

NATIONAL SHOOT-TO-RETRIEVE FIELD TRIAL ASSOCIATION

JUDGING GUIDELINE

**This does not replace the NSTRA Rule Book*

OPENING

This guideline has been developed to assist you with your understanding of the standards by which birddogs are to be judged in NSTRA sanctioned field trials. The guideline is also the basic document by which new NSTRA judges are certified and seasoned judges are re-certified. It is important however to note that this guideline does not replace the current NSTRA rulebook.

As you read through the guideline and/or listen to an instructor present the material you will note that many times the instructors will talk about severity of a fault or a defect in a dogs work. A good judge knows and understands birddogs. They understand when an error is the result of an accident or was done intentionally. The good judge has the ability to quickly determine if an error is characteristic of the breed or the result of a physical defect. Wind direction and scenting conditions are important factors to be considered as well as other issues. In other words there are many factors that a judge must consider and reflect in a score that is applied to a piece of work.

In the guideline we have attempted to point out the positives as well as the negatives in each of the scoring categories. We have also attempted to categorize the defects and faults.

You as a judge should strive to learn and understand the NSTRA system of judging and scoring so that equal application of the rules will be applied to all who participate. The guideline is also designed to assist NSTRA members to become better handlers and as such all handlers should recognize when a judge has done a good job and compliment them on it.

Your NSTRA National Officers

PURPOSE

The purpose of a training conference is to enable each of you, as a judge or prospective judge, to gain a better understanding of the rules and their application as they cover some of the many instances that occur while judging – some will be covered in our rule book – and some will not.

The guidelines presented in this document, are not the opinion of one person or one committee, but the result of many, many hours of discussion amongst many seasoned judges.

Judging with the number system is probably the most difficult method of judging bird dogs, although we feel that it is by far the fairest method of determining a winner on any given day. Therefore, when you take a judging assignment, it is very, very important that you give each dog and handler your complete attention for the length of time you are judging them. As a judge, you must give each handler the respect due them; you have absolute control and power in your hands for a limited time. It is your duty to be honest, conscientious and courteous to the participants under judgment in each brace, and your attention at all times must be focused on this dog/handler team, by not allowing your thoughts stray to the previous brace or the previous trial.

We cannot stress to you too strongly, the need to use your common sense in the judgement of a bird dog. No person can stand before you and tell you precisely what number to put on each piece of work. You will be given the general guidelines to work from, and hopefully, you will apply them to the very best of your ability. Consistency in your opinion and interpretation of the rules is an absolute necessity if you are to be a competent qualified NSTRA judge. We realize that all will not completely agree with our feelings on the scoring application, but we do expect you to judge with these in mind.

With regard to the rules in our rule book, some of the wording has been changed to make the rules read more clearly, and to correct obvious mistakes made when the original book was printed, such as omissions, incomplete statements or confusing wording, to make them more beneficial to you, as members, and now, particularly as judges, and to meet the needs of the current times.

Remember, as a judge you are not in the field to hurt the dog or handler with regard to score. When pertinent questions are asked, particularly by those who may be running for the first time, be considerate enough to give a response. You need not give an elaborate explanation, but common courtesy should prevail. You are not there to help them increase their score by providing information regarding the location of the birds, but when a piece of work is not scored, or a questionable situation arises, a brief explanation will do wonders toward insuring the success of NSTRA trials.

The reason for this conference is the explanation of the rules. To bring prestige to NSTRA as a qualified bird dog association, we must strive for top quality dog work, while not reaching the limits of professionalism. We do feel if there is no difficulty factor in training a dog and placing him in a trial, we will never be looked upon as a top-flight field trial association. Dogs that do sloppy work and without class, will be scored accordingly.

Please remember our scoring is from 0-75 (or 100). We intend for you, as judges, to use the full range of numbers allowed. If a dog is deserving of a 50, use this figure to judge him. If he is deserving of a 95, then use this number. The entire range is for you to use.

We hope you will enjoy your training conference and that it will be helpful to you in understanding the rules as set forth in our rule book. We are all members of NSTRA for one reason – the same reason you will be attending a conference, to improve the sport of field trialing with consistent and fair judgement of our dogs, and we all care a great deal for this sport. It will help each and every member if we will all make every effort to work together and make the best field trial association even better

NSTRA JUDGING PROGRAM

NEW JUDGES:

1. Must be a member of NSTRA for six (6) months.
2. Must be a minimum of 18 years of age.
3. Must attend a Judge's Conference and earn at least an 90% score on the written Judge's Test.
4. Field test and use of a judging tape is optional.
5. An applicant seeking a new judge's card must pass #1, #2 and #3 and serve as an apprentice, with an experienced judge, for a minimum of eight (8) braces. The apprentice shall be issued a scorecard for each brace he will judge (with experienced judges) and shall be responsible for submitting said card, initialed by the experienced judge, to the Region President. When a minimum of eight cards have been submitted, with satisfactory acceptance by the experienced judge, the Region President shall submit a Verification Form to the NSTRA office, which shall issue a judge's card at that time.
6. Application for a new Judge's Card shall be completed within six (6) months from the date of attendance at the first Judging Conference (to include apprenticeship).
7. Judge's card shall be issued for a three-year period.

JUDGE'S MAINTENANCE:

1. Judges should actively judge six (6) trials in a three-year period.
2. A judge will be notified three (3) months in advance of the date of expiration date of their card. A judge must attend a Judge's Conference and earn at least an 90% score on the written judge's test approximately three (3) years after their initial certification. Their card will be updated for a three-year period from the date of conference attendance (upon receipt by the NSTRA office of the Verification Form from the Region President).

Judges who are designated, as instructors will automatically be considered to hold tenure certifications provided they conduct a judging conference at least once in a three-year period.

3. Should a Judge knowingly serve as a trial judge after expiration of their card, they will be subject to disciplinary action.
4. Should a judging card expire, the individual must attend a Judging Conference and earn at least an 90% score on the written test to be reinstated as a Certified Judge (no apprentice braces required).
5. Should a judge's membership dues lapse, upon receipt of annual membership dues payment; the individual will be reinstated provided they had attended a Judge's Conference or participated in the tenured judge re-certification process within a three-year period (no apprentice braces required).

GENERAL INFORMATION:

1. Expiration of a Judge's card is three (3) years after attendance at a Conference or successful completion of the tenured judge re-certification process.
2. A Judging Committee consisting of the national officers and other members assigned and as required, with a National Officer as Chairman, shall be responsible for certification of new judges and conferences for existing judges (said certification for both may be done at the same conference).
3. Judging instructors are those members appointed by the chairman who are responsible for conducting judging conferences using the guidelines provided by NSTRA. These representatives shall be responsible to the Chairman, who shall report to the elected officers.
 - a. Judging instructors are not assigned by a region quota rather they are assigned to fulfill the needs in a particular geographical area of NSTRA.
 - b. Region Presidents may request that a particular member be considered as a judging instructor.
 - c. A qualified NSTRA judging instructor may go to any area to conduct a judging conference as requested by a region president.
 - d. The President of the region hosting a judging conference or other region officer as designated by the region president will attend all judging conferences to assist the judging instructor.
4. Regional Elimination Trial Judges shall be those best qualified.
5. Championship Trial Judges shall be those best qualified and will be selected by the elected officers.
6. The Region Presidents shall be responsible for completion of the Verification Form with regard to conferences held within their region and the submission thereof to the NSTRA office.

***Revised 10/04**

THE FIND

Score: 0 – 100

POSITIVE FACTORS

Exceptional style
Steady during interference
Extreme intensity
Hard slam point
High and intense during flush attempt
Good game location
Works scent intelligently

NEGATIVE FACTORS

Flagging
Lack of intensity
Creeping
Roading
Stepping
Low tail or front
Lying down
Looking around

FINDS

What we are looking for in a find is for the dog to work the scent intelligently, aggressively, but carefully, point the bird with style and intensity yet without endangering a flush.

The find consists of two parts: the first is the scent contact and the second is the point.

SCENT CONTACT

What we are looking for in scent contact is when a dog hits the scent, how he handles it. The dog comes in, plus or minus five feet, pins the scent and spins to a stop. It's pretty easy to get him to 95 or 90 plus, if he is flawless and makes no other mistakes.

