

**NSW**

**RETRIEVING TRIAL JUDGES'**

**TRAINING NOTES**

**By Paul Hamson**

## Foreword

These notes have been assembled for the purpose of assisting aspiring NSW Retrieving Trial Judges. They are general in nature and are a combination of reference to the prescriptive elements of the rules and the personal opinions and experiences of the author. It should be noted that these notes are not distributed or endorsed by DOGS NSW as an official training aide.

Whilst it is impossible to address every possible scenario or consideration that aspiring Judges will face, it is hoped that these notes will form a basis for Judges to be able apply sound informed principles to their future judging appointments.

I would like to thank all the Judges who have assisted me in developing these notes and in particular Wayne Pohlke for his sound advice, Ray Temple for his assistance in the training and assessing of NSW Judges, and Noel Eltringham and Elio Colisamone for being kind enough to provide some written notes which I have included in this document.

Aspiring Judges should also be aware that The “Archive” section found on the Home page of the “Retrieving Australia” website contains helpful information posted by experienced triallers and Judges including Bob Tawton, Karl Britton, Peter Betteridge and Joe Law. Candidates are encouraged to read and consider these articles.

Judges should remember that trials are held to determine the merits of Gundogs in the field under conditions as close as possible to those found whilst “*hunting*”. Judges should strive to set runs that allow them to assess the traits, both natural and trained, that they would expect to find in a high quality working Gundog.

Judges should always remember that it is essential that all competitors are, and are seen to be, treated fairly.

Please note that not every Judge will agree with the opinions expressed in this document. Judges have a large degree of discretion in how they judge and provided they comply with the rules, varied opinions are acceptable and an integral part of the sport. Candidates are strongly encouraged to seek alternative opinions, advice and assistance from other experienced Judges and to then form their own opinions.

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# NSW Judges' Practical Examination Assessment Criteria

## **Safety of Handlers and Dogs Considered and Managed**

- Safety of handlers - access to and from the control area, position of firing point etc.
- Safety of dogs – land and water hazards, excessive heat or cold etc.
- Gun safety – communicated, monitored and enforced

## **Instructions and Communications Clear and Effective**

- Clear and effective communication and instructions to Stewards, handlers and observers

## **Logistically Sound**

- Position of car parking area, gallery, waiting area, access between runs etc.
- Time management – set up runs, conduct runs, coordinate Stewards etc.
- General run design, position of the control point, firing point, throwers, hides etc.
- Position of sun, direction of wind, terrain, water, water entries and exits etc.
- Marks visible, reasonable delay between throws, consistent area of fall achievable etc.
- Blinds possible to do (at least in theory) on initial line - dog visible until area of fall etc.
- Other run elements - double rise, two bird, double fall, diversion etc. logistically sound

## **Rules Applied Consistently**

- Demonstrated sound knowledge of rules and applied them in design and conduct of runs
- Inquiries, disputes, unforeseen events etc. managed in accordance with the rules

## **Scoring Consistent**

- Scored in accordance with the rules - consistency between competitors demonstrated
- System used was logically sound and resulted in competitors being correctly ordered

## **Safety of Persons**

- Consider slip and trip hazards for competitors moving between the Holding Blind, Control Area and Firing Point
- Consider slip and trip hazards at the Firing Point
- Consider the safety of Stewards accessing throwers, Blinds etc.
- Enforce gun safety – no live rounds or blanks (primers only), gun broken when not being fired, not pointed at persons, secured in a vehicle when not in use and returned to club officials on completion of the stake

## **Safety of Dogs**

- Inspect the route from the firing point to the area(s) of fall for serious hazards e.g. wire, wombat holes, sheer drop-offs etc.
- Ensure water entry and exit points are safe and achievable
- Ensure dogs are not required to swim where they could be swept into culverts
- Be aware of the risk of dogs being swept away in fast flowing water
- Be conscious of the risk of swimming dogs for long periods in extreme cold
- Be conscious of the risk of running dogs for long periods in extreme heat
- Be aware of the potential risk of foot injuries to dog running along stony river-beds or through hard ploughed paddocks etc.
- Show competitors steep drop-offs close to the firing point so that they can assess where they will send their dogs from

# Instructions and Communication

## Stewards

Judges should provide clear instructions to Stewards. Typical matters to be communicated include:

- The logistics and sequence of the run including the:
  - Location of throwers, Blinds, Area(s) of Fall, Double Rise, Diversions etc.
  - Sequence in which game is to be thrown or placed by the Stewards
  - Firing sequence to be followed by the handlers
  - Sequence in which game is to be retrieved by the dogs
  - Means for signalling Stewards e.g. waving a note pad, using a radio, hand signals etc.
  - Type and colour of game to be used – this should be consistent for all dogs e.g. all dark birds or all light birds
  - Responsibility of Stewards to advise the Judge re matters such as a bird landing in a different area from others, a dog switching game etc.
  - Number of shells to be provided to the handlers
  - Delegated responsibility (if any) for checking game for signs of hard mouth. This would normally be done by the Judge but at times the Judge may delegate this function (Rule 92). In the case of suspected hard mouth, the Judge should personally inspect the game and make the final decision.

Judges signalling Stewards to throw birds should ensure that they do not distract the dog by making noise or being in front of, or in the peripheral vision, of the dog.

Stewards are to be treated with respect at all times by the Judge and handlers. Judges should not tolerate any abuse of Stewards. Any person who persists in abusing a Steward should be turned out of the stake and referred to the Trial Committee for further action.

Judges should also require **all** handlers to assist with Stewarding. Most clubs make this a condition of entry. Placing an unfair stewarding burden on the most willing

competitors is detrimental to the sport. Anyone who is unwilling to assist with reasonable Stewarding should be referred to the Trial Committee.

## Handlers

Judges should provide clear instructions to handlers. Typical matters to be communicated include:

- The logistics and sequence of the run including:
  - The car parking and dog exercise area. Note all cars (including the Judge's) should be positioned so that the dogs in the field who look back to the Firing Point/Handler are not looking directly at the cars.
  - Caution against having any noisy dogs in the marshalling area, holding blind or cars
  - The need to strictly ensure that dogs in competition are at no times placed in a position, deliberately or otherwise, to see game being placed, thrown, or to watch other dogs working. Any transgression of this will impact on the Judge's capacity to fairly assess the dogs performance.
  - Handlers are not to wear white coats other than when they are running their dog
  - The position of the staging area for next dog in line to run
  - The position of the Control and Firing Points
  - The position and borders of the "hide". Dogs leaving the hide are penalised 5 points – dogs remaining in the hide but moving are penalised less than 5 depending on the severity.
  - The location of throwers, game and diversions etc.
  - The sequence in which the game will be thrown
  - The sequence in which game is to be shot.
  - The sequence in which game is to be retrieved by the dogs
  - Any relevant information re the terrain being faced by the dogs etc.
  - Handlers should be provided with the opportunity to see test birds being thrown and Stewards should be asked to stand over the position of Blinds and clearly indicate their location to the handlers

## Observers – Gallery

Judges should provide clear instructions to the gallery and competitors observing the run. Typical matters to be communicated include:

- The logistics and sequence of the run including:
  - The car parking area
  - The location and extent of the gallery. This should be positioned so that dogs in the field who look back to the Firing Point/Handler are not looking directly at the gallery.
  - A caution to be quiet and remain still whilst dogs are working
  - A caution against wearing white coats in the gallery that may distract the dog's attention away from the handler
  - A caution against having any noisy dogs in the gallery or cars

# Logistics – General Principles and Tips

## Car Park – Exercise Area - Holding Area – Gallery

When setting runs the Judge should determine the position of the car park, exercise area, gallery etc.

- Cars should be parked close enough to the run to make them easy to access but not so close that they interfere with the run.
- All cars (including the Judge's) should be positioned so that the dogs in the field who look back to the Firing Point/Handler are not looking directly at the cars.
- Where possible the cars should not be parked where they overlook the run. This prevents dogs moving or standing amongst the cars from being in a position where they have a clear view of the run.
- Where possible the car park should not be positioned directly in line with the Firing Point and run. Dogs looking back at their handlers should not be looking at the cars.
- Handlers should position their vehicle so that dogs inside the vehicle cannot see the run.
- The Judge should consider whether there are any issues with cars driving between stakes e.g. will they distract the dogs working or provide a hazard. If this can't be avoided the Judge should give clear instructions where persons driving between runs are to wait whilst a dog is working.
- The Judge should provide clear instructions where the dogs are to be exercised/toileted. This should be somewhere where they will not be able to see the run or distract dogs working. The exercise area should not impinge on the location for a later run.

- Where possible the gallery should be positioned where people can watch the run but not distract the dogs working or being handled. A dog looking back at its handler should not be looking directly at the gallery.
- In order to efficiently manage time, it is advisable to specify a waiting area near the Control Point for the next dog in competition e.g. behind the Judge's car. Judges should give clear instructions that the next dog in line should be in that area ready to go when the preceding dog has completed the run.

## Setting Runs

### What is the Purpose of the Run/Test?

Before setting a run the Judge should clearly have in their mind what it is that they are trying to test. Judges then need to structure the run so that the dogs have the opportunity to demonstrate the desired performance. For example:

- Purpose of Test “**Marking Ability**” - Well sighted, multiple Marks, with wide separation are a sole test of marking whilst;
  - Multiple Marks on tight lines test control as well as marking and
  - Marks that cannot be clearly seen effectively become Blinds.
- Purpose of Test “**Water Attitude or Courage**” – Water retrieves requiring the dog to face reeds or swim to the centre of a water body are test of the dog's courage or attitude to water whilst;
  - Water retrieves set close to a highly visible and easily accessed alternate land route become a “water cheating” or “control” test.
- Purpose of Test **Not Switching Game** – A well sighted or heard “Two Bird”, or “Double Fall”, landing within a reasonable distance of the line taken by the dog is a test of not switching game and marking/memory whilst;
  - A “Two Bird” or “Double Fall” that is not sighted or heard by the dog and falls a long way off-line effectively becomes a Blind.

- Purpose of Test **Demonstrate Control** – A well placed Blind which allows a dog taking a good line to remain in sight of the handler until they arrive at the Area of the Fall is a test of control whilst:
  - A Blind positioned so that the dog is out of sight for long periods of time is as much a test of luck as it is a test of “control”.

## **Position of the Sun and Direction of the Wind**

- Judges need to be conscious of the impact that the sun will have on their runs. For example, setting Marks where the dogs are looking into the sun inhibits the dogs’ ability to see the Marks. Setting Blinds where the dogs looking back at the handler are looking into the sun inhibits the dogs’ ability to see the handler and take direction.
- A simple thing judges can do, to try and avoid difficulties with the sun, is to use a compass to determine the location of the sun at various times during the day. This can easily be done by using a permanent marker to mark the location of the sun on a compass at 8am, 12pm and 4pm. This then allows the Judge to design their runs knowing where the sun will be at any given time.
- Judges need to be conscious of the impact that the wind will have on their runs. Dogs downwind of game may easily scent the game. This should be factored into the Judge’s considerations when positioning diversionary game, directing the order in which game is to be retrieved etc.

