is used throughout the test. The individual behavior of dogs is of paramount importance in judging performance. Their behavior will tell you a lot about the job it is doing, how well it is doing, scent recognition, experience, etc.

Explain what happens to a test each time a dog runs through the area.

Explain the differences between dead verses live grasses, forested wetlands verses upland forest, dried leaves, etc.

Scoring a Trailing Test

- Give the dog an opportunity to get the scent in his nose.
- Head up, head down, down wind, close quarter – all can be good jobs.
- Lost Trail? Score the recovery – did dog work intelligently back to the scent?
- Ran like a fool, SOB (stumbled on bird)? Make trail long enough to minimize the chances of this occurring.
- Over scenting, stray scent on your shoes, dog's feet, drag back, wind, etc.
- Did the dog follow some sort of pattern and return with the bird?
- Did the direction of wind affect the dog's performance?
- Would you hunt with this dog?

Give the dog the benefit of doubt, be fair! A dog should be granted a re-run if you feel the trail may have deteriorated in some way. In this case, the score starts over. *Nothing wrong with being sure of what you are seeing. Don't give too many re-runs.*

Firearm Safety:

Three Fundamental Rules for Safe Gun Handling.

- 1. Always keep the gun pointed in a safe direction.** This is the primary rule of gun safety. A safe direction means that the gun is pointed so that even if it were to go off it would not cause injury or damage. The key to this rule is to control where the muzzle or front end of the barrel is pointed at all times. Common sense dictates the safest direction, depending on circumstances.
- 2. Always keep your finger off the trigger until ready to shoot.** When holding a gun, rest your finger on the trigger guard or along the side of the gun. Until you are actually ready to fire, do not touch the trigger.
- 3. Always keep the gun unloaded until ready to use.** Whenever you pick up a gun, immediately engage the safety device if possible, and, if the gun has a magazine, remove it before opening the action and looking into the chamber(s) which should be clear of ammunition. If you do not know how to open the action or inspect the chamber(s), leave the gun alone and get help from someone who does.

Additionally, always follow these NRA Rules:

Know your target and what is beyond. Be absolutely sure you have identified your target beyond any doubt. Equally important, be aware of the area beyond your target. This means observing your prospective area of fire before you shoot. Never fire in a direction in which there are people or any other potential for mishap. Think first. Shoot second.

Be sure the gun is safe to operate. Just like other tools, guns need regular maintenance to remain operable. Regular cleaning and proper storage are a part of the gun's general upkeep. If there is any question concerning a gun's ability to function, ask the gun captain to examine it.

Know how to use the gun safely. Before handling a gun, learn how it operates. Know its basic parts, how to safely open and close the action and remove any ammunition from the gun or magazine. Remember, a gun's mechanical safety device is never foolproof. Nothing can ever replace safe gun handling.

Use only the correct ammunition for your gun. Only the specific gauge and length shell designed for a particular gun can be fired safely in that gun. Most guns have the ammunition type stamped on the barrel. Ammunition can be identified by information printed on the box and sometimes stamped on the cartridge. Do not shoot the gun unless you know you have the proper ammunition.

Wear eye and ear protection as appropriate. Guns are loud and the noise can cause hearing damage. They can also emit debris and hot gas that could cause eye injury. For these reasons, shooting glasses and hearing protectors should be worn by shooters and anyone close to the shooter.

Never use alcohol or over-the-counter, prescription or other drugs before or while shooting. Alcohol, as well as any other substance likely to impair normal mental or physical bodily functions, must not be used before or while handling or shooting guns.

Store guns so they are not accessible to unauthorized persons. Many factors must be considered when deciding where and how to store guns. A person's particular situation will be a major part of the consideration. Dozens of gun storage devices, as well as locking devices that attach directly to the gun, are available. However, mechanical locking devices, like the mechanical safeties built into guns, can fail and should not be used as a substitute for safe gun handling and the observance of all gun safety rules.

POPPER GUNS CAN CAUSE SEVERE INJURY! They must be treated the same as guns firing live ammo.

Gun safety is everyone's responsibility. Judges are responsible for the test scenario but the gun captain has final say on safety. Reset the test if the gun captain has doubts about safety. Don't let an accident happen on your watch.

Code of Conduct

The Field Test Committee of a NAHRA Approved or Licensed Hunting Retriever Field Test, NAHRA Judges, and all participants in such events, shall without any reservation whatsoever follow and abide by all rules, procedures and regulations of the North American Hunting Retriever Association, Inc.; and in addition shall, not condone, tolerate, or allow on the field test grounds or otherwise participate therein.

- a) Any unruly, and/or unsportsmanlike behavior or conduct, or foul or offensive language.
- b) The possession of an open container of alcoholic beverages, or the drinking of alcoholic beverages or the use or possession of substances, with out valid prescription, which are controlled or regulated by federal, state, or local statutes or regulations.
- c) Any unsafe or careless conduct that could endanger other persons or their property.
- d) Any activity, which is not in the best interest of, or discredits, the North American Hunting Retriever Association, Inc., or its Licensed or approved Field Tests.
- e) Any illegal activity prohibited by any federal, state, or local statute, ordinance or regulation.

Any person found to be in violation of the foregoing shall be immediately removed from the club grounds or Field Test grounds.

The Field Test Committee for an Approved or Licensed Field Test shall have the authority to decide by its majority vote any matter that may arise during the running of the test. All such decisions may be reviewed by NAHRA and cancelled or amended. The Field Test Secretary shall submit to NAHRA a complete report of any action taken by either the Field Test Committee or the Judges. Any club, organization, or individual hosting a NAHRA Approved or Licensed Hunting Retriever Field Test and found to be in violation of the foregoing may be subject to disciplinary measures from NAHRA.

NAHRA reserves the right to take any additional measures it deems appropriate, which may include but shall not be limited to expulsion from and/or denial of the benefits of NAHRA.