What about the dog that contacts the scent out further? How does he achieve his 90 plus work? What you want to see when a dog contacts scent further out is for the dog to intelligently work the scent and stop within a reasonable distance of the bird. If this happens to be 30 feet or so away from the bird, some dogs may make a cast out and come in and point and style up nicely, others may throw their head up and cat walk up the scent trail a little and point, and yet other dogs may zip up real fast and point. The point is, whether the dog stops within five feet, seven feet or eight feet, it is a good piece of work. However, in your mind, you want to see the dog point where you consider it to be a reasonable distance away from the bird, not endangering a flush.

How close the dog stops to the bird greatly depends on the scenting conditions. Some dogs will point anything (false point), and then they get a little bit loose. This is not necessarily a good piece of work because the dog may have been disciplined so many times that it will point scent whenever he smells it and does not really give the handler good location on the bird. In your mind, how he handles scent should be a good percentage of whatever his overall score is.

When scoring the dog, you must bear in mind one thing: if you don't have your eyes on the dog when he actually made his scent contact, you have lost part of your judging of the find. That is why it is critical for a judge to stay in view of the dog at all times. You don't necessarily have to push him out of the field; you have to get to the vantage points in the field.

If the dog has to pick up scent on the ground, chances are his head will be a little bit lower than when he points on a nice day when the scent is coming across in the wind. Head position, sometimes (even though it may be a little lower than other times) might not always be a detriment on how you score the dog.

Whether the dog is trailing or winding the bird he still should stop a reasonable distance from the bird. Don't try to pin down reasonable distance because, again, that depends on the scenting conditions for the day.

Roading can happen two different ways. Roothing up on a bird is a term we have used to define when the dog advances past where you feel he should stop and point without endangering the bird to flush. It can also happen if he makes full scent contact, establishes point, and then moves up on the bird. You could call this creeping or roading.

To summarize:

- (1) Your eyes are always on the dog
- (2) The scoring of the dog begins not when the handler calls point, but when the dog makes scent contact.
- (3) Roothing of the bird is a dog advancing past where you felt the dog should have pointed
- (4) From the scent contact to the point will vary upon the scenting conditions, whether the dog is winding the bird or whether he is trailing it
- (5) The score should be affected positively if you have a dog that hit scent 30 feet out, moves in aggressively and points a reasonable distance from the bird. One that plods up the scent trail, even though he stops at a reasonable distance, should be score lower accordingly.

THE POINT

The first thing on the point is a dog's style. A high head, high tail and intensity are the basic ingredients of style. High tail is from 10:00 to 2:00 o'clock and really should not greatly affect the dogs score. You will have some dogs that point differently than others. If you have two identical pieces of work, everything else being equal, the dog that looks the best to you, with the highest head and tail, should receive the best score. Not all points can be the perfect point. A dog can have good style and be in an awkward position because of the way he was traveling when he pointed the bird. A dog that is tracking will probably wind up with a little lower head (as scenting conditions diminish, the head will almost always lower). A dog that is running hard when it comes across the scent and gets all crossed up should not be cut for style, as long as he is really intense. Where you want to start lowering the score for style is when the dog has lowered his head or tail for no apparent reason. You should cut him on his style when he is standing loose, not intense, and if he has dropped his tail or head.

There is a big difference between a dog that is loose and lowered his tail than one that has an intense tail that is constructed low on his rump. Some dogs may have a low constructed tail and if it's up and tight, then it's good intensity on his part: but, if it's drooping down and showing no intensity, you should cut his score. Don't chop his head off because he has a low tail set. However, you want to see a nice intense tail to give a high score.

A loose rump, flagging during point and flush, shows lack of intensity and should be downgraded severely. A little tail wagging and then styling up should be downgraded a little bit, but not cut badly. You will see many, many types of flagging. (*A dog is working a bird and trying to find it. Scenting conditions are bad and he is getting closer to the bird. The dog may be working his tail and when he comes to a point, the tail is still going a little bit, but suddenly stiffens up.) That should not be cut hard, but you have to admit the dog that did not do that deserves more credit than the one that is still wagging when the handler walks in front of him.

Creeping, walking and steps: Creeping is defined as an advancement with intent to flush the bird or get closer after point has been established, with no reason. In other words, a dog that is creeping, whether it's ten feet back or two feet, should be cut hard, especially if the handler has to whoa the dog in order to stop him from creeping; or dog has established a pointing posture and isn't happy with it: he has good location on the bird and he creeps. Two of those steps are worth a lot more minus points than a dog that took a couple of steps because he had a poor location on the bird. Steps can come in many different situations. The difference between creep and steps is: a dog is creeping after he has the bird pinpointed and is greedy and unbroken. He wants to flush the bird himself. Steps, on the other hand, can happen if the dog is off balance or a bird has run off and he relocated himself slightly. These are still minus points, but there is a difference in severity of points. A broke dog takes no steps under any of these circumstances. A step is a definite downgrade. However, creeping, whether it is one foot or ten feet from the bird, should be downgraded much more severely than a step. *Roading happens prior to the point.

Lying Down: Lying down should be down scored severely, as well as sitting down. Here are a few kinds of lying down. When a dog points a bird and his feet come out from under him and he just jammed it and froze on his belly. You won't see that too often because most of the time the dog will style on up. Another kind of lying down is when the closer they get to the bird, the lower they get on their belly and the next thing you know, they are down. That is a sloppy piece of work and should be downgraded severely.

Head Movement: Turning the head slowly to see the handler coming and then back to the bird, with all other intensity good, should be a slight downgrade. Continual looking around, with lack of intensity, definitely should be a severe downgrade. A lot of times a dog is on point, and the judge comes up too

close behind him and the dog turns his head. The score should be cut only a point or so for this type situation.

Lack of Intensity: Lack of intensity is seen in young and untrained animals, old dogs that are bored with the situation and confused dogs as well as others. Lack of intensity should be down scored severely.

Steadiness or intensity: No movement always deserves the highest scores. If the dog stands there loose, he does not deserve to be scored anywhere close to the dog that is on an intense point.

Flush Anticipation: Many dogs will crouch in anticipation of the flush. A dog should be cut slightly if he has a nice point and when the handler goes to flush, he crouches a little bit. That's a slight chop.

An outside factor you might consider when judging a find is interference. If the other dog comes in and steals his point and your dog stands there, doing a good job, you might consider an upgrade. Other factors such as long and difficult flushes may be an upgrade, as well as walking birds and many other situations.

Find What If's

1. Dog is lying down on point. Handler picks dog up and styles dog up. What do you do and/or say?

*Score the dog, but very low, and advise handler not to do it again because next time, you will not score the find and he will be required to remove the bird for no score..

2. A dog is on point and the handler cannot locate the bird. The handler asks the judge for permission to relocate the dog. Do you lower the pointing dogs score because it was relocated (penalize the dog)?

There are several factors that the judge should consider before penalizing the dog. We identify good game location as one of the positive factors to be considered when scoring a find. If a dog is so over trained that it stops on point several yards from the bird and the handler has to relocate the dog so that it will move closer to the bird to give better location the judge should view that relocation negatively.

If however a dog points a bird within what the judge considers a reasonable distance that should give the handler good location on the bird but yet the handler cannot find the bird because of factors such as heavy cover, poor scenting conditions, rain, or just simply cannot find the bird. In this case the dog did its job and therefore should not be penalized.

Note: Relocation is a continuation of a piece of work. Scoring does not stop and start with each relocation.

3. Dog A is hunting in front of Dog B. Dog A slams to a point ahead of Dog B. Both dogs are on point and Dog B did not have opportunity to back (no backing score)

Handler of Dog A attempts to flush unseen bird. Judge has told handler of Dog B to hold his dog. Dog A handler continues to attempt to flush unsuccessfully. Handler A tells judge he wishes to relocate, which he does. Dog A runs around in general area and points. (All this time, handler of Dog B is holding his dog.) Handler A is still unable to produce bird. Handler A asks to relocate again, which he does. (This could – but should not – go on for the entire brace.)