## Retrieves, Runs and Related Matters

### Mark Retrieves (Marks)

- Marks are a test of the dog's ability to see the bird being thrown and remember the Area of the Fall.
- Marks should not be thrown with the sun in the background.
- Marks should break the skyline where possible.
- Judges should be mindful that some colours of birds may be very difficult for a dog to see against certain backgrounds. For example, white birds against a clear skyline or a shimmering lake, and dark birds against a heavily treed background are difficult to see. Regardless of which colour birds are used the Judge should ensure that the same colour is used for all the dogs.
- If there is a poor background for the Mark consider getting the Steward to "quack" before launching the bird to draw the dog's attention to the area.
- Marks should be thrown perpendicular (at right angles), or reasonably close to perpendicular, to the line. Parallel throws should only be used where the thrower is a relatively short distance from the firing point, or the background allows for the birds to be readily seen.
- It is advisable to crouch down at dog height when you are viewing test birds so that you can determine what the dogs' are going to see.
- Strong winds also play a role when setting Marks. Marks thrown directly into a strong wind can vary significantly in length depending on the velocity of the wind at the time the bird is thrown. It may be preferable to reposition the thrower and throw with the wind.
- In a Triple Mark Retrieve one of the retrieves should be relatively short e.g. 60 metres

## **No Birds**

Unfortunately at times thrown birds will not come out of the thrower like we plan. Where this occurs the Judge needs to decide whether or not to call a “No Bird”. No Birds can occur on any leg of a run that requires a bird to be thrown including Marks, Two Birds, Double Falls and thrown Diversionary Game.

Where a Judge calls a “No Bird” the handler should be given a re-run. Handlers should, where possible, be provided with the choice of coming straight back up or alternatively having two or three other dogs run in between.

When deciding whether to call a “No Bird” you should consider whether the competing dog is being disadvantaged or advantaged by the difference in the thrown bird e.g. it lands in a significantly different Area of Fall (heavy cover vs light cover) or it was not available to be seen by the dog (a disadvantage for Marks and a potential advantage for dogs that may be tempted to switch game on a Two Bird, Double Fall or Diversion) etc.

It should be noted that the discretion and obligation to call the “No Bird” rests with the Judge not the Handler. Handlers should not be given the option to decide to call or run on a “No Bird”. It is the Judge’s decision to make.

When a Judge calls a “No Bird” and needs to re-run the competitor the Judge should score the score the competitor up to the time the “No Bird” occurred. For example if it occurs on a “Two Bird” you would only start re-scoring the dogs performance on the re-run from the Two Bird; if the dog had been steady in the Control Area, remained in a Hide etc. on the first attempt at the run then the Judge should not harshly penalise any unsteadiness caused by over excitement exacerbated by the “No Bird” occurring etc.

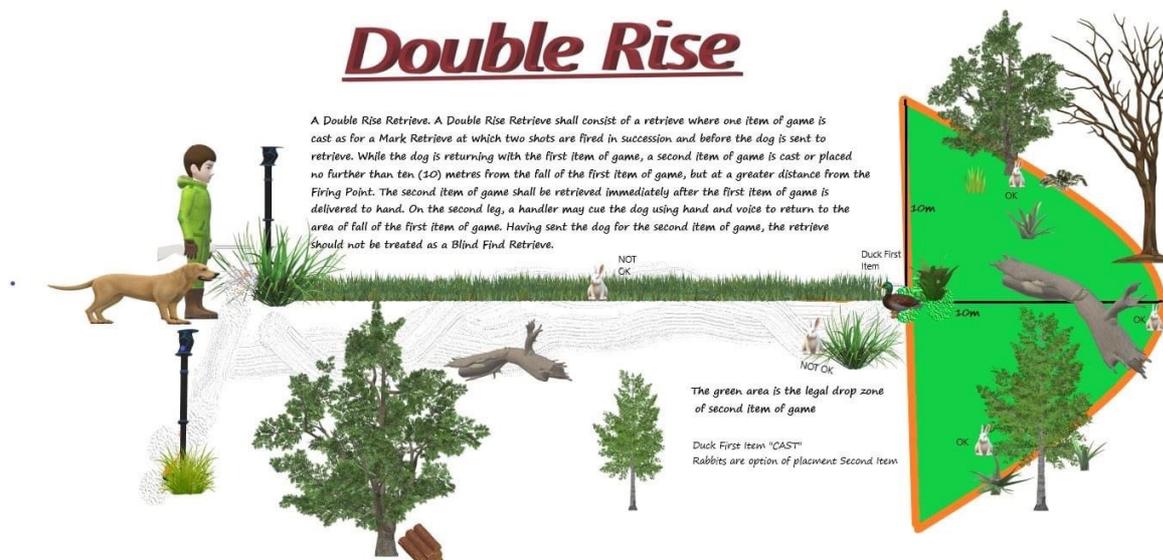
## **Blind Find Retrieves (Blinds)**

- Blinds are a test of the handler's control over the dog. In saying that, the best performing dogs will often require no further handling/assistance than being shown the line with a possible hunt command or short cast given once the dog reaches the Area of the Fall.
- A dog should, in theory, be able to complete the Blind on the initial line from the Firing Point i.e. there should not be any completely impassable obstacle(s) between the Firing Point and the Area of the Fall e.g. an unclimbable cliff face.
- Handler's should be able to see their dog on the line to the Blind until they reach the Area of the Fall. Note the handlers do not have to be able to see the game being picked up.
- Where the Area of the Fall is positioned so that the handlers cannot see the pick-up you should ensure that they are able to see the dog if it leaves the Area of the Fall. For example don't have the Area of the Fall set back into a large area of cover where a well-lined dog can disappear and then go out of control and not return into sight for an extended period of time or distance. Examples of a suitable Area of Fall for an unsighted pick-up include a depression in the ground or an isolated patch of cover. This allows the handlers the opportunity to see the dog and regain control if it leaves the Area of the Fall without finding the game.
- Dogs out of sight of the handler for an extended period of time are not available to be controlled.
- There should be an imaginary corridor to the Blind/Area of Fall determined by the Judge. If the dog stays in the corridor it should remain in sight and off-line to other items of game. Obviously in the presence of undulating terrain, gullies, small patches of cover etc. the dog may go out of sight for a short period of time. It is reasonable to expect a dog (particularly in an All Age stake) to carry through undulations and gullies etc. and remain on-line/in the corridor.

- The use of Marks or previously retrieved game to the side of the line act as a suction to the dog and increase the level of control required to complete the Blind.

## Double Rise Retrieve

- A Double Rise Retrieve is where an item of game is placed in the Area of the Fall immediately after the Mark has been picked up.
- The Double Rise must be located within 10 metres of where the dog picked up the bird and further from the firing point.
- The dog must be sent for the Double Rise Retrieve immediately after returning with the Mark.
- Double Rise Retrieves are a test of memory and should be treated like a Mark for the purpose of scoring.

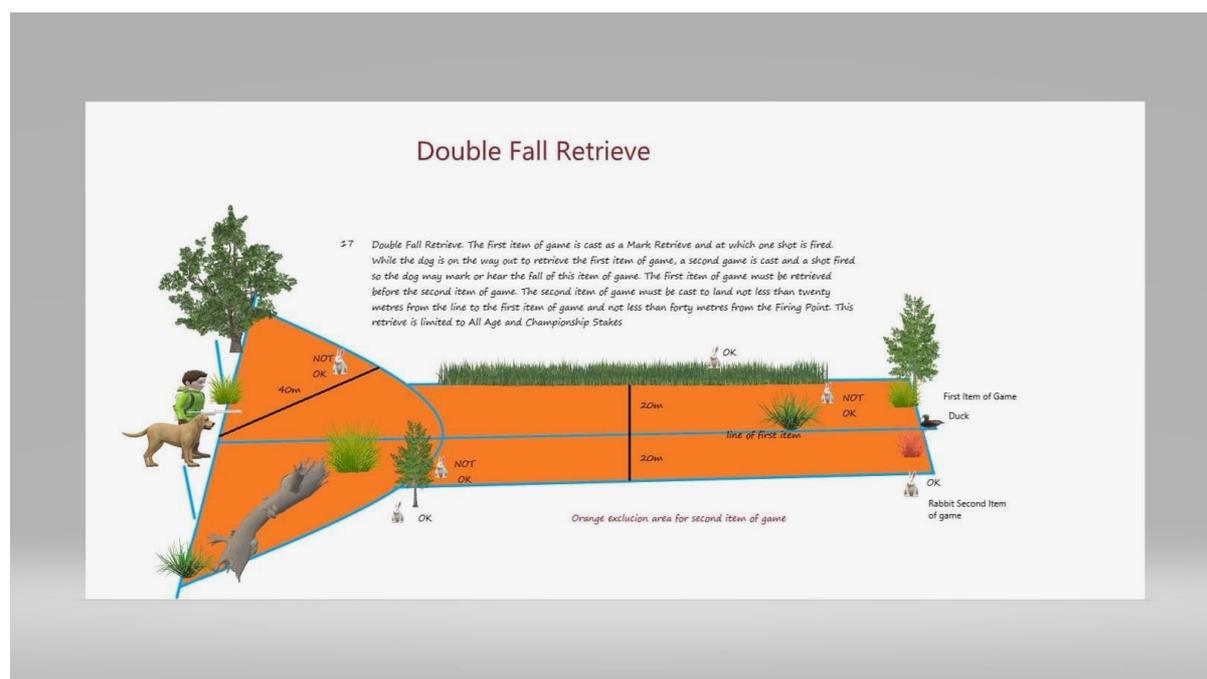


(Diagram Provided by John Aherne)

## Two-Bird and Double Fall Retrieves

“Two-Bird Retrieves” (TBR) are where a bird is thrown when the dog is on the way back from picking up a Mark or Blind. “Double Fall Retrieves” (DFR), permitted in All Age and Championship stakes, are where a bird is thrown when the dog is on the way out to a Mark. Two Bird and Double Fall Retrieves are a combination of a diversion/switching test and a marking/memory test.

- TBR’s and DFR’s should be thrown so that they are able to be seen or heard by the dog.
- TBR’s and DFR’s can also be used on triple retrieves, to increase the time delay/level of memory required where the last item of game to be retrieved is a Mark i.e. the TBR or DFR is the second item of game to be retrieved.
- TBR’s and DFR’s can also be used to increase the level of control required on triple retrieves where the second item of game to be retrieved is a Blind i.e. the TBR or DFR is the third/last item of game to be retrieved and acts as a temptation for the dog to get off-line.
- TBR’s and DFR’s are a test of memory and should be treated like a Mark for the purpose of scoring.



(Diagram Provided by John Aherne)

## **Wounded Bird and Rabbit Retrieves**

A Wounded Bird or Rabbit Retrieve is meant to simulate the common hunting situation of game that is shot but not immediately killed moving off i.e. the game leaves the Area of the Fall before it dies. This differs from a Blind Find Retrieve in that, in an actual hunting situation, the handler would not know the final resting place of the game, only where it was last sighted. Therefore the handler would, in theory, not be able to handle the dog to the game.

### **The logistics for a Wounded Bird Retrieve are as follows:**

- The bird is thrown as per a Mark.
- The handler shoots the bird with the dog at heel. The bird lays still (Area of the Fall)
- The handler should then be required to retrieve another item of game to give time for the Game Steward to drag the wounded bird etc.
- The minimum distance that the game must be dragged is 20 metres. I prefer a drag of at least 60+ metres with at least one turn to lessen the chance that the dogs can just stumble onto the game by aimlessly running around.
- The drag can be carried out in different ways e.g.:
  - The thrown bird is placed in a mesh bag attached to a cord and thrown as per a Mark. The cord is then wound in on a hose reel or by hand to a specified location. This bird is then picked up by the Game Steward and a fresh bird is left in its place; or
  - The thrown bird can be picked up by the Game Steward who then drags a bird on a cord (preferably on a stick held out at right angles so that the handler is not walking on the drag line) to the final location where he drops the thrown bird.
- The dog is eventually sent to retrieve the wounded bird.

**The logistics for a Wounded Rabbit Retrieve are as follows:**

- The rabbit is dragged across in front of the dog and handler e.g. at a distance of 20 to 30 metres.
- The handler shoots the rabbit with the dog at heel, the rabbit stops moving (Area of the Fall).
- The handler should then be required to retrieve another item of game to give time for the Game Steward to drag the wounded rabbit etc.
- The Game Steward drags the rabbit (at least the minimum distance of 20mts)
- The dog is eventually sent for the wounded rabbit

**Points to consider in relation to a wounded bird or rabbit retrieve include:**

- The dogs should be sent to the Area of the Fall i.e. where the dog last saw the game. Any attempt to send the dog directly to the game's final position should, in my opinion, result in the dog being turned out of the stake for the handler's failure to follow instruction.
- Wounded Bird Retrieves should be thrown as a relatively short and easily remembered Mark. This is not a marking test; it is a test of the dog's ability to locate wounded game that has moved.
- This is not a Blind Find Retrieve. In a real hunting situation the handler would not know the final resting place of the game and therefore would not be able to handle their dog to it.
- If the game is dragged downwind then it will become primarily a trailing exercise for the dog i.e. it will need to locate the game predominantly through ground scent.
- If the game is dragged upwind then (depending on the strength of the wind) the dog may locate the game through air scenting as much as ground scent.

- Whether the dog uses air or ground scent to locate the game doesn't matter. The purpose of the test is not to test trailing it is to test the dog's ability to relocate/hunt game that has moved from where it is initially seen. It is up to the dog to use its natural abilities and initiative to figure out how to best achieve this.
- If you use a hose reel to drag the game a turn can be placed in the drag by either dragging the game around a tree trunk or alternatively hammering a star picket into the ground and dropping a 50mm piece of green or brown painted poly pipe over it.

### **Scoring a Wounded Retrieve**

- Remember a Wounded Retrieve is not a Blind. The handler, in theory, does not know where the game is, just where it was last seen. Any attempt to handle the dog to the game should be heavily penalised e.g. an immediate 15 point deduction or "No Score" for not working to the Judge's satisfaction.
- Any handling required to get the dog to the Area of the Fall should be treated as per a normal Mark Retrieve. This should rarely occur if the Area of the Fall is relatively close and easy to remember.
- Any initial command or cue given to the dog to indicate that it needs to locate the game outside the "Area of the Fall" without handing should not be penalised e.g. once the dog unsuccessfully hunts the Area of the Fall and the handler cues the dog with "HuntEmUp" would not be penalised. It should be noted that handlers who have not trained their dogs to hunt outside the Area of the Fall may find this type of run difficult. This is their problem, not the judges. This type of run closely emulates hunting and is very interesting to set and observe. I would encourage judges to use Wounded Game Retrieves more often.
- Whilst the dog is using air and/or ground scent to try and locate the game (i.e. solve the puzzle) the dog should not be penalised (or certainly not heavily penalised). Remember this is a test of the dog's hunting ability and whilst it is hunting and showing initiative it is doing what we want.

## **Walk-Up Retrieve**

A Walk-Up Retrieve is where the bird is thrown whilst the dog is walking at heel. Walk-Up Retrieves are a test of steadiness, marking and also control where a short Walk-Up has to be retrieved after a longer item of game. Walk-Ups are a simulation of what would occur as you and your dog are walking in a paddock and a bird is flushed by you.

It is my observation that for Walk-Up Retrieves to be an effective test the dog needs to see or at least hear the bird. I would recommend that Walk-Up Retrieves are relatively short in distance e.g. the bird comes up at a maximum distance of 60 metres from where the handler and dog are walking. In a real hunting situation you are not going to flush a quail when you are walking 100+ metres away.

Walk-Ups are most likely to be seen by the dog when they come up in front as opposed to the side. If you want to test the dogs ability to remain at heel whilst the handler pivots to shoot game at significant angle to the line he or she was walking, then I recommend that the bird is thrown from a distance of approximately 30 metres so that the dogs hear the thrower (just like they would hear a bird flushing/taking flight).

Once the dog is sent for the Walk-Up Retrieve it should be scored like a Mark Retrieve.

## **Diversionsary Game**

In All Age and Championship stakes the Judge is allowed to have one item of diversionsary game placed or thrown. This item of game is not to be picked up. Diversions cannot be placed on the line and must be a minimum of 20 metres from any item of game to be retrieved.

The use of a diversionsary item of game places an increased demand on the need for steadiness, control and obedience.

The most common use of diversionary game is to place an unsighted item of game off-line. This item of game provides a strong incentive for handlers to keep their dog on-line and when placed upwind may provide a scented diversion.

Thrown/sighted diversions are rarely used but provide a significant test for the dogs, particularly when they are thrown into cover a relatively short distance from the Firing Point.

Another rarely used variation of the use of Diversionary Game is where the item of game is shot by a Steward. This may also be accompanied by the Steward then retrieving the diversion by hand or using a dog whilst the competing dog is watching. This is a close simulation of the sort of circumstances that may arise in an actual hunting situation. Any judge using this type of Diversion should consider:

- The need to keep the Game Steward out of sight other than for the purpose of shooting and retrieving the Diversion;
- The Diversion should be easily retrieved e.g. landing close to, and in clear sight of the Steward as opposed to landing in heavy cover
- If a dog is used to retrieve the item of game it should be a non-competing, calm, quiet and non-aggressive dog that is secured on a chain and peg and only released for the purpose of retrieving the Diversion. It is recommended that the dog is not unchained until it is clear that the competing dog is not going to break. You need to take all reasonable steps to ensure that you don't have two dogs in the field trying to retrieve the Diversion.

## **In Line Game**

“In Line” Game means that the lines to two items of game are separated by a distance of less than:

- 10 metres at a distance of 50 metres from the Firing Point
- 20 metres at a distance of 100 metres from the Firing Point, and
- 30 metres at a distance of 150 metres from the Firing Point

The “In Line” rule equates to having a minimum of approximately 11.5 degrees between the lines to the items of game from the Firing Point. Theoretically this means a Judge could position three items of game within an angle of 23 degrees and still be within the rules.

In order to accurately determine if game is “In Line” the Judge can stand on one line and have a Steward stand, or temporarily erect a peg on another line at a distance of 50 metres from the Firing Point. The Judge can then use a Range Finder (or pace it out) to measure the distance between the two lines. If the distance between the two lines is 10 metres or more the items of game are not “In Line”.

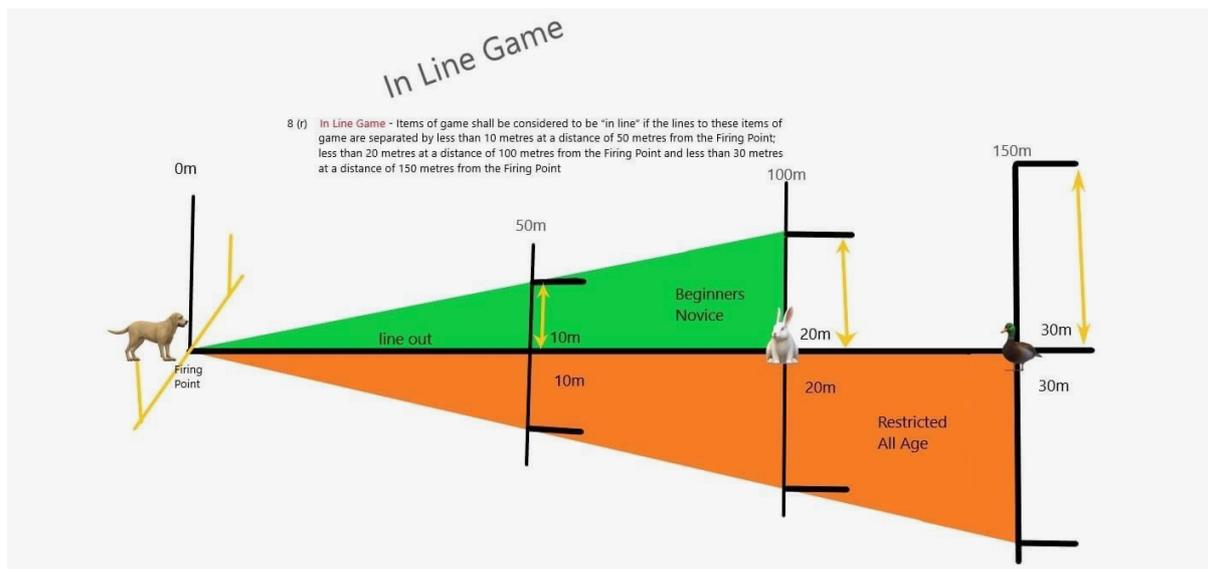
A simple way to determine if game is close to being “In Line” is to:

- Stand at the firing point and, with your upper arm resting against your chest, elbow bent at approximately 90 degrees, raise a hand up in line with your eyes with the palm facing back towards you.
- Spread your index and second fingers as far apart as they will go.
- Sight over the tips of your fingers and position your index finger over the right hand item of game.
- If the second item of game is in line with the tip of your second finger then the lines to the game are approximately 12 degrees apart i.e. close to “In Line”.

Note this method works for me but can be tested by a Judge using a ranger finder to determine the three sides of the triangle and a calculator to determine the angle between your finger-tips whilst held in that position.

Judges should understand that the tighter the lines between items of game become, the more the run becomes a test of “control” vs a test of natural ability. This is particularly the case where a distant item of game is to be retrieved before a closer item of game.

Judges can locate game “In Line” but the order of pick-up must then be at the discretion of the handler. The handler should clearly indicate to the Judge which item of game is to be retrieved before the dog is sent i.e. the order of pick-up is not at the dog’s discretion.



(Diagram Provided by John Aherne)

## Consecutive - Back to Back Runs

Back to Back runs are where a dog and handler complete one run and then, before another dog runs, they run their dog on a second run. Back to Back Runs can be used to save time and manage large numbers of entries.

- A maximum of 4 items of game are allowed to be retrieved in Back to Back Runs.
- The handler should hand over the game from the first run for inspection before moving to the next Firing Point.
- The runs should be located so that the first run does not influence the dogs performance on the second run.
- It is recommended that judges have water available and allow the dogs the option to have a drink between the runs.
- A dog that fails the first run would not normally be allowed to immediately run on the second run as a non-competing dog. You may, in agreement with all the competitors, decide to allow this.

## Game Stewards, Throwers and Placement of Game

- Game Stewards should be given clear instructions about the placement of game, that is where and when it is to be placed or thrown.
- Game Stewards should be given clear instructions that the type and colour of game used on a retrieve is to be the same for every dog e.g. all “light” birds or all “dark” birds.
- Game Stewards should be positioned so that they are at least 10 metres from any item of game and out of sight of the dogs at the Firing Point.
- Throwers should be positioned so that they are not visible to dogs at the Firing Point. Where possible position throwers on relatively stable flat ground. Remember the steeper the thrower is angled the less stable it is and the more likely that you will have “No Birds” thrown.
- Carrying a couple of screens made from 3 metres of shade cloth attached to 3 electric fence pegs allows a Judge to position the throwers out of sight in the best locations to achieve visible Marks.
- When setting up a Mark Retrieve it is a good idea to have the Game Steward drag a bird around the Area of the Fall before the first dog runs. This means the first dog on the run has as good a chance of picking up ground scent as the later dogs.
- Game Stewards should remain still so as not to distract dogs whilst they are working.
- Game Stewards should ensure that game is kept in a closed bag out of the sight and reach of competing dogs.
- Game Stewards should not begin to replace items of game, or wind down throwers, until the dog has picked up the last item of game and is in a position where it is unlikely to be distracted by the Steward.

- **All handlers** are obliged to assist as Stewards and Judges should insist everyone takes a turn.
- Where you have a shortage of Stewards you can structure your run so that one Steward can be responsible for two items of game. For example, you may position two throwers in close proximity to one another but throwing in opposite directions and have the Steward operate both throwers with a short pause in between. Alternatively, you may have the same Steward place a Blind and operate a thrower.

# Scoring Dogs

## Purpose and General Principles

The purpose of scoring dogs is to record the relative differences in performance between individual dogs. The performance between dogs completing a run varies considerably and it is the responsibility of the Judge to record those differences by consistently applying the principles set out in the rules and exercising appropriate judgement and discretion.