****DO NOT ALLOW TO GO ON FOR ENTIRE BRACE; HANDLE AS FOLLOWS:****

*a. Require handler of dog B to hold their Dog for up to three (3) minutes. Require handler of dog A to relocate after two (2) minutes unless the dog was relocated before two minutes were

up. After one (1) additional minute, if Dog A is still on point, give Handler B the option to leave the area or continue to hold his dog.

*b. If Dog A relocates on his own at anytime and/or Dog A is moving when the time on dog B is up, turn it dog B loose: open bird for either dog.

*c. If Handler B leads Dog B off 50 yards or a reasonable distance, releases him and Dog B immediately returns to situation area and:

1. Dog A is relocating and Dog B goes on point, the find belongs to dog B.
2. Dog A is on point and Dog B backs score dog B for the back.

*Let's assume that Dog A is pointing and there is no Dog B around, it can be relocated for the entire brace on the same bird. If dog A is relocating and Dog B shows up and points the bird while Dog A is still relocating, it is Dog B's bird.

WHO' S FIND IS IT?

Situation #1

Dog A makes scent contact and is working a bird when dog B comes into the area and begins working the same bird and steadies up on point before dog A. A few seconds later dog A establishes point. The handler of dog A says that their dog made scent contact first therefore the find belongs to them. The handler of dog B says that their dog established point first therefore the find should be scored in their favor. Who's find is it?

The find belongs to the dog B because it established point first. It is true that the scoring of a find begins with scent contact but as we note in our judging guidelines there are two parts to a find, which are scent contact and the point. A dog that completes both parts is scored for a find after a bird is produced. In the example above dog B completed both parts before dog A.

Situation #2

Dogs A and B are working the same scent and dog A establishes point just ahead of dog B. After three seconds dog A breaks point and leaves the area. The handlers have not yet arrived in the area and no flush has occurred. Who's find is it?

A dog may not relocate on its own. Dog B remained on established point and is therefore credited with the find.

A dog that takes steps should not be confused with one that has relocated. A relocation is when a dog breaks point and goes into a hunting mode.

Situation #3

Dog A points. Dog B sees him, comes into the area and moves ahead of him and points. Dog A leaves the find (breaks point). Who's find is it?

Neither dog receives credit for the find. Take the bird out and credit no find. Dog B will also receive zero (0) on back. The judge should give dog B a warning for interference and advise the handler that the dog will be picked up if it interferes one more time. If the interference is the second for dog B the brace should be stopped, dog B picked up and replaced by a standby dog.

THE FLUSH

After a bird is pointed the seasoned judge knows that the next important step in scoring the find is the flush. The flush must be accomplished by the handler/gunner using their foot to cause the bird to leave it's resting place or by the presence of the handler/gunner approaching the bird also at times a bird may flush it's own at which time rule # 3 under finds in the NSTRA rule book will apply. Throwing an object such as a hat, shotgun shell, golf ball, etc. to cause the bird to flush is not permitted. Like wise the use of a gun barrel to prod the bird so it will flush will not be permitted. The pointing dog must not be in motion when the flush occurs. Many dogs will anticipate the flush by crouching in anticipation of the bird taking flight but they must not be in motion.

On days when it is raining or damp and the birds are having difficulty flying we still require that an aggressive attempt to flush the bird be made. This action will enable the judge to see the reaction of the dog when the attempt to flush is being made. After the flush attempt is made the judge can then instruct the handler to throw the bird for a scored retrieve.

Our judging techniques #10 tell us that "when the handler is having difficulty in locating the pointed bird and you see the bird, tell the handler. The dog has already proved he found a bird and you are not judging the handler". Keep the trial moving.

RETRIEVES

SCORE: 0 - 100

POSITIVE FACTORS

Quick location
Quick pickup
Blind retrieve
Snappy return
Easy release
Water retrieve
Length of retrieve
Tender mouth
Interference

NEGATIVE FACTORS

Trouble locating bird
Slow pickup
Hard mouth
Indirect return
Unwilling to release
Unwilling to search for dead bird
Rolling bird in mouth
Loose mouth
Drop bird

RETRIEVES

What you are looking for is a dog that marks the game down well, aggressively runs to the downed bird, picks it up quickly with a tender mouth, and returns it to the handler aggressively, with pride and with a willing release.

The main things on a retrieve are how fast the dog goes to the downed bird – on a direct line – and how quickly he picks up the bird, the tenderness of the retrieve and his speed or quickness back to the handler once he has it.

When the dog gets to the handler, judge the ease of the release. In other words, he ought to open his mouth and lay it right in the handler's hand or hold it for the handler to take. If the dog starts turning it's head away from the handler, a minus factor would be in order.

All retrieves are not going to be perfect and some of the reason will be the thickness and height of the cover, possibly scenting conditions, etc. He will have difficulty locating the bird by sight and he will try to scent it. There are a lot of things that can determine your scores on those retrieves. Example: you have a point and the man goes to flush the bird. Two birds come out. The handler shoots one bird and the dog takes off after the second bird. It's obvious he is going to have to do something to get that dog back. Part of that is going to reflect in your obedience score; however, the handler has to do something, by voice command, by arm movement or throwing an object in the direction of the downed bird. This should be reflected as a blind retrieve.

Other factors: some other factors that can upgrade a retrieve would be interference. It can be by another dog, a horse, etc. The score should not be cut because of an interference call. The distance of a retrieve can be reflected in a score. A man may cripple a bird and it goes across the field with the handler possibly losing sight of it, but he stays in place and the dog finally returns with it, in which case the distance of retrieve would probably come into consideration. Also, an exceptional water retrieve should be given special consideration with the distance as well as the water being considered.

Other points you should be looking at are heat and the effect on mouthing the bird. How fast the dog picks up a bird depends on how high the cover is. If there is really thick grass and the bird is all the way down in the bottom, he is likely to have a mouth full of grass or weeds. He is going to have a hard time picking up the bird. Crippled birds will be hard for a dog because they have crawled down in the bottom of weeds/grasses and are trying to get away from the handler. It may be a slower pick up, but it is not the fault of the dog.

Retrieve What If's

1. Dog goes for a retrieve and starts back with bird. Points another bird. Handler cannot get dog to break point to retrieve bird he has in his mouth. Handler goes over to flush bird, kills bird, dog retrieves bird (or both at same time).

1. Does he receive credit for both retrieves?

*Yes – handler receives an average for the first retrieve and a scored retrieve for the second.

2. A crippled bird is pointed by the retrieving dog after the find has been scored. The bird is considered dead once it has been scored on. Score should be: Slash

3. A dog is on established point. Gunner flushes two birds; shoots one dead, but the dog begins chasing unshot bird. The dog catches unshot bird and makes a nice retrieve. Do you score the retrieve?

*Yes. The dog did accomplish retrieve.

4. A bird won't fly.

Can it be thrown for a retrieve? Yes If an adequate attempt to flush has been made and permission granted by the judge.

Can the handler kill the bird before throwing? No the judge cannot let the handler intentionally kill the bird.

Note: When the judge gives permission or requires that a bird to be thrown for a scored retrieve, the judge is to advise the handler not to kill the bird. If the handler then still kills the bird and in the judges opinion the handler intentionally disregarded the judge's direction the judge may withhold the retrieve score.

Retrieve- Average, Slash, Zero, or Score? We still are hearing of instances in which scores of average or slash are being awarded when dogs are confronted with birds that will not fly at flush or which will fly only a few feet. In some cases trial placements have been affected by improper scoring of the retrieve. Refer to your rule book page where it states "birds that cannot fly may be thrown in the air to get credit for a retrieve". A bird that moves only a few inches or feet at flush should be thrown for a scored retrieve. If in the opinion of the judge the bird has flown far enough for a scored retrieve but remained to low and close to the dog there should be an average awarded. Birds that are intentionally flushed (kicked) toward the dog or judge should be thrown for a scored retrieve. A handler may request that they be allowed to throw a bird for a scored retrieve and it is up to the judge as to whether or not to allow it, however in the above circumstances the judge should require that the bird be thrown whether or not the handler makes a request to.

A dog that has no opportunity for a retrieve, i.e. handler misses the bird (unless the dog catches it and brings it to the handler, in which case the retrieve is scored), the dog could not see the bird dropped, or some other unusual situation occurs, should be awarded a slash.