It is essential that the methodology applied by a Judge to score dogs is not changed during the judging of any stake. Your method of scoring may evolve over time, but it should not be altered between the commencement and completion of a stake.

The maximum number of points to be allocated on any single run are governed by the rules and are broken into three components:

- Steadiness, obedience & walking to heel                      Maximum 10 points
- Style, eagerness and action    Maximum 10 points
- Retrieving    Maximum 45 points

Whilst it is not defined in the rules, the points allocated for – **“Steadiness, obedience & walking to heel”**, are generally solely allocated to the dogs performance in the Control Area. Obedience or disobedience on the retrieve is generally rewarded or penalised in the 45 points allocated for “Retrieving”.

**“Style, eagerness and action”** - “Eagerness” is not defined in the rules but speaks for itself and is easy to recognise. “Style” and “Action” are defined in the rules as a “fearless, well-trained dog working with purpose, enthusiasm and good free movement”. Stylish dogs, with a good action, are pleasing to watch and Judge. These terms should not be confused with speed. Just because a dog is fast does not necessarily mean it is stylish or has a good action. Generally, you would expect a stylish dog to provide 100% effort to the job and:

- Be alert, attentive, focussed on the task at hand and biddable without being fearful of the handler or lacking initiative
- Boldly face obstacles such as water, reeds, cover etc. and
- Actively and thoroughly hunt the Area of the Fall until the game is located

Dogs that are clearly not eager or stylish should be significantly penalised e.g. 1 or 2 points awarded out of the possible 10. An experienced Judge Gun Stewarding for me one day commented on a particular dog's performance that he had "seen # # tortoises go faster". To award this type of dog, anything above a minimal score is to rob the stylish eager dogs of the recognition they should be given.

## **Assessing a Dog's Performance**

The rules clearly set out the principal points to be considered by the Judge in assessing the merits of performances in competitive work. These include:

- |                       |                         |
|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| • The Ability to Mark | • Sagacity              |
| • Use of Nose         | • Steadiness            |
| • Dash                | • Perseverance          |
| • Attention           | • Control               |
| • Courage             | • Style                 |
| • Retrieving          | • Cleanness of Delivery |

The rules further state "Retrieving to which supreme importance must always be accorded, should be with tender mouth and right up to hand. The dog must not injure game, retrieve decoys, drop the game, or retrieve without being ordered to do so."

## **But What About Perfectly Straight Lines**

There is significant discussion in the sport about dogs having to take a perfectly straight line to and from the retrieve. This requirement does not come from the rules. Other than a reference in rule 68 dealing with "Blind Find Retrieves which states *"It*

*should be possible, at least in theory, for a dog to find a well-planned Blind Find Retrieve on the initial line from its handler”* the rules make no specific reference to the line to be taken by the dogs.

The rules, however, require the dogs to complete the retrieves “quickly and briskly without unduly disturbing too much ground”.

This requirement is a true reflection of the sort of performance required by a dog in a hunting situation. A dog that is slow in completing the retrieve is not available to mark other game being shot. A dog that unnecessarily disturbs ground is more likely to disturb concealed game and prevent the hunter from being in a position to shoot it. In other words, we want the dog to complete the retrieve as quickly as possible, and not unnecessarily disturb other game that may still be in the area.

Unfortunately, our sport has evolved to a position where many people seem almost completely focussed on perfectly straight lines even when the perfectly straight line would make no practical sense to anyone who actually hunts with a retriever. If a hunter wouldn't care which side of a stump the dog runs around then neither should the Judge.

The obsession with perfectly straight lines can be particularly seen where runs are deliberately designed by Judges to require the dog to complete the retrieve slowly. A typical example is a run that requires the dogs to swim long distances to retrieve game that could be retrieved with significantly less effort and time by a long run and a short swim. Often these runs are not just the antithesis of retrieving “quickly and briskly”, they also require the liberal use of whistle and voice commands adding to the likelihood that game would be disturbed.

The prevalence of these types of runs is, in my opinion, a detriment to the sport and bear no resemblance to the conditions found whilst hunting.

Whilst it is ultimately the decision of the individual Judge I would encourage aspiring Judges to think carefully about what qualities we want in hunting dogs. Do we want dogs to demonstrate blind obedience in the face of stupidity e.g. swim 150 metres up and back a narrow channel of water instead of running the bank, leaping into the

water, picking the bird up and running back? If a hunter and an intelligent, brave, and eager retriever would think the run is stupid then it probably is.

By all means set runs that require dogs to face cover, enter water, demonstrate courage, use their nose to find game, use their intelligence, maintain a reasonable line through terrain and water etc. But don't set runs that bear no arguable resemblance to "hunting" and require good dogs to surrender their intelligence.

If you want to put on a narrow "Channel Swim" then at least try and find a location where picking up the bird by swimming up a relatively narrow body of water is the only real option e.g. both banks of the water are covered in blackberries.

The US book "Retriever Field Trial Judging – A Manual" (highly recommended reading as a source for Judges and available at "[theretrievernews.com](http://theretrievernews.com)") provides some interesting commentary on how US Field Trial Judges view extreme lining:

*"The line to the mark may be evaluated in different ways. Generally, the line to the mark is not nearly as important as the area of the hunt for the mark... Given very similar hunts, the dog with the straightest line to the mark merits the highest score, although the score may not be substantially higher than a dog whose line was not perfectly straight."*

*"A dog that returns with the bird "off-line" or runs around the water on the return should not be substantially outscored by the dog that returns by water, unless the avoidance is extreme..."*

*"The Rules provide in Paragraph 22 that:*

*"The Judges must Judge the dogs for (a) their natural abilities including their memory, intelligence, attention, nose, courage, perseverance and style, and (b) their abilities acquired through training, including steadiness, control, response to direction and delivery"*

*Even a casual reading of the language quoted above makes it clear that the Rules did not, and do not, contemplate Blind retrieves of the exquisite difficulty and precise control that are routinely encountered at today's field trials. Little if anything has*

*been written about how today's field trial Judge must apply his/her Judgement to the matter of giving marking and natural abilities the appropriate weight...*

*One approach is to focus on the concept of functionality. Memory, intelligence, courage, style and perseverance, the inborn qualities that make a working retriever, are the building blocks on which our sport of field trials exists. Granted training is important, the training concepts contemplated in the rules including steadiness, control, whistle response, casting and delivery are relatively primitive when compared to the precision expected, and obtained in, All Age Blinds.*

*Today's All-Age Blind is a highly sophisticated exercise in obedience... How do we continue to give appropriate emphasis to the accurate marking and the natural abilities of our dogs that the rules mandate the best interests our retrievers deserve?*

*Many experienced and thoughtful field trial Judges have confronted this issue and found an approach that they believed gave the proper emphasis to natural versus trained skills. This approach first requires that the Judge recognize that Blind work is simply less important than marking; that the natural qualities that evidence style and desire to retrieve are more desirable than mechanical obedience; and that our sport is about working retrievers."*

Ultimately, provided the run complies with the rules, the design of runs is up to the individual Judge's discretion. I would encourage Judges to think carefully about the natural and trained abilities they would like to see in a working gundog and design their runs to allow dogs to demonstrate those abilities.

## **Scoring Dogs Out of Sight**

At times you may choose to set retrieves where the dog picking up the bird is out of sight of the judge e.g. the bird falls into the bottom of a steep gully. It is generally preferable that the judge can see the dogs working the Area of the Fall but if you set a run where that is not possible then you will find your scoring on that retrieve has to be closely linked to the amount of time it takes for the dog to appear back into sight with the game.

It is recommended that, where possible, you avoid setting runs where a dog, in the Area of the Fall, is out of sight or, alternatively make sure that a dog leaving the Area of the Fall will be visible i.e. don't set the run so that a dog can leave the Area of the Fall and then travel for extended distances out of sight of the judge.

Note there is no requirement to set runs that always allow handlers to be able to see their dog pick up the game.

### **Scoring Different Breeds of Gundog**

During Judges' training I have had several candidates ask whether they should consider the breed of dog when they are assessing performance?

This question has two elements:

1. Should they make allowance for how the various breeds work e.g. a quartering breed such as a Spaniel or Utility Gundog should not be penalised if they quarter their way out to the Area of the Fall as opposed to taking a direct line? and
2. When assessing how many points to award for Style, Eagerness and Action should the dog be compared to other competing dogs or only to members of its own breed e.g. the dog is really slow and boring, but it is the fastest Lagotto Romagnolo you've ever seen so it gets 10 out of 10 points? (Apologies in advance if anyone is working a Lagotto - they may be great but I'm not aware of anyone working one in Australia, so I am hoping it's my least chance of offending someone)

My opinion and recommendation is that you should not take the breed of dog into consideration when judging.

Rules 1 and 2 clearly set out the purpose of Retrieving Trials and the functions of a Retriever. When a dog is sent for a retrieve it is being sent to recover game that has already been located/flushed and shot vs finding game that can be shot. Once sent for the retrieve the dog should be expected, regardless of breed, to "retrieve quickly and briskly without unduly disturbing too much ground". A dog that quarters its way out to the Area of the Fall is clearly not meeting that criteria.

Retrieving Trials are “competitions” to determine the “relative merits” of the competing dogs. Once judges start making allowance for breed then, in my opinion, they are not applying an “ambit of equality” to the competing dogs. Retrieving Trials are not a handicapping event like Horse Racing. A good performance is “good”, and a poor performance is “poor”, regardless of the breed of dog.

When judging you should not care about who is holding the lead, which dog they’re running, or how that dog has performed in the past. The judge’s sole focus should be on assessing and scoring that individual dog’s performance on that individual run.

### **Example of a Scoring Philosophy**

One approach to scoring a run is to picture what is required for a dog to demonstrate a “perfect performance” in completing the run. A dog providing a perfect performance is awarded the maximum number of 65 points. Any dog providing a less than perfect performance is awarded less than 65 points relative to their comparative performance.

For example, on a Single Mark Retrieve, the perfect performance would be:

- Dog heels quietly and calmly from the Control Point to the Firing Point
- Dog sits or stands steadily and focusses on the bird being thrown
- Dog shows no fear of the sight or sound of the gun
- After a short pause to demonstrate steadiness the handler sends the dog
- Dog takes a direct line to the Area of the Fall and picks up the bird with little or no hunting required and no commands/handles
- Dog proceeds directly back to the firing point and delivers the bird to within reach of the handler with a tender mouth
- Dog demonstrates a high level of style, eagerness and action, demonstrates courage, use of nose etc.

- Dog heels quietly and calmly from the Firing Point back to the Control Point
- Dog remains quiet and steady at heel in a sitting or standing position whilst the handler gives the bird and gun to the Steward and takes the lead

This level of performance (a perfect picture) would warrant a perfect score of 65 points. Anything less than the perfect picture would score less than 65 points.

### **Negative vs Positive Scoring**

Some people view a scoring methodology where you start by theoretically awarding every dog 65 points and then proceed to cumulatively deduct points to be “negative” scoring. An alternate viewpoint is that, when deciding how many points to deduct from a dog’s score for a less than perfect performance the Judge is also deciding how many points to award dogs who don’t demonstrate those faults. In order to reward excellent performance, you must also be prepared to punish poor performance. It should be noted that this approach is consistent with the rules as they prescribe a number of deductions for various faults in performance. In order to deduct points, you had to award points to start with.

A relevant example is scoring a Triple Mark Retrieve. The perfect Triple Mark Retrieve consists of three sends, three quick direct lines to the Area of the Fall, three quick locations of the bird and three quick returns and three deliveries. I personally deduct 5 points for the first handle/cast on any Mark/Sighted Retrieve. I do not reduce this deduction for a handle on the final leg of Triple Mark Retrieve. I believe the dog that clearly remembers the last bird should be rewarded at least 5 points more than a dog who has forgotten the third bird and needs to be handled. I am penalising one dog so that a better performing dog can be appropriately rewarded.

### **Scoring Methodologies**

There are significant variations in the methodologies used by Judges to score dogs. It is essential that you arrive at a methodology that you can understand and consistently apply in the field. Examples of differing methodologies include:

## **Treating the Run as a Whole (*Methodology I Use*)**

This methodology is applicable to scoring runs consisting of single and multiple retrieves:

1. Start at the maximum allowable number of 45 points allocated for “Retrieving” and cumulatively deduct points for a less than perfect performance. This includes deducting points for:
  - Failures in performance prescribed under the Rules e.g. “Breaking to Shot, “Dropping Game” etc.
  - Non-Prescriptive failures in performance e.g. failure to mark the Area of the Fall, urinating on the run etc.
2. Allocate a score out of 10 for “style, eagerness and action” (SEA)
3. Allocate a score out of 10 for “steadiness, obedience & walking to heel” (SOH)
4. Add the three scores together for a total score out of 65

## **Breaking the Retrieve/Run into Individual Elements e.g.**

1. Break the Retrieving component of the run into individual components and pre-assign a maximum score for each component e.g.
  - a) “line out” maximum of 6 points
  - b) “line back” maximum of 2 points
  - c) “retrieving” maximum of 20 points
  - d) “delivery” maximum of 6 points
  - e) “eyes ears and nose” maximum of 6 points
  - f) “failure to handle conditions” maximum of 5 points
2. Add the above together for a total score out of 45 points for “Retrieving”
3. Apply any deductions e.g. “Breaking to Shot”, “Dropping Game” etc.
4. Allocate a score out of 10 for SEA

5. Allocate a score out of 10 for SOH
6. Add the three scores together for a total score out of 65

### **Multiple Retrieves – Each Retrieve Scored Separately Out of 45**

1. Score each “Retrieve” separately out of 45
2. Add the scores and divide by the number of retrieves for a total score out of 45
3. Apply any deductions e.g. “Breaking to Shot”, “Dropping Game” etc.
4. Allocate a score out of 10 for SEA
5. Allocate a score out of 10 for SOH
6. Add the three scores together for a total score out of 65

### **Multiple Retrieves – Each Retrieve Pre-Allocated a Separate Score**

1. Allocate a maximum number of points for each retrieve e.g. a triple retrieve consisting of:
  - a) a simple Mark retrieve (maximum of 10 points),
  - b) a difficult Mark retrieve (maximum of 15 points) and
  - c) a Blind retrieve (maximum of 20 points)
2. Add the total points together for a maximum score out of 45
3. Apply any deductions e.g. “Breaking to Shot”, “Dropping Game” etc.
4. Allocate a score out of 10 for SEA
5. Allocate a score out of 10 for SOH
6. Add the three scores together for a total out of 65

### **Deducting Points – Principles and Examples**

Along with providing the principal points to be considered when assessing performance, the rules also prescribe some deductions and empower Judge’s to turn

dogs out of a stake i.e. eliminate the dog from further competition. These along with examples of discretionary deductions are outlined below:

### **Rules Based Prescriptive Deductions**

- No Score for: Failure to Complete Retrieve, In Multiple Retrieves Where the Dog Switches Game & Extreme Hard Mouth
- Deduct Up to 10 Per Run for: - Breaking to Shot, Hard Mouth, & Failure to Obey Command & Direction
- Deduct Up to 5 Per Run for: - Blinking & Over-Running Game, Pottering, Giving Tongue & Dropping Game
- Deduct Up to 5 for Each Offence: - Handler Moving Outside Firing Point, Breaking from the Hide & Not Firing from Shoulder at Game

Where the rules prescribe a deduction “up to” a certain amount the Judge has to exercise discretion whether to deduct the full amount, or a portion thereof. The amount of points deducted should reflect the severity of the fault.

The way to approach this is to imagine the worst level of performance in that area, this would attract the full deduction, anything less than that would result in a lesser/partial deduction.

For example, the rules prescribe a deduction for “Dropping game Up to 5”. From a hunting perspective dropping game is an undesirable trait as it may allow wounded game to escape. The following scenario demonstrates the exercise of the Judge’s discretion when a dog drops game:

- The dog has retrieved the bird out of heavy weed covered water. Along with the bird the dog has a large amount of weed in its mouth preventing it from breathing. The dog puts the bird down, spits out the weed and immediately picks the bird up and continues the retrieve (no deduction)

- The dog accidentally drops a bird when it stumbles down a steep slope. The dog immediately picks the bird up without command and continues the retrieve (1 point deduction)
- The dog deliberately spits the bird out several metres in front of the Firing Point and stands over it until the handler commands him to pick it up (full 5 point deduction)
- The dog deliberately spits the bird out, abandons it, and goes for a run in the paddock (exercise rule 68 and “turn out of stake”)

Another example is “Giving tongue Up to 5”. Dogs that are vocal are not desirable from a hunting point of view as they may disturb game and they reduce the pleasure of hunting with a canine companion. The following scenario demonstrates the exercise of the Judge’s discretion when a dog gives tongue:

- Dog is excited in the control area and emits a low level whine (1 point deduction)
- Dog barks as it leaves the firing point (2 point deduction)
- On a multiple retrieve the dog barks every time it leaves the firing point (5 point deduction)
- The dog make an intolerable amount of noise, so much so that the thought of hunting with such a dog is not, in the Judge’s opinion, conceivable (exercise rule 68 and “turn out of stake”)

It is worth specifically discussing deductions for **Hard Mouth**. The Rules define “Hard Mouth” as being “when there is unmistakable evidence of any markings or damage on game retrieved due to biting or crunching by the dog.”

It should be noted that the correct application of this is, in my opinion, that the Judge needs to be certain of both the presence of “damage” and that it was “due to biting or crunching by the dog”. When assessing Hard Mouth I am looking for

strong evidence of both elements. Preferably I am able to actually witness the dog crunching/biting the bird or alternatively the damage is so extreme that it could not have been caused by the game being thrown. Where there is any doubt you should extend the benefit of the doubt to the dog.

I do not recommend combing through the bird's feathers looking for the slightest skin tear. Take the bird, feel the chest to see if it's crushed, or if there are any other obvious signs of damage, and then move on.

The Rules prescribe a maximum of 10 points deduction for Hard Mouth per run and further state "In the event of Extreme Hard Mouth, the Judge may apply Rule 68 and disqualify the dog. Extreme Hard Mouth is where there is deliberate squeezing of game so that bones break, or the flesh is badly ripped, and the Judge considers that the game is unfit for the table."

Where you decide to deduct points for Hard Mouth Rule 92 requires the Judge to "immediately" advise the handler of any penalty e.g. "your dog has damaged the bird and I am deducting 5 points from your score". If the damage was extreme you should advise the handler that "your dog has badly damaged the bird and is disqualified".

Judges need to be aware that by the third run game is quite often very soft and the benefit of doubt given to the dogs may need to be increased vs the game used in the first run.

### **Non-Prescriptive Deductions – Judge's Discretion**

Judges have a wide discretion to allocate and deduct points for performance related issues. These vary between Judges. New Judges will need to exercise their discretion to determine that deductions are proportionate to the performance of the dog. Examples of discretionary points deductions include:

- First handle on a Mark retrieve (5 point deduction) – subsequent handles (1 point deductions)

- Dog misses area of fall and runs around – cumulative deductions depending on how long and how far the dog roams
- Disobeyed commands e.g. fails to take a cast (2 point deductions)
- First handle on a Blind retrieve soon after leaving the Firing Point (5 point deduction)
- First handle on a Blind retrieve very close to the Area of the Fall (1 point deduction)
- Handle on a major obstacle on a Blind retrieve e.g. the dog baulks at, or is stopped by the handler, at the edge of the water and cast “Back” – (5 point deduction – this is versus the dog who entered the water without the need for a further command i.e. this dog is rewarded 5 points)
- First handle on a Blind retrieve in the Area of the Fall to prevent the dog from overrunning or exiting the Area of Fall - no deduction
- Dog urinates on the run (1 point deduction) – subsequent urinations (2 point deductions)
- Dog baulks the water on the way out and fails to demonstrate courage (5 point deduction)
- Handler yells “easy” when the dog is in the Area of the Fall on a Mark (1 point deduction – “insurance costs”)

### **Judge’s Discretion to “Turn Out of a Stake” (Rules 68 & 56)**

Judges’ have the discretion to turn a dog out of a stake under certain circumstances. These include:

- The dog does not work to the Judge’s satisfaction for example:
  - The dog’s cumulative performance is below the Judge’s standard for the run or,

- The dog's performance in a particular area is so poor that it is below the Judge's acceptable minimum standard e.g. the dog shows a distinct lack of effort, the dog is clearly failing the test etc.
- The handler does not obey the Judge, or
- The handler wilfully interferes with another competitor or his dog

Note the Judge should immediately inform the handler of the awarding of "No Score" or that they are being turned out of the stake.

When judging you should have in your mind the minimum standard you are willing to accept. This may at times be a certain point where the dog has reached a pre-determined maximum number of points that can be awarded. Whatever standard you decide to apply should be equally applied to all competitors. For example:

- In a Novice stake with a small number of entries, the Judge may decide that once a dog has only 5 points left out of a possible 45 for the retrieve, that they will be turned out of the stake.
- In an All Age stake with a high number of entries, the Judge may decide that the cut-off for turning a dog out of the stake is 15 points left out of a possible 45 for the retrieves.
- A Judge may also decide that the dog's performance is so poor that it should be called in before it reaches the minimum point level. For example, the dog may be a significant distance from the Area of the Fall and is failing to take any positive actions or directions to move towards the Area of the Fall.

It is advisable that before you turn a dog out of the stake you give the handler some warning e.g. "You need to get the dog in the area" – "If the dog refuses this cast you will have to call him in". When you turn a dog out of a stake you should always express your sympathies to the handler.

Judges should also be mindful that rule 55 instructs them to "withhold any prize or award if... the dogs competing do not show sufficient merit". Where a dog's performance over the stake is consistently poor it is preferable that the dog is turned

out of the stake rather than being left in and completing it. If it is the only dog to finish the stake the Judge must then face the difficult decision of whether to withhold the prize. Regardless of the dog's performance, most handlers who are the only finisher, will not react well to not being awarded the prize. You're better to avoid this situation in the first place.

## **Practical Methods for Scoring a Dog's Performance**

It is essential that Judges have a means for recording the performance of individual dogs and for being able to provide some feedback if requested by a handler at the conclusion of the presentation. The means for doing this varies between Judges but it is essential that some records are kept on paper. My personal method is as follows:

- A separate score sheet is used for each dog. This prevents you from recording scores against the incorrect dog.
- Any deductions that occur in the control area or on the retrieves are recorded as acronyms as they occur, for example: for giving tongue write "GT", uncontrolled break "UCB", baulked the water "BTW", disobeyed command "DOC", handled/obeyed command "H", overran the area of fall "OR", had to hunt "HTH", good line out "GLO", poor line out "PLO", dropped game "DG" etc. – use ticks to indicated multiple thereof etc. These notes only need to be legible to you. Note a Judge may show and discuss their score sheets with a competitor but should never give them a copy (rule 95).
- Once the dog leaves for the first retrieve start at 45 and mentally count down from there depending on the dog's performance e.g.
  - Dog is off-line to the Mark – handlers stops the dog and casts the dog over = 5 point deduction so mental sum is now 40
  - Dog stops to urinate – 1 point deduction = 39
  - Dog finds bird but stands over it and needs to be told to pick it up – 2 point deduction = 37

- Once a dog picks up game I immediately record in the notes section of the score sheet the maximum possible score at that time so I would write “BIM 37” (Bird in Mouth 37 Points). This method prevents you forgetting where you were if you get distracted.
- Repeat for the other legs of the run e.g. dog leaves the Firing Point for the second retrieve with 37 points but baulks the water entry – 5 point deduction = 32
- Dog subsequently picks up the bird with no more faults – record “BIM 32” etc.
- After dog has retrieved all the game to hand write a score down out 45
- Award and record a maximum of 10 points each for “style, eagerness and action” and “steadiness, obedience & walking to heel”
- Add the three scores up at the end of the stake to give a score for each run
- Add the scores up for the three runs for a combined total score out of the maximum 195 points

## Dealing with the Unplanned and Other Discussion Points

Note: The answers below are a combination of applying the Rules and the exercise of discretion by the Judge. The answers reflect my beliefs at the time of writing and may differ from other Judges. Judges in training are advised to discuss scenarios with other experienced Judges and apply the rules and logic to reach their own conclusions. Remember whatever decisions you make should comply with the Rules and allow you to *“bring the work of each dog within an ambit of equality where assessment may be fairly made.”*

1. The handler pulls the trigger but the gun misfires?

Answer: If the dog has already demonstrated in the Stake that it is not gun-shy do not stop the process. If it is the first shot fired over the dog in that Stake then consider re-starting the process.