A zero is awarded when the dog finds the downed bird and refuses to pick it up or fails to bring it to within three feet of the handler. Do not confuse this with a dog that points a crippled bird as described in number 2 above where a slash is awarded

AVERAGE RETRIEVES

Question: If a dog has one or more finds and all average retrieves. Does the judge give the handler a chance to throw a bird for a scorable retrieve other than an average?

Answer: Yes. The dog would receive score awarded for all retrieves.

WET BIRDS

Question: It is a wet day and the birds cannot fly upon attempting to flush. The dog advances and picks up the bird. What retrieve score is awarded?

Answer: The dog will not receive an average retrieve. The judge should tell the handler to throw a bird for a scorable retrieve.

BACKS

SCORE: 0 – 75

POSITIVE FACTORS

Backs immediately upon sight of pointing dog
Intense style
Remains intent until handler reaches him
High head and tail

NEGATIVE FACTORS

Lack of intensity
Flags
Lays down
Low tail, low in front
Looking around
Roading or creeping on back
Breaks and relocates, takes steps

BACK

We are looking for a dog that spots a dog on point, backs immediately with good intensity, and is styled up. He should look just like he would on point. If he points with a 10:00 o'clock tail, to be called a real good back, he shouldn't be loose or flopping his head. If he is going to get a good score on a back, he should perform the back immediately when he sees the pointing dog. Make sure that you know, as a judge, that the dog has seen the pointing dog. There are instances where you cannot be 100 percent sure. If the dog is hunting with his head down toward the ground and really searching hard, maybe he has not seen the pointing dog. You start scoring a back immediately when you know the backing dog has seen the pointing dog.

If you know, in your mind, that the dog has seen the pointing dog and he has started his back, has been there a second or two and then breaks, goes right on in and takes the bird out, the dog should be scored a 0.

Some handlers think you cannot score a back until it is called. That is a misinterpretation of the rule book. You can judge a back without it being called. If the judge is out of sight of the handler when the dog backs, then the pointing dog breaks point, the judge could score the dog. You do have the right, as a judge, to score a back when you know he has started a back and gives you a starting place to score on.

Example: The dog comes in and makes a real good back, say a 70. About the time he has been there five seconds, suddenly he turns around and starts to leave. His handler may be back about 15 feet and he stops here. In this case, you have no back. The score is a zero. The reason he stopped the second time was when he saw the handler, he knew he had made a mistake. You start cutting the dog when he lacks intensity, flags, lays down, has a low tail or head, looks around, breaks and relocates, creeps or roads the back.

There are degrees of severity in each of the negative factors associated with the downgrade of your scoring, and you must strive to understand them in order to give a fair score.

Some of the minor things that can take a few points away from the dog is turning his head just to see the handler coming to take hold of him. This is not a really severe penalty. If he continues to flop his head and gets a little loose, then he has much more of a cut coming. This is a different situation than checking the handler. You have to cut his score but be very careful that you do not crucify him because he wanted to know what was behind him.

Distance should not really have much bearing on whether you score the dog 70 or giving the same score to a dog that is backing more closely. If the dog stops immediately when he sees the pointing dog and he

is 15 feet from him, all else being equal, he deserves the same score as the dog that is out 50 feet. In that same light, if the dog 15 feet away takes one or two little slow motion steps, and the dog out 50 yards takes two or three slow steps, the really close dog should probably be cut more severely than the dog farther out. This dog was close enough to know exactly what he was looking at and maybe the other dog had a few weeds or obstacles in his way, not allowing him to get as good a view of the pointing dog.

Judges should be alert for "situation backs" that is a dog that appears to be back it's bracemate but after a closer look it becomes evident that it was backing a water bucket, horse, ATV, etc. In this case the dog should be given another opportunity to score a back provided of course that it had not received a zero previously.

Backing What If's

1. Dog A scents and points a bird. The bird is flushed by the handler but goes marked for one reason or another. Example: Handler whoaed his dog. Dog broke prior to flush. Dog A points a bush in vicinity of marked bird with only 2 minutes elapsed. Judge tells Handler A to take the bird out. Dog B backs. Handler of Dog A attempts to flush, but cannot locate the bird. Three minutes are now up. Dog A breaks point without being relocated by his handler. Dog B is released by his handler and moves in and points the bird.

Does B score back – Yes

Does B score find – No (bird was declared dead when Dog A pointed the marked bird
(Note: Don't overlook possibility of two birds in the area)

2. Dog A points. Dog B sees him, comes to the area and moves ahead of him and points. Dog A leaves the find (breaks point). You should:

Take bird out and credit no find; also zero (0) on back

3. Dog on point. Handler cannot flush bird in two minutes. Handler is holding backing dog. Handler of pointing dog relocates after one minute – cannot flush bird, but pointing dog does not move. Backing dog is released and points bird in front of pointing dog (which has not moved at all).

1. Does backing dog get find? No not if pointing dog does not move

4. Handler whoas dog so his bracemate can get a back.

1. Does he receive credit for back? No

5. Dog appears to back bracemate. After pointing dog's bird is flushed, backing dog is released, steps forward three or four feet and goes on point.

1. Does he receive credit for back? No – dog was pointing bird

6. Dog is running in trial with side by side fields. He backs dog in adjoining field.
1. Does he receive credit for the back? No – all scoreable work must take place between the two dogs in competition with each other in their field.
7. Dog points. Bracemate backs. Pointing dog breaks point and goes on immediately.

Does he receive credit for a back? Yes

How long must he back before receiving credit? Long enough for the judge to consider that a back was established.

Dog A points. Dog B backs. When does time start on the backing dog?

Time starts on backing dog WHEN IT BACKS.

What if Handler A is not to Dog A within two (2) minutes to attempt a flush and/or relocate?

When the handler of dog A arrives they will be given an opportunity to flush the pointed bird before being required to relocate their dog. The judge should exercise good judgment regarding the amount of time the handler of dog A is given to attempt to flush the bird.

8. A dog is in the process of making a retrieve and spots its brace mate on point. The dog backs its brace mate before completing the retrieve. You should:

Allow the handler of the backing dog to advance and hold their dog and score the retrieve by awarding an average.

9. Dog A is hunting in front of Dog B. Dog A slams to a point ahead of Dog B. Both dogs are on point and Dog B did not have opportunity to back (no backing score)

Handler of Dog A attempts to flush unseen bird. Judge has told handler of Dog B to hold his dog. Dog A handler continues to attempt to flush unsuccessfully. Handler A tells judge he wishes to relocate, which he does. Dog A runs around in general area and points. (All this time, handler of Dog B is holding his dog.) Handler A is still unable to produce bird. Handler A asks to relocate again, which he does. (This could – but should not – go on for the entire brace.)

DO NOT ALLOW TO GO ON FOR ENTIRE BRACE; HANDLE AS FOLLOWS:

*a. Require handler of dog B to hold their Dog for up to three (3) minutes. Require handler of dog A to relocate after two (2) minutes unless the dog was relocated before two minutes were up. After one (1) **additional** minute, if Dog A is still on point, give Handler B the option to leave the area or continue to hold his dog.

*b. If Dog A relocates on his own at anytime and/or Dog A is moving when the time on dog B is up, turn it dog B loose: open bird for either dog.

*c. If Handler B leads Dog B off 50 yards or a reasonable distance, releases him and Dog B immediately returns to situation area and:

3. Dog A is relocating and Dog B goes on point, the find belongs to dog B.

4. Dog A is on point and Dog B backs score dog B for the back.

*Let's assume that Dog A is pointing and there is no Dog B around, it can be relocated for the entire brace on the same bird. If dog A is relocating and Dog B shows up and points the bird while Dog A is still relocating, it is Dog B's bird.

OBEDIENCE

SCORE: 0 – 75

POSITIVE FACTORS

Comes when called
Stops to flush on command
Whoas on command
Works in front of handler
Works well on dead bird command
Works well on marked bird
Moves out when commanded
Checks back with handler

NEGATIVE FACTORS

Fails to back
Fails to whoa
Does not work in front
Chases meadowlarks
Chases other dogs
Fails to check with handler
Gets busy when called
Spending time out of bounds

OBEDIENCE

What you are looking for is a dog that works with and for the handler. He should respond to the commands when given.