2. A thrown bird is clearly visible to the dog, but it is a bit shorter or longer than the preceding birds. The handler, without pause, sends their dog. The dog struggles on the run and the handler turns to you and asks for a “No Bird” to be called?

Answer: The handler made an immediate decision to send the dog. The handler’s actions effectively prevent the Judge from having time to assess and call a “No Bird”. In this case the handler inherits the outcome of their actions. Generally speaking the “No Bird” needs to be called before the dog is sent. It is a good idea to instruct competitors that you expect them to demonstrate their dog is steady before sending their dog. This has the added advantage of giving you time to process whether a “No Bird” should be called.

3. The handler sends the dog. The handler doesn’t like the initial line taken and calls the dog back to the heel position and attempts to re-send the dog?

Answer: The handler cannot re-send the dog. This should be treated as a failure to complete the retrieve. The Judge should advise the handler that if

they call the dog to “heel” they are out. The handler can call the dog closer in front and cast the dog back. Note this differs from the dog breaking and being brought back to the heel position as the dog had not yet been sent for the retrieve.

4. The dog stops short of the handler on the return. The handler steps forward to take delivery?

Answer: Rule 91 states “The handler without stepping towards the dog shall take the game with one hand from the mouth of the dog”. A Judge may tolerate the handler moving one foot slightly forward of the other so the handler can balance themselves however, any attempt to step towards an out-of-reach dog should be heavily penalised. If the dog will not deliver within reach of the handler it may be treated as a “Failure to complete retrieve (Rule 8 (w) and the Retrieving Trial Judging Sheet). It is advisable that the Judge verbally warns handlers who are about to walk towards their dogs to take delivery, that you may turn them out of the stake if they do so. Remember the dog delivers game to the “handler” not to the “Firing Point”.

5. The dog is out of control in in the Control Area, the dog leaves the Control Area and runs into the run before the game is thrown?

Answer: If the dog can be brought back under control prior to it reaching the Area of the Fall then the penalty is under “Steadiness, obedience and walking to heel”. If the dog cannot be brought back under control and reaches the Area of the Fall the Judge should consider turning the dog out of the stake pursuant to rules 56 and 68. A dog that is running around the Area of the Fall scenting where previous birds have been and locating the thrower/Game Steward, cannot be fairly assessed on the Mark. A dog breaking from the heel position before the gun is fired is unsteady, they are not “breaking to shot” as no shot has been fired.

6. On a Double Mark the dog does an uncontrolled break on the first bird. The handler wants you to throw the second Mark whilst the dog is enroute to the first bird?

Answer: The second item of game should not be thrown. The dog has failed the test and should be turned out of the stake (Rules 56 and 68).

7. The dog is left in a hide, the handler fires the gun at a Blind, the dog breaks from the hide and runs straight past the handler and picks up the Blind without being sent?

Answer: The dog has not been sent for the retrieve and should be turned out of the stake (Rules 56 and 68).

8. The dog delivers game to the handler. The dog then leaves the handler to go for a swim or run and won't return to the Control Area?

Answer: The handler and dog complete the run when the lead is placed back on the dog (Rule 8 (x)). The dog has failed to complete the run and should be turned out of the stake.

9. A Game Steward leaves their socks and shoes on the river-bank whilst they cross the river. A dog in competition retrieves a sock?

Answer: Rule 25 (b) provides a prescriptive answer to a dog retrieving an item of game. When a dog retrieves an object that is not defined as an item of game the Judge needs to exercise their discretion to ensure an ambit of equality between competitors. Where the object retrieved has some resemblance to items of game e.g. a dried up piece of rabbit skin, or training objects e.g. a rolled up sock or dummy, the Judge will need to decide, whether to turn the dog out of the stake for a failure to complete the retrieve, or re-run it. If the Judge decides to turn the dog out of the stake it is essential that the object be placed back on the run so that an "ambit of equality" is maintained between competitors. This decision may be influenced by factors including how many dogs have already completed the run, how similar the object is to game etc. Where the object retrieved bears no resemblance to an item of game or a training item e.g. the dog retrieves a stick, the dog should be turned out of the stake for failing to complete the retrieve.

10. The handler places an item game on the ground. The handler then calls the dog to heel to send for another item of game. The dog circles around the handler and picks the item of game up off the ground?

Answer: The dog should be turned out of the stake for retrieving an item of game that it had not been sent for/nominated by the handler (Rule 25 (b)).

11. The Game Steward starts winding down the thrower before the dog has completed the retrieve. The dog hears the noise and stops and looks back?

Answer: No penalty should be applied. The fault lies with actions of the Game Steward not the dog.

12. The dog is sent for a bird in water. Ducks with ducklings appear, a parent duck flaps in front of the dog eventually leading the dog out of the water and up a gully?

Answer: This condition could not be replicated for all the dogs in competition and therefore impacts on the Judge's ability to apply an "ambit of equality". The dog should be given a re-run (preferably after several other dogs). If it is the first dog to run the Judge may consider cancelling and re-setting the run in a different location.

13. The Game Steward leaves a bird on the ground next to the thrower. A dog picks the bird up and retrieves it?

Answer: The dog is to be given a re-run pursuant to Rule 25 (b). On the re-run the Judge should take into consideration the performance of the dog prior to it picking up this item of game.

14. In setting up the run a bird is accidentally thrown over a tightly strung fence. Rather than try and get through the fence the bird is left, and the thrower is re-positioned. A dog in competition gets through the fence and retrieves the bird?

Answer: The dog is to be given a re-run pursuant to Rule 25 (b). On the re-run the Judge should take into consideration the performance of the dog prior to it picking up this item of game.

15. The dog retrieves an item of game that may have been left in the paddock from the previous day etc.

Answer: The dog is to be given a re-run pursuant to Rule 25 (b). On the re-run the Judge should take into consideration the performance of the dog prior to its picking up this item of game.

16. The dog delays getting into a fast flowing river and the bird is swept away down-stream?

Answer: Birds should only be thrown into fast flowing water where they are the first item of game to be retrieved i.e. the handler can immediately send their dog. Any dog hesitating to get into the water and subsequently missing the bird as it has been carried down-stream, fails the retrieve and should be eliminated from competition.

17. The Judge observes a handler and dog still in competition standing between cars/in the “Marshalling Area” watching the run?

18. Answer: Judges should give clear instructions at the start of the stake that no dog in competition is to be at any time placed in a position where they can watch other dogs running or game being thrown or placed. When this occurs it severely impacts on the Judge’s ability to assess the performance of the dogs within an “ambit of equality” (Rule 1). Any handler who fails to comply with the Judge’s instructions in relation to this, whether intentionally or unintentionally, should be advised by the Judge of the failure and given the right of reply/explanation. The Judge should then consider the appropriate response e.g. the dog is to be placed back in the vehicle and not got out until all the other dogs have run i.e. that dog now runs last. If the Judge believes the breach was severe and intentional the Judge may exercise their discretion to turn the dog out of the stake (Rule 56 “handler does not obey the Judge”). Also refer to Rule 77 (b) “competing dogs... cannot see retrieves in progress” and Rule 71 “unsportsmanlike conduct”. This sort of conduct is unacceptable, damages the integrity of the sport, and should not be ignored, rewarded or tolerated.

19. A dog is obviously gun-shy i.e. it recoils from the sight or sound of the gun. The handler requests that the Judge permit them to leave their dog behind them whilst they fire the gun and then call them to heel?

Answer: This is not permissible under the rules, all dogs must be assessed within an ambit of equality. If a handler requests a special concession the Judge should refuse but may choose to provide them the opportunity to run as a non-competing dog (note this should only occur in a Beginners or Novice Stake). Remember any advantage or concession extended to one dog is automatically a disadvantage to the other dogs in competition. Also being “gun-shy” is a recognised fault and precludes a dog from being awarded various titles under the rules e.g. Rules 101 and 106

20. The dog is unsteady to shot. The handler blocks the dog with their body to prevent the dog from breaking, or requests that they be allowed to put a lead on the dog?

Answer: The deliberate blocking of the dog by the handler should be penalised proportionate to the severity. If the severity was extreme then the Judge could turn the dog out of the stake for the handler not obeying the Judge (rule 56). Refer to the previous question in relation to a request for a special concession to a dog in competition.

21. The handler deliberately sets up the dog to not see the Mark being thrown? This is done at times to prevent the Mark acting as a diversion for an earlier retrieve e.g. a Blind is the first item of game to be retrieved.

Answer: Deliberately setting the dog up to not see Marks should be heavily penalised. If the severity was extreme then the Judge could exercise their discretion to turn the dog out of the stake for the handler not obeying the Judge (rule 56).

22. A handler blatantly mis-lines the dog to avoid another item of game or diversion to the side of the line to the item of game to be retrieved?

Answer: Deliberately mis-lining the dog to avoid a diversion etc. should be penalised proportionate to the severity. If the severity was extreme then the Judge could exercise their discretion to turn the dog out of the stake for the handler not obeying the Judge (rule 56).

23. The dog is obviously scared e.g. it raises its shoulders and drops its ears and tail every time the whistle is blown etc?

Answer: A dog displaying fear should be penalised under “Style, eagerness and action” (Rule 8 (a)). If the level of fear demonstrated was extreme e.g. the dog won’t come out of a hide despite being called repeated times the Judge should consider turning the dog out of the stake pursuant to Rule 68 “does not work to his satisfaction”.

24. On a Double Rise Retrieve, after the first bird is delivered, can the Judge instruct the handlers to shoot at another item of game before sending the dog for the second bird of the Double Rise?

Answer: No the Judge cannot. Rule 15 states “the second item of game shall be retrieved immediately after the first item of game is delivered to hand”. “Immediately is defined in the Oxford Dictionary as “at once; instantly; without any intervening time”.

25. The Judge allows the handlers to determine the order of pick-up, or the game is “In-Line”. Should the handlers be required to clearly nominate the item of game to be retrieved before sending their dog?

Answer: Where game is “In-Line” the “order of pick-up is to be left to the handler’s discretion” (Rule 24). At other times the Judge may also decide to allow the handlers discretion on the order of pick-up. It is recommended that where the order of pick-up is to be at the handler’s discretion that the Judge clearly instruct the handlers that they must clearly nominate the order of pick-up before sending their dog i.e. the discretion is given to the handlers not the dogs.

26. A dog stands instead of sitting whilst at heel or delivering game, deduct points or not?

Answer: No penalty is to be applied. Standing is clearly allowable under the rules.

27. A handler raises their right arm and commands “back”, the dog pivots in the opposition direction i.e. to the dog's right side but goes back. Should this be treated as a disobeyed command?

Answer: No penalty is to be applied. It is not up to the Judge to determine the cues and commands handlers give their dogs e.g. some handlers may raise their right arm as they want the dog to turn back in that direction i.e. the dog turns to its left, other handlers may be using that arm simply to avoid influencing the dog towards another item of game. If the handler gives a clear “back” command and the dog fails to move, casts over, or comes in then it should be penalised for a “failure to obey command and direction“. If the dog goes back, regardless of which way it turns, the Judge should assume it has obeyed the command. Judges should not assume that all handlers use the same cues, commands or training methodologies.

28. A dog delivers in front of the handler but is not totally square on i.e. at a slight angle to the handler. Should the Judge deduct points or not?

Answer: No penalty should be applied. The rules require the dog to be in front of the handler, standing or sitting, and stationary at the time of the delivery. Retrieving trials are emulating hunting not Obedience Trials. The standard of delivery should be that expected of a well-trained hunting dog.

29. In a multiple leg Run, after the dog has already completed the earlier retrieve(s), a logistical failure occurs e.g. a “Two Bird” is a “No Bird”, the Game Steward forgets to put out the Blind etc.?

Answer: The Judge should give the dog a re-run (preferably after a break of several dogs). The Judge should apply the score up to the when the logistical failure occurred i.e. you start re-scoring from when the dog gets to the point of the run when the logistical failure occurred. Note if the dog fails to complete any of the retrieves on the re-run it is still out (even though it may have already completed that retrieve on the first attempt at the run).

30. The morning is foggy, and the Judge and competitors are keen to start the trial. As the fog clears the Judge consults with the competitors and they agree that the fog has cleared sufficiently to allow the dogs and handlers to see. The first dog runs and successfully completes the run. The second dog runs but fails to complete the run. The handler complains about the low visibility. Should the Judge agree to re-run the dog?

Answer: Once a dog has successfully completed a run Judges should be cautious about allowing following dogs to re-run due to conditions that were present for the first dog. To do so may lead competitors to believe that an “ambit of equality” is not being applied. If the environmental conditions have clearly changed between dogs e.g. the fog thickened after the first dog ran then the Judge may choose to exercise their discretion and grant a re-run. It should be noted that a fact of trialling is that the scenting conditions on the run may significantly vary between dogs running earlier and later i.e. the wind may pick-up or drop-off, change direction or cease blowing. Judges should, so far as reasonably practicable, do their best to ensure an “ambit of equality” but competitors also need to accept that some factors are beyond a Judge’s control.

31. You issue instructions for the handlers to place their dog in the Hide and shoot the blind before calling the dog. The handler neglects to place the dog in the hide and shoots the blind with the dog at heel.

Answer: The judge is faced with three options: 1. Eliminate the dog from competition for a failure to obey the judge; 2. Instruct the handler to place the dog in the Hide and start again and apply a deduction or 3. Deduct the equivalent maximum 5 points allowed for “Breaking from the Hide” (my preferred option)

32. You give clear instructions on the order of the retrieves and the handler sends their dog for the wrong item of game. Do you: 1. Try and advise the handler prior to them sending their dog or 2. Turn them out of the stake after they send the dog, and it retrieves the wrong item of game or is clearly not making any progress to the correct Area of Fall etc?

Answer: If I had time to advise the handler before sending their dog I would consider doing so and deduct points. Once the dog is sent I believe Rule 52 applies, a “Judge is not permitted to advise the competing handler where the dog is nor where the item of game is in relation to the dog” and whether they recover from their error is up to the handler. A variation on this scenario is where the handler sends the dog for a retrieve before completing the instructed sequence at the Firing Point e.g. on a Double Mark they send the dog for the first Mark before the final Mark can be thrown. This dog should be eliminated from competition.

33. The handler forgets to shoot an item of game e.g. a Two Bird or a Blind when the dog is returning from a retrieve.

Answer: Based on the principle of “you can’t retrieve game you didn’t shoot” you may choose to eliminate the dog from competition or alternatively advise the handler to shoot the game and deduct points e.g. 5 points for a failure to obey the judge’s instructions.

## **Examples of Judging Sheets**

- **Author's - Score Sheet**
- **Score Sheet Provided by Wayne Pohlke**
- **Score Sheet Contained Within Rules**
- **Author's - Tally Sheet**
- **Author's - Run Selection Guide**
- **Author's - Judge's Instructions to Handlers**

## Retrieving Score Sheet: Date ...../...../..... (Novice) - (Restricted) - (All Age)

No: ..... Handler: ..... Breed: ..... Dog's Name: .....

OBSERVATIONS	Portion of Retrieve & Maximum Points to Be Awarded		Awarded
<b>Run 1</b>	Steadiness, Obedience & Heeling Maximum of 10 Points		
	Style, Eagerness & Action Maximum of 10 Points		
	Retrieving Maximum of 45 Points		
	Total	65	
<b>Run 2</b>	Steadiness, Obedience & Heeling Maximum of 10 Points		
	Style, Eagerness & Action Maximum of 10 Points		
	Retrieving Maximum of 45 Points		
	Total	65	
<b>Run 3</b>	Steadiness, Obedience & Heeling Maximum of 10 Points		
	Style, Eagerness & Action Maximum of 10 Points		
	Retrieving Maximum of 45 Points		
	Total	65	
<b>Total Score Out of 195</b>			...../195

### Principal Points to Consider when Assessing Performance:

- Ability to Mark
- Dash
- Courage
- Sagacity
- Perseverance
- Cleanness of Delivery
- Use of Nose
- Attention
- Retrieving
- Steadiness
- Control
- Style

**No Score for:** Failure to Complete Retrieve, In Multiple Retrieves Where the Dog Switches Game & Extreme Hard Mouth

**Deduct Up to 10 for:** - Breaking to Shot, Hard Mouth, & Failure to Obey Command & Direction

**Deduct Up to 5 for:** - Blinking & Over-Running Game, Pottering, Giving Tongue & Dropping Game

**Deduct Up to 5 Each Offence** - Handler Moving Outside Firing Point, Breaking from the Hide & Not Firing from Shoulder at Game

Retrieving Trial Judge's Score Sheet by Paul Hamson February 2020

DATE:

CLUB:

DOG NO:

COMPETITOR:

BREED:

MALE or FEMALE:

Points shall be allocated for each Retrieve on the following basis:	Points:	RUN. 1.	RUN. 2.	RUN. 3.	RUN. 4.
Steadiness, obedience and walking to heel:	10				
Style, eagerness and action.	10				
<b>Retrieving: 45</b>					
Marking:	20				
Line Out:	6				
Line In:	2				
Delivery:	6				
Hunting:Nose,Eyes&Ears	6				
Handling Conditions:	5				
<b>POINTS AWARDED TOTAL: =</b>	<b>65</b>				
Points may be deducted for each Retrieve on the following basis:					
Breaking to Shot:	Up to 10				
Blinking and over-running game:	Up to 5				
Pottering:	Up to 5				
Giving tongue:	Up to 5				
Dropping game:	Up to 5				
Hard mouth:	Up to 10				
Failure to obey command and direction:	Up to 10				
Not firing from shoulder at game OR Handler moving outside of Firing Point OR Breaking from the Hide.	Up to 5 pts each offence [ 3 ]				
<b>POINTS DEDUCTED TOTAL: =</b>	<b>65</b>				
<b>NET AWARDED TOTAL: =</b>					
<b>Failure to complete retrieve: NO SCORE</b> <b>In multiple retrieves where the dog switches game: NO SCORE</b> <b>Extreme Hard Mouth: NO SCORE</b>					
<b>RUN NO: 1.</b>					
<b>RUN NO: 2.</b>					
<b>RUN NO: 3.</b>					
<b>RUN NO: 4.</b>					

### RETRIEVING TRIAL JUDGING SHEET

Name of Club \_\_\_\_\_

LAND/WATER Type                      Venue                      Stake                      Date

Competitor No. \_\_\_\_\_

Retrieve No. \_\_\_\_\_ Breed \_\_\_\_\_

MAX  
Points

Points shall be allocated for each Retrieve on the following basis:																				
Steadiness, obedience and walking to heel.                      10																				
Style, eagerness and action                      10																				
Retrieving                      45																				
<b>Total</b> 65																				
Less Deductions (if any)																				
<b>Net Total</b>																				
Points may be deducted for each Retrieve on the following basis:																				
Breaking to Shot Up to                      10																				
Blinking and over-running game                      Up to                      5																				
Pottering                      Up to                      5																				
Giving tongue                      Up to                      5																				
Dropping game                      Up to                      5																				
Hard mouth                      Up to                      10																				
Failure to obey command and direction                      Up to                      10																				
Not firing from shoulder at game and/or Handler moving outside of Firing Point and/or Breaking from the Hide Up to 5 each offence																				
<b>Total Deductions</b>																				

Points for deduction are to be applied to points allocated.  
 Failure to complete retrieve: No score.  
 In multiple retrieves where the dog switches game: No score.  
 Extreme Hard mouth: No Score.

(Signed)

Judge

## RETRIEVING TRIAL JUDGE'S TALLY SHEET

Thank/Stewards: .....

Top Score 1<sup>st</sup> Run ..... Top Score 2<sup>nd</sup> Run ..... Top Score 3<sup>rd</sup> Run .....

Place Awarded	Catalogue No.	Name of Dog	Handler	Breed	Aggregate Points
1st	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
2nd	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
3rd	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
4th	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....

## MATTERS TO CONSIDER WHEN SETTING RUNS

<b>GENERAL LOGISTICS</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Car parking &amp; Holding blind</li> <li>• Exercise area – not interfere with runs</li> <li>• Gallery is able to see but not distract</li> <li>• Competitors driving between runs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interaction between runs</li> <li>• Stock in paddock</li> <li>• Wild game in runs</li> <li>• Access to run via fences etc.</li> </ul>
<b>SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Water entry clear of stakes/logs/rocks</li> <li>• Water exit is possible</li> <li>• Fast flowing water - culvert drains etc.</li> <li>• Excessive heat or cold</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hidden hazards on the line - wire/posts/holes</li> <li>• Sudden sheer drop offs</li> <li>• Proximity to public roads</li> <li>• Ground surface – damage to feet/legs</li> </ul>
<b>MARKS – REQUIREMENTS &amp; CONSIDERATIONS</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dog able to see the bird in the air &amp; as it falls</li> <li>• If possible bird should break open skyline</li> <li>• Position of sun for viewing marks</li> <li>• Able to achieve a consistent area of fall</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Double Mark – reasonable delay between casts unless within 20 metres of each other</li> <li>• Triple mark – 1 must be at a short distance + must be a reasonable delay between casts</li> </ul>
<b>BLINDS – REQUIREMENTS &amp; CONSIDERATIONS</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Position of sun for handling on blinds</li> <li>• Hide for blind from natural terrain or materials</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Possible to find on the initial line from handler</li> <li>• Dog should be in sight until area of the fall</li> </ul>
<b>GENERAL REQUIREMENTS</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Maximum Distance of Retrieve</b> – Beginners &amp; Novice 100mts, All Other Stakes 150mts</li> <li>• <b>Firing Point (FP)</b> – minimum 2 metres wide</li> <li>• <b>Control Point to FP</b> – minimum of 10 metres</li> <li>• <b>Game Retrieved</b> - max of 3 in any one run</li> <li>• <b>Consecutive Runs</b> – maximum of 2 runs and 4 items of game to be retrieved</li> <li>• <b>In Line Game</b> – at 50 mts &lt; 10mts, at 100 mts &lt; 20 mts, at 150 mts &lt; 30 mts – 11.5 degrees</li> <li>• <b>Water</b> – “in or through water of sufficient depth to require the dog to swim”</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Double Rise</b> - maximum of 10 metres from initial game + greater distance from Firing P't</li> <li>• <b>Two Bird</b> – minimum of 20 metres from game</li> <li>• <b>Double Fall</b> - (AA or CH only) - marks only – minimum of 20 mts from line &amp; 40 mts from FP</li> <li>• <b>Diversion</b> - (AA or CH) - max 1 item – not “in line” with or less than 20 metres from game</li> <li>• <b>Relocation</b> - max of 20 mts from initial FP + area of fall able to be observed from new FP – permitted to enable better sighted retrieves</li> <li>• <b>Wounded Game</b> – minimum drag of 20 mts</li> </ul>