When the dog leaves the line, normally it has but one thought in mind 'find the bird'. Chances are, it won't hear a command at the initial release even if one is given, and, consequently this is not a good place to judge obedience. You are going to have to get deeper into the brace and begin to get a feel for how the dog is responding to the handler's commands.

To get the top score, he should respond immediately when he is called. A place the obedience score can be used is, if a handler needs to whoa a dog. If he doesn't whoa, that should reflect on the negative side of his obedience. If a bird flushes and it's a marked bird situation coming up, the handler should be able to call the dog off and the dog respond quickly. This would be good on his obedience score. If he is around another dog or they get involved and the handler can separate them, going off in a different direction, those are things you look for. How well the dog responds to the handler is what obedience is all about. The negative thing is if he won't whoa, it's the reverse of what we have just discussed. This is a negative. If he cannot get the dog back in due to a distraction that might occur in the field, lack of response should go on the negative side of his obedience score. If the dog comes in or the handler brings him in and he won't back, that can reflect somewhat on the negative side of obedience.

Regarding correction, you cannot allow abusive correction of a dog. You can't have a handler picking up a dog and whipping it, kicking it, stomping on it or picking it up and throwing it on the ground. If any of those things happen, he is out of the field trial. Have him pick up his dog immediately. If the handler is abusing the dog, the score on obedience is a zero and he is out of the field trial. There is no other action in that instance.

It is permissible for a handler to get hold of a dog's collar to calm him down. It is going to reduce his score, but you are better off to have a man do that with the dog than to have one that is disobedient and disrupting the brace. If the handler can bring him under control, your job is going to be easier, and it's going to be a better brace. If a man gets hold of a dog and takes him away from the work, it is permissible. It shouldn't be a zero; don't pick him up for that mild correction.

Another thing that can gain a handler a good obedience score is if the dog is working bird scent on a marked bird and he can get him out of the area easily. This is a sure sign he is an obedient dog. You need to weigh how bad is the bad and how good is the good in each incident and to balance out what kind of score you put down. If he responded well 80 percent of the time, you should not cut his obedience

score in half. If a handler happens to have a marked bird and wants a dog to hunt that area, responding to his command, this is a good place to pick up the positive and negative. When the clock stops, the score stops. The only place there is any variation of that is the one minute in a find we allow after the brace time has expired. When you say time is up, you quit judging.

If a dog is out of the field ten minutes, he is picked up. If he went out of judgement at 20 minutes into the brace and did not return, he is not scored. He receives a zero. The way our rule book reads, if the dog is out nine minutes and 45 seconds, then he is not totally disqualified. You may give him a five or a one or nothing on obedience, even zero, but he would not be disqualified from the trial. We cannot stretch nor shorten the brace length. Obedience throughout the whole trial should be any negative or positive response to a command. When you get a handler who can't keep quiet, this is an area you are going to have to cut when the dog does not respond. You need to explain to your handler he needs to be quiet if he does not like the low obedience scores.

If a handler makes a major correction, you have to make him pick up his dog and give him a zero. If a dog is hard driving and strong running, yet responds to numerous commands during the brace, he should receive a good obedience score. A dog a short distance from the handler should respond immediately; however, distance should not give a dog the right to disobey a command. How much you cut on his obedience should be relative to the severity of the distraction. A handler might have to shout at him three times to get him off a bird he is chasing. This is much harder than if he is just making a cast and the handler wanted to bring him back around, shouting at him three times. He was much more disobedient when he is fighting his natural instincts; he had a lot of distraction and therefore the cut should not be as severe.

If the dog is responding to commands, whether the man is over-handling or not, the dog is obedient. As long as the dog responds you can't cut him if the handler is inexperienced or over-handles. It is when the dog ignores the handler's commands that his score will suffer. What about the man who can't handle his dog: he just walks around in the middle of the field and never says a thing the entire 30 minutes? If a man hunting in the field chooses not to use verbal or whistle commands, does the dog hunt in front of him? He makes a left turn and the dog goes right 300 yards and doesn't ever come back around, even though he isn't called. Look at him as being disobedient. If a man changes directions and the dog never responds, your only alternative in this case is to apply obedience for scoring purposes. When he does have a find, if the handler has to whoa him, he keeps creeping, he is being disobedient at that point; also, if the handler has to call him in for a marked bird or into an area to hunt for a bird, and he does not come, he is being disobedient. If a dog came in for a back, or refuses to back and the handler starts giving him a whoa command, he is being disobedient if he does not whoa. Obedience – zero obedience does not mean automatic pickup; zero obedience does not mean you do not score. Every other category is still intact unless the dog is picked up. **If a dog is scored zero in obedience by one judge it receives a zero for the entire brace.**

Obedience What If's

1. A dog is out of bounds. Should you allow the handler to shoot his gun in order to bring the dog in?

No. You would be allowing the handler to use a training aid.

GROUND COVERAGE

SCORE: 0 - 100

POSITIVE FACTORS

Quick and thorough search for birds
Quartering the wind
Sharp, classy movements
Working in front of handler

NEGATIVE FACTORS

Pottering ground scent
Running – not hunting
Out of bounds
No enthusiasm/Slow pace
Not covering field thoroughly
Continually urinating
Continual return to handler

GROUND COVERAGE

The things we are looking for on ground coverage is a dog that aggressively covers the ground and does not leave too many holes in his pattern. You are looking for a fast, snappy dog.

A dog that is released at the line and just lays his ears back and runs clear to the other side of the field is not exhibiting good ground coverage. We have to remember we are not talking about ground race: we are talking about ground coverage.

We want a little style. It is much more pleasing to see a dog carrying himself with style and snap. You can go overboard on any of these points, but we are not looking strictly for what a lot of people think is just an old meat dog. We are looking for something that can be used to hunt and do more than just run.

Some dogs, you have to take into consideration, have a different way of getting over the ground. Some do a little trailing; some do it strictly by wind. Take these things into consideration when scoring this category.

A factor that may take away from a dog in ground coverage is when he keeps running back to the handler; the next three minutes, he has to stop and relieve himself and he is doing a lot of fiddling in between, spurting and hunting. That dog isn't going to get as good ground coverage as the dog that is searching the field the full 30 minutes. On scoring, a dog is going to have to be busy all the time, and he is going to have to be looking for birds. One way you can tell whether a dog is just out there running or if he is actually hunting birds is if the dog runs, never stops, never turns and comes back, like he is checking bird scent. He may be running, but he is not necessarily hunting.

Don't take ground coverage lightly. We aren't really thinking a lot about it, and then all of a sudden we come to the end of the brace and think, "I have to write something down for ground coverage". We grab a figure out of the air and write it down. You must pay close attention and be alert throughout the brace.

A bad situation occurs if you turn two dogs loose and one dog is continually running and harassing the other. That dog isn't hunting; he is out for a good time.

It's natural for a dog to slow his aggressiveness when he's working scent. Don't let this influence the score.

Another negative factor mentioned is line running. The dog just runs a line with no particular objective. He isn't really searching for game.

A dog should be quick and snappy, showing a strong desire to find birds. He should maintain a good steady gait throughout the brace and stay busy for the full 30 minutes.

Non-competitive dogs: A judge who is confronted with a dog that is non-competitive, i.e. one that is "boot licking", one that playfully follows its brace mate around the field, etc. should be replaced with a stand-by dog after accumulating ten minutes of non-competitive activity. Non-competitive dogs should be treated the same as a dog, which accumulates ten minutes of out of bounds time.

In addition to the above, a dog which, for what ever reason, is held out of competition by its handler for a period of ten minutes (cumulative) should be replaced with a stand-by dog. An example of such action would be a dog that is held in one part of the field by its handler therefore "giving the field" to the other handler.

Judges should be alert of those situations described above and handle them accordingly. Remember our goal is to keep each brace as competitive and fair as possible for all participants.

General What If's

1. Bird out of bounds is flushed in bounds by dog or handler – How do you handle it:

1. Mark for 3 minutes
2. Dead for the brace – take the bird out if possible
3. Other

*#2 – Dead for the brace – take the bird out if possible

2. Is any bird a judge sees fly into the bird field, from out of bounds, scoreable if he came into the field on his own?

*Yes – provided that he was not flushed into the field from an adjacent field trial. Mark for three (3) minutes if no adjacent bird field is being used.

3. Gunner calls safety after firing two shots. He is using and over/under.

1. Safety?

*No safety – if gun is empty. However, if the handler has reloaded his gun and the bird flies back by him, a safety could be called.

4. Handler sees bird walking out of bounds, and the handler walks it back in bounds.

a. Is this allowed or disallowed?

*Disallowed – judge should tell handler/gunner to take bird out for no credit.

5. A dog breaks loose from the gallery, enters the bird field causing a nuisance to a working dog. What do you do?

*Stop the trial and remove the dog

6. What do you do if you see a bird on the ground and assume the handler has also seen it?

*Pass by and say nothing.

GENERAL:

WHY MARKED BIRDS?

Most often marked birds are associated with a dog that runs over a bird causing it to take flight. But why do we mark the bird?

NSTRA field trial rules are written so that the field of competition is kept as fair and equal as possible for all participants in the trial particularly the two dogs in competition in a given brace. When a bird takes flight in the field of competition for any reason, other than when it takes flight as the result of a scored find, it is marked for three minutes. Both handlers are notified that a bird has been marked and they are told the general vicinity that the bird sat down in (provided of course that the bird stayed within the established boundaries of the field trial). The only exception to the marked bird rule is a bird that takes flight on its own after it has been pointed as a scored find by one of the two dogs in a brace. In this case the bird becomes a scored on marked bird and is dead for the brace, provided of course the bird is not retrieved and stays in bounds.

When the three minutes are up both handlers are notified that the bird is open to competition. The judge should not at this point say anything else with regard to the location of the bird that was marked. Judges should not lead handlers to the area of a marked bird.

In the same spirit of fairness a bird that a judge sees fly into the field on it's own from an out of bounds area shall also be marked for three minutes. In this situation both handlers are also told the general vicinity where the bird is located.

Birds that have been scored on are marked dead for the remainder of the brace and should be taken out if convenient. A scored on bird is one that has been scored as a find for one of the two dogs in competition and stayed in bounds after the flush but not retrieved. The judge should mark the area in which the scored on bird sat down. Should a dog point a bird in the marked area the handler should be instructed to flush and kill the bird. Should a second bird be pointed and produced in the same area by either dog it should be scored.

When the brace time expires the judge(s) should pick up any markers used to mark scored on birds during the brace. After the brace time has expired **NO** birds are to be intentionally removed whether marked during the brace or not.

WALKING BIRDS

NSTRA judges know that if they see a walking bird in the field they are to pass by and say nothing.

What about birds that are seen walking in the field in close proximity to the gallery area? Again the bird should be left alone.

Let's say that the bird walks out of bounds in the area of the gallery and someone in the gallery or even a dog causes the bird to move back into the field. If a judge or field marshal sees that the bird was forced back into the field it should be marked dead for the brace and taken out if convenient. Note: Anyone who intentionally chases a walking bird from an out of bounds area back into the trial field should be cautioned that their interference can not be tolerated and is subject to disciplinary action.

If it can be ascertained that a bird found out of bounds in the area of the gallery is one that should be considered dead for the ongoing brace, it should then be removed. Removal should be done so as not to

disrupt the ongoing trial. In any case the field marshal should be consulted prior to the removal of any bird in the out of bounds area.

COLLARS: Some handlers are using the wide red collar in addition to their regular collar. It has been ruled that only one collar can be worn while running the brace. Judges will advise the handler to remove one of the collars; it will be their choice as to which one they want to remove.

SCORING

As stated earlier, judging with the number system is probably the most difficult method of judging bird dogs. No one is capable of telling you what exact score to put on your score card, but if you know your dogs, the rule book and these guidelines, it will be easy to determine what the dog deserves.

Listed below is a suggested method of helping you to determine an appropriate score.

These scoring ranges are intended to aid new judges by providing them with a starting point for scoring pieces of work. As the new judge gains experience they will begin to fine-tune their scoring. The important thing is for the judge to be consistent throughout the trial with their scoring. Use the entire range of scoring (0 to 100 or 0 to 75). If both judges work as a team and are in the same scoring range throughout a trial, it will make little difference, if any, if the scoring range varies a few points one way or the other.

FIND – RETRIEVE – GROUND COVERAGE (0 – 100)

IF YOU OBSERVE AN EXCELLENT PIECE OF WORK IN ONE OF THESE CATAGORIES, THEN SCORE IN THE RANGE OF 80-100

IF IT IS A GOOD PIECE OF WORK, THEN SCORE IN THE 60-80 RANGE.

A FAIR PIECE OF WORK SHOULD DESERVE A SCORE IN THE 30-60 RANGE

POOR WORK SHOULD BE IN THE 20S AND VERY POOR WORK SHOULD BE SCORED 0-20

OBEDIENCE – BACK (0 – 75)

IF YOU OBSERVE AN EXCELLENT PIECE OF WORK IN ONE OF THESE CATEGORIES, THEN SCORE IT IN THE 60-75 RANGE.

IF IT IS A GOOD PIECE OF WORK, SCORE IT IN THE 40-60 RANGE

A FAIR PIECE OF WORK SHOULD DESERVE SCORES IN THE 20-40 RANGE

POOR WORK SHOULD BE SCORED IN THE 0- 20 RANGE.

These are only Guidelines and only you can determine what the correct score should be. This booklet is a Guideline only and does not replace the RULE BOOK.

“REMEMBER ONE FACT:”

“YOU CANNOT SCORE WHAT YOU CANNOT AND DO NOT SEE”

BIRD HANDLER CREED

I PLEDGE TO:

Bring my gloves and bird box (carrier).

Be at the site 30 minutes before starting time.

Check the 4-wheeler for gas and oil and other maintenance it may need.

Check the birds to make sure I have enough and they are where I need them.

I UNDERSTAND:

I am the most important person at the trial and all eyes are on me.

That I must deceive the spectators as to where I have planted the birds.

That I must not create a pattern as I plant birds.

I WILL:

Ride the field aggressively, but in a safe manner.

Dizzy the birds using the established method.

Track the field 20 minutes before the first brace.

Be ready and on the 4-wheeler with birds, two minutes before the end of the current brace.

TO THIS PLEDGE, I SET MY SEAL:

JUDGING TECHNIQUES

1. Have a current copy of the Rule Book with you while judging a trial.
2. At least one judge and/or the field marshal should observe the bird planter during planting.
3. You should be prepared to start judging the dogs when they leave the starting line, until they are picked up. When a brace becomes boring is when you get lax and problems occur.
4. It is always to your advantage to use two-way radios for judging purposes.
5. You should position yourself to be able to observe all dog work at all times. It does not require you to push the dogs, but you do need to be able to observe all dog work.
6. Each day and each brace is new: don't get in the habit of remembering what a dog did yesterday.
7. You should use the full range of the scoring system and not establish a standard figure.
8. You should always keep the handler informed if there is a question whether a piece of work was or was not scored.
9. When a handler is attempting to flush, position yourself where they will have the safer opportunity to shoot.
10. If the handler is having difficulty in locating the pointed bird and you see the bird (walking after it has left its resting place), tell the handler. The dog has already proved he found a bird and you're not judging the handler.
11. When you have a handler that is objecting to the way you are judging their dog, just warn them to continue handling their dog.
12. Should a question arise during a brace, judges should confer with each other and attempt to settle any questionable situations before leaving the field, and before the next brace enters the field.
13. You should refrain from carrying on a conversation with the handler; only respond to their questions.
14. Judges should switch as close to the halfway point of a brace as possible, but with at least ten (10) minutes left in the brace. You should never switch unless you have each dog in sight and never when scoreable work is occurring.
15. You should be aware of running in the bird field and be consistent in the enforcement of this rule.
16. The rule book states that a judge may hold the backing dog, at their discretion. If it will speed up the waiting, it will always be to your advantage to hold the backing dog.
17. You should always score your bird work when it occurs and not leave anything to memory.
18. You should be attentive and considerate of participants and dogs. Refrain from making negative remarks about the handlers dog other than those necessary to explain a low score.
19. When serving as a judge, keep in mind you're the NSTRA representative and your actions will reflect on the image of NSTRA.

Perceptions: As judges we must always make every effort to avoid the perception of any wrong doing. Ensuring that we judge each dog during each brace for as close to fifteen minutes as possible will most certainly help to avoid any perception of favoritism.

Judges should not select which dog they would like to judge at the beginning of the brace rather the field marshal should make that determination by handing each judge their folded scorecard with their assigned dog on the up side.

Field marshals should be alert for dogs, which belong to family members of the judges, dogs that come from kennels operated by judges, etc. Dogs such as the aforementioned should be assigned to the other judge for the first part of the brace. Judges should advise the field marshal of any assignment given them that may place them in a conflicting situation.

HORSEBACK JUDGING TECHNIQUES

1. Before the trial starts an effort should be made to ride your horse around the field so that it will have an opportunity to become familiar with you being on its back.
2. During the trial present water to your horse at frequent intervals.
3. Make your horse understand that you are in charge.
4. Remember that your horse will be working for several hours. Run it sparingly.
5. Keep dog in sight but stay with handler as much as possible.
6. Stay far enough from handler so that if horse spooks or kicks handler will not get injured.
7. If you are dismounting to hold a backing dog be sure to keep hold of the reins or have knowledge that the horse will ground tie.
8. Do your best to keep dogs in sight but refrain from charging off of the line like the "Lone Ranger" as much as possible. If Dog is all over the field move horse from vantage point to vantage point to keep dog in sight until handler catches up to dog.

ATV JUDGING TECHNIQUES

1. A judge can see more from an ATV if much of their time is spent standing on the foot pegs rather than sitting down.
2. Stay close enough to the dog so that it can be seen when making scent contact but yet far enough away so that the engine noise does not keep the dog from hearing its handler.
3. When the dog is on point stop the ATV a reasonable distance from the piece of work, turn the engine off and walk into the area to complete judging the find and retrieve.
4. Make every effort to keep your ATV in the pre-tracked areas of the field to preserve the cover as much as possible.
5. When dog is in sight, stay in one spot with engine off. Restart engine and relocate to other vantage point as necessary then turn engine off again. Keep engine off as much as possible to eliminate noise so you and handler can hear.
6. Do not allow handlers to ride on ATV during brace.
7. Do not idle along behind handler as you would on a horse. Engine noise is a problem.
8. Some handlers train off of ATV's. Be aware or watch for a dog that is handling in front of your ATV instead of his handler. If you observe this stay as close to handler as possible.
9. Care must be taken not to "push" a dog while following. You may run the dog right out of the field.
10. Do not follow a dog out of bounds with the ATV. Stop at the boundary line at a point where the dog can be seen if it re-enters the field. Shut the ATV engine off. ATV engine noise may interfere with a handler's ability to call his dog back into the field.

Handling from an ATV during NSTRA Recognized Field Trials

Rev. 04/25/12

The following guidelines are provided to assist both the judges and the handler with the safe and proper operation of an ATV by a handler during a NSTRA recognized field trial.

1. An ATV may only be used if its use is not in violation of any state or federal laws pertaining to land use.
2. The use of an ATV shall not, in any way, create an advantage to the handler.
3. **The handler shall not stand on any part of the ATV, at any time, for any reason, while handling a dog.**
4. The handler will be responsible for providing the ATV.
5. The ATV shall be operated in a safe manner at all times.
6. No ATV may be used that operates at a noise level above that of the original equipment muffler.
7. Any handler using an ATV shall be required to have a gunner who is on foot.

Exception: Those members who request permission to use an ATV may also request that they be granted permission to take the gun from the gunner and flush and shoot for themselves. The gunner may only give the gun to the handler after they are off the ATV.

Requirements: The handler must make a decision at the beginning of the brace as to whether they will shoot for themselves or not and notify the field marshal who will advise the judges. Once the handler makes the decision to shoot for himself or herself they must do so for the entire brace. The gunner then becomes a gun bearer and pacer for the ATV. The gunner may not discharge the gun for any reason. The gunner must remain at least 15 feet to the side or rear of the handicapped handlers ATV while the ATV is in motion and may only approach the handicapped handler when the handicapped handler's dog has established point.

8. At no time shall the speed of an ATV be faster than the gunner.
9. There will be absolutely no talking or other communication between the handler and the gunner.
10. The dog must retrieve to the handler who may remain on the ATV during the retrieve or leave the ATV to receive the bird from the dog and then hand it to the judge. The handler must remain within 5 feet of the ATV. The handler must immediately return to the ATV.
11. A handler must stay beside his bike unless he is involved in a find, retrieve, back or relocation.
12. The speed of the ATV engine (rpms) shall not in any way be used to create an attraction or distraction to either of the competing dogs. Engine speed shall at all times be kept to a minimum.
13. Should an ATV fail during a brace, the brace shall continue. The gunner shall take over the handling of the dog at such time as the handler notifies the judge that he cannot continue to handle the dog from the ATV. The handler shall remain seated on the ATV until the brace is completed, and must remain silent for the remainder of the brace and shall not in any way handle the dog. The handler shall not continue to attempt starting the ATV. The ATV shall be removed from the field upon completion of the brace.
14. The dog that backs shall be held by the handler, in accordance with NSTRA rule Find: 11 and 12; Back: 1,2,3,4,5 and 6.
15. Should the handler fail to obey the instruction of the judge, the handler will be instructed by the judge to pick up his dog, and a standby dog will replace him in accordance with NSTRA rule: Pick-up, 1.
16. If the handler creates an unsafe situation or uses the ATV to gain an unfair advantage in the field trial, the judges may suspend him/her from that trial or take other action not inconsistent with NSTRA rules. The judges shall have the right to determine, in their sole discretion, if the handler has created an unsafe situation or has used the ATV to gain an unfair advantage. The placements of a recognized field trial shall not be disturbed in the event of a protest to the National Board of Directors from the judges' decision. The only remedy shall be a refund of the entry fee, if the Board of Directors

disagrees with the decision of the judges.

17. The Board of Directors shall have the authority to permanently revoke a handlers variance from the NSTRA walking policy when it has been determined that the handler has created an unsafe situation or uses the ATV in a manner to gain an unfair advantage in a recognized field trial.

I understand that I have been granted a variance from the established walking policy of NSTRA. I have read and understand the above rules pertaining to the use of an ATV during recognized field trials and I agree to obey them. I understand that my failure to follow the above rules may cause my variance to be revoked. I further agree to hold NSTRA, its officers, directors, landowners and all other participants harmless from any liability that might arise as a result of my operation of an ATV during a recognized field trial.

Signature of member

Date

Revised 04/25/12

Use of Speed Governors/Regulators While Handling Dogs from an ATV

- 1- Handlers will be responsible for all costs associated with the acquisition and installation of a speed governor/regulator. NSTRA will not cover any expenses related to this.
- 2- Handlers have the option of using a governor/regulator or may continue to use a walker, if they so desire. If this is the case, all existing guidelines for the use of a walker will then remain valid.
- 3- The allowable speed by an ATV using these instruments shall not exceed four (4) miles per hour. The ATV must be in low gear.
- 4- Marshalls or trial chairman will check the device prior to the brace in which it is to be used to grant approval.
- 5- Guns, whether it is a single barrel, single shot, double barrel, over and under, side by side, or semiautomatic will be unloaded at all times while on the ATV. This means absolutely no ammunition in any of the chambers at any time. Handlers must load their guns for each find and fully unload them prior to getting back on the ATV.
- 6- If a judge observes a gun being carried on an ATV not fully unloaded, handler will be asked to pick up his/her dog.
- 7- Guns will be carried in an approved gun rack in the front of the ATV, not on the handler's hands or lap. In states where state regulations require that guns carried on an ATV be contained in a gun case, state regulations shall be observed, and will prevail. It is the responsibility of the handlers to be informed of the regulations of the state in which they are competing. It is recommended that regional officers be knowledgeable of their state's regulations and make their members and other competitors aware.
- 8- A judge's discretion regarding the speed of the ATV shall not be questioned. If a judge believes that an ATV is exceeding the allowable speed he/she will give one warning to the handler. The second warning will result in the handler being asked to pick up his/her dog. This is regardless of who approved, and when the device was approved for use. A judge's decision is final.

Additional responsibilities for Championship Trial Field Marshals:

- 0 Arrange for bye dogs in accordance with the particular Championship trial guidelines.
- 0 Ensure that the bird field is cleaned before and after each day's competition.
- 0 Ensure that the winner of any championship trial has demonstrated it's ability to back at some point during the competition.
- 0 Assist the trial chairpersons in completing the drawing for successive rounds of each championship trial.
- 0 Prepare score cards and score sheets for successive rounds of each championship trial.
- 0 When possible, assist the trial chairpersons in assembling tote bags or any other gift packages to be given to the participants.
- 0 For each Championship Trial where a Calcutta is conducted, the field marshal is responsible for all record keeping, collection of funds, and preparation of funds for disbursement.
- 0 Display sponsor banners, sponsor board, literature, and gifts at trial grounds.
- 0 Complete all required field trial reports.
- 0 Maintain radios as needed.
- 0 Ensure bird planter and judges are present and ready.
- 0 Ensure that horses are ready.
- 0 Announce dogs and handlers.
- 0 Inform trial chairman of potential problems.
- 0 Be present the day prior to the start of the trial to ensure completion of all pre-trial responsibilities.

Dog Handlers: The handler designated at the time that a dog is drawn for a trial must be the one to handle the dog in the trial unless the field marshal, prior to the brace participants being placed in the blind, has approved a change. In the past there have been cases where a handler was listed for a particular dog but yet was changed to the owner when it came time to enter the blind. In many cases it was apparent that the practice was being used to avoid the possibility of two particular dogs being drawn together for the same brace.

Trial ground boundaries: It is the responsibility of the field marshal and judges to establish definite boundaries within which a NSTRA sanctioned field trial is to be held.

Field trial drawings: NSTRA rules for recognized field trials provide that if a person enters more than one dog he or she will not be drawn to run subsequent braces. It goes without saying that the dogs entered by one person cannot be drawn in the same brace. Likewise a handler who is handling dogs for more than one person cannot be drawn to run in the same brace.

The preceding paragraph defines the only instances when dogs may not be drawn to run in the same brace. Dogs registered to different members of the same family that are entered in the same trial may in fact be drawn to run in the same brace unless as noted above they are being handled by the same person.

PULLING DOGS AFTER DRAWING

QUESTION: A member has two dogs, A & B. He enters dog A in a trial Saturday and Sunday, single both days. After the trial has started on Saturday he tells the chairman that he wants to pull dog A and run dog B instead on Saturday but will still run dog A on Sunday. The chairman asks why and the owner says that there is no medical reason and would just rather run dog B instead of dog A. Is this allowed, to pull a dog at will provided that you have another dog in your name to replace and do not re-enter dog A in the same trial?

ANSWER: Absolutely not. The NSTRA rulebook states “ Owners or handlers running more than one (1) dog must run the dog drawn in the brace specified. Any change due to sickness, will be at the discretion of the field marshal.”

*Any dog withdrawn from a trial shall not be re-entered in the same trial. However, the owner may substitute a replacement with another dog he owns, at the discretion of the field marshal.

Even though the rule speaks to owners/handlers running multiple dogs, it is intended to apply to all dogs entered in a trial. It would be unfair to allow owners/handlers running only one dog to pull their dog from a trial for any reason while at the same time only allowing the owner/handlers of multiple entries to pull a dog only in instances of sickness.

The key to the rule is “Any change due to **sickness**, will be at the discretion of the field marshal.” The field marshal has control of the trial. When a owner/handler pulls a dog for sickness it is up to the field marshal to determine where the replacement dog is to come from, be it from the owner which has pulled the dog, from the paid standby list or use a non-scorable bye dog. The field marshal has the option to allow the owner/handler to replace a dog that he has pulled from a trial due to sickness but is not required to do so.

The above addresses dogs that are pulled from trials after the drawing has been conducted. Trial entries, which are canceled before the drawing, are addressed in the rulebook on page 31, paragraph 8.

Brace Times

Occasionally we hear of trials wherein handlers are permitted to leave the field before the brace time expires. NSTRA requires that all braces be completed in the field. Our rulebook requires that all brace times be thirty minutes duration. The only two exceptions are when a fifteen-minute run-off is conducted to settle a tie or the final one-hour braces conducted at Championship or Regional Elimination trials.

In National Championship or Regional Elimination trials where more than one round of competition is held in one day it is important all dogs spend the same amount of time in competition.

Bird Releasing

We should all agree that releasing birds for our trials is a full time job and should be regarded as one more important than that of the judges, field marshal, trial chairman, etc. Our Trial Chairmen should ensure that they only engage bird handlers who have demonstrated the ability to perform the job effectively and safely.

Bird handlers should be methodical in their approach to their job. The idea is not to race around the field on their ATV not caring if the released birds stayed in the field or not. A pattern should not be established that might be followed by the handlers. The entire field should be used ensuring that the birds are released in different locations over the entire field for each brace and at the same time releasing birds on the boundary lines should be avoided. Releasing the birds in a straight line should be avoided at all times. The bird handler should be ready on the ATV with birds, two minutes before the end of the current brace.

Above all the bird handlers should perform their function in a safe manner so as not to endanger themselves or others.

As a reminder, while the birds are being released the field marshal and/or one judge must observe the action as it takes place.

CLARIFICATION:

There exists some confusion pertaining to unregistered dogs participating in NSTRA trials. Therefore we wish to review and provide an interpretation of the rule.

A dog must be eligible to be registered or be registered with a recognized registry to receive placement in any NSTRA trial an/or Region Elimination or Dog of the Year Trial.

INTERPRETATION: There is no question pertaining to dogs that are already registered, only those that are eligible to be registered. For a dog to be eligible for registration means the owner has registration papers in hand.

NSTRA recognizes the NSTRA, AKC (American Kennel Club), FDSB (Field Dog Stud Book), and CKC (Canadian Kennel Club).

INTERPRETATION: The CKC was approved and added since the printing of this rule book. NSTRA only recognizes those breeds of pointing dogs that are recognized by the AMERICAN FIELD.

Owner having dog registration pending will be responsible for documenting all placements.

INTERPRETATION: When a dog places, NSTRA expects the owner to immediately complete the registration and furnish the National office with a registration number.

No placements will be recorded until the registration number is forwarded to the National office (AKC, FDSB, or CKC).

INTERPRETATION: If NSTRA has not recorded a placement (which we will not until a registration number is received) the dog does not have a placement and is not qualified to participate in a Regional Elimination Trial.

SUMMARY: NSTRA is aware that some owners desire to run a certain dog to determine if they want to continue to trial this particular dog. NSTRA has no problem with this as long as this dog is eligible to be registered, keeping in mind that this means papers in hand.

When this dog places, NSTRA expects the dog to be immediately registered with a number submitted to the National office.

Until a registration number is received in the National office, then no placement is recognized by NSTRA. Remember, if no placements are recorded then the dog is not qualified for any Regional Elimination Trial.

A HANDLER WHO CANNOT COMPLETE A BRACE

We all know what to do when a dog for whatever reason cannot complete a brace, bring in a standby dog. What about a handler who cannot complete his or her brace?

The situation should be treated the same as a when a dog cannot complete a brace. A standby handler should be brought in to complete the brace. The standby handler may, with the owner's permission, handle the existing dog in the field or may bring in a standby dog. In any case the dog belonging to the handler who is coming out of the field is no longer in competition once the handler is replaced by a standby handler.

EIGHTEEN OR TWENTY-SIX DOG TRIAL?

There appears to be some misunderstanding in some regions of the association regarding the break point of trial entries with regard to points, which are awarded.

For example: a trial chairman has twenty-six entries and conducts the drawing. On the day of the trial one dog drops out for one reason or another. Some believe that if the trial is run with only twenty-five paid dogs plus one bye dog, points will only be awarded based on the eighteen to twenty-five dog range. Therefore on the day of the trial the chairman tries to find a paid entry to replace the dog that has dropped out. Note: the owner of the dog that has dropped out does not have a dog to put in as a replacement.

First, points are awarded based the number of dogs drawn for the trial (in this case twenty-six dogs drawn). Secondly a trial chairman may not solicit paid entries for the trial after the drawing has been completed.