Author Paul Hamson March 2022

# Judge's Instructions to Handlers

## General Instructions

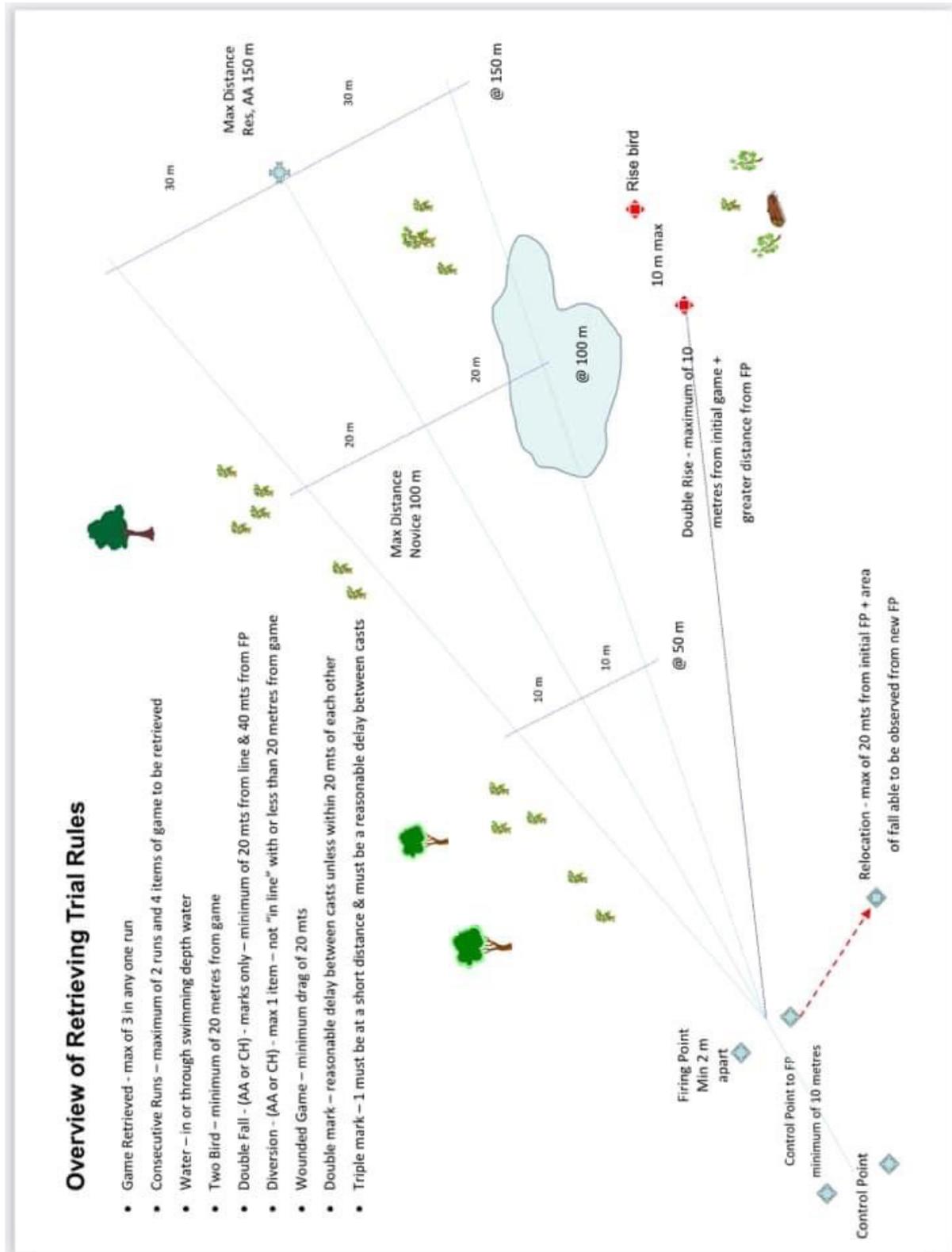
1. Introduce Yourself & Thank Them for Their Attendance
2. Cars – Parking Position & Orientation – Moving Between Stakes
3. Exercise Area – Position – Moving To & From Cars or Holding Area
4. Dogs **Must Not** Watch Dogs Working or Game Being Placed or Thrown
5. Explain Location of Runs – 1<sup>st</sup> – 2<sup>nd</sup> - 3<sup>rd</sup> – (4<sup>th</sup> Run if Relevant)
6. **All** Handlers are Expected to Assist with Stewarding During the Day
7. Whilst Dogs are Working Remain Quiet & Still in Gallery, Car Park etc.,
8. Dogs in Cars and Holding Area are to be Kept Quiet
9. White Coats Only to Be Worn Whilst Running a Dog

## Run Instructions

1. Next Dog Competing is to Be Ready and Waiting
2. Show them the Control Point
3. Gun - Demonstrate the Operation & Safety - Invite Them to Handle It
4. Show them the Firing Point – Explain Where They Can Stand
5. Explain the Run e.g. “Double Mark” & Sequence of Firing & Retrieves
6. Show Position of Throwers & Game – Show Them Test Birds
7. Other Instructions e.g. “Pause before sending your dog to show steadiness”
8. Any Questions? or Concerns? (*Rule 67 - logistically unsound - against Rules - safety of dogs*)

Author Paul Hamson March 2022

# Overview of Rules Provided by John Aherne



## Judges' Training Notes Provided by Elio Colisamone

The process of induction, training and development of prospective judges to hopefully get better alignment in interpretations of performance has very often been a challenge.

Everyone comes into judging with pre-conceived ideas based on their own experiences. Some variation seems almost inevitable.

Also - refining the rules and scoresheets to cover every possible eventuality would be very challenging indeed.

Retrieving Trials have become a very high order, high precision 'stand alone' activity in the last few decades and most judges and handlers seem to have adapted accordingly.

Its roots and underlining philosophy hark back to hunting but just visualise a duck hunter standing on the edge of a lagoon wearing a white jacket and waving arms around for 15-20 minutes to effect pick-ups. Doesn't happen.

The American Field Trialling fraternity love to talk about the "Art and Science" of Retrieving Trials.

Often in the real world hunting scenarios -it's a case of lining dogs to the general area of the blind fall and then allowing the dogs to do some problem solving - while the shooter hunkers down again for the next flight of birds that could appear at any moment.

Plenty of acceptable "Art" involved in those situations.

Not so in this clinical sport – and as long as we all accept -like almost every sport where improvements occur - that at the pointy end –success requires very high order technical requirements.

Firstly for blinds -we as judges owe it to handlers and dogs to set runs where handlers are offered overwhelming vision from the release to the pick up when the bulk of the work is expressing itself in the "SCIENCE" side by presenting acceptable corridors even if tight so that the handler and dog can deliver via effective cueing for lining, maintaining a line especially with undulations, gullies,

water etc and maintaining momentum and with the visual opportunity for handler adjustments as needed.

Hopefully dogs may also get the chance to express their gundog "Art" of nose work and a bit of sagacity as they approach the blind area.

So on a sliding scale - if the dog is set up beautifully, runs the line perfectly, steps on the game - no commands - top scores. If there is no reason to blow a stop whistle – what exactly is the point of blowing?

If it's based on some misconstrued notion that it tells the judge the dog is under 'Control' it makes no sense at all. There'll be plenty of opportunities to test control as needed for other meaningful reasons.

The next dog runs a perfect line but finishes up a metre or two either side but the nose kicks in and methodically works a tight area - takes longer - no commands. Equal top scores. If it seems to be taking a bit longer than expected and a handler reinforces with a 'seek' command. Minimal damage.

All other dogs are separated on a sliding scale according to how well they stay within the corridor, their momentum, at what stage the handler needs to step in, how much work is required for the clean out, commands slipped etc. A few may even finish up reasonably close to the scores of 'No Command or Minimal Command' dogs.

**PERMUTATIONS FOR NEW JUDGES TO FACTOR IN:-** Big day, lots of dogs, scented area slightly expands -because of the helpful scent trail left by a couple of the early smart operators which assists dogs that follow.

Alternatively, first handful of dogs are all over the shop- leaving scattered scent trails. Less assistance for what follows.

Another classic example ..Initially no breeze..

At about 10sh a strong breeze picks, blowing back towards the dogs, or across the face L-R etc. Both handlers and judges make adjustments in their dealing with or assessment.

Some dogs may suddenly now even pick up the scent from 20-40m away while travelling the extreme edge of the acceptable corridor.. Some handlers begin to line further left.. Still well within the corridor - Smart thinking.

Some dogs take a beautiful line with powerful momentum but are two metres to the right of the location with a strong cross wind. The smart handler will attempt to stop the momentum a few metres before the location and request a 'seek'. Again clever handling.

For judges- interpreting things as they unfold – is often mandatory.

However, with blinds- as a general rule- - good lining that results in a slick, efficient, tidy, minimum fuss clean out with plenty of momentum and enthusiasm gets the better score.

My advice to new judges is that they don't need to over complicate or overthink things.

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Just a bit more background stuff to throw in the mix for your group to mull over.

Things like archery or clay pigeon shooting have self-evident defined scoring methods.

Retrieving and Field Trials are more at the mercy of individual interpretations when giving or removing points. Can't be avoided.

Most judges seem to follow the rule guidelines as closely as possible. I'm also fairly sure scoring decisions would to a degree reflect their own exposures/experiences of gundog work. So a bit of variation in approach that sometimes shows up doesn't personally bother me at all. Judges aren't robots and we should all be able to cope with that.

For developing judges – with far less experience - it will be bit of a challenge when you consider all the permutations that can occur. As competitors – if we want folk to take up judging - we all need relax a bit when things aren't quite right at the various stages of their progression.. The senior judges should be ready to offer pleasantly given advice.

Even the basic multiple marks scenario can by itself be quite challenging to developing judges.

Here's one more take on it.

I suppose after a number of decades of involvement in both Retrieving and Field Trials and trying a range of scoring methodologies I've now settled more comfortably in the 'differentiated value' camp.

I tend to see each mark in multiples as having a different weighting challenge.

So Option 2B seems to be the way that I'd 'mostly' deal with that scenario.

Why? Basically - memory fade and other sometimes changing variables (light/breeze etc) can affect outcomes when multiple marks are being assessed.. Even sometimes adjusting scoring methodology on the fly is not completely uncommon and a valid approach if a perceived need arises.

Lag time between pick-ups – increase the challenge for the dogs- so using exactly the same penalty weighting on every mark when handling occurs doesn't fit comfortably with me.

That approach can be quite valid on two well separated marks with minimal memory involved but I still tend to treat each case on merit.

A couple of typical examples.

**TRIPLE MARK EXAMPLE ONE:** If the last mark down in a triple is the 'GO TO' - the level of memory challenge for it is virtually zero to minimal..

So the penalty on the need for commands given on the 'Go To' mark should definitely be heavy. The rest would be treated on a decreasing sliding scale according to evidence of how effectively memory has kicked in and if the dog appears of its own accord to be targeting the area of the fall and at what stage the handler feels a need to step in. Experience in assessing these things correctly is often key.

**TRIPLE MARK EXAMPLE TWO:** If the judge decides to really crank up the challenge for dogs and handlers by treating all three marks as 'Memory Marks' on a tough run with difficult terrain that also has minimal separations - things usually become increasingly stacked towards the probability of handlers most likely needing to handle on all or at least one or two of the marks – generally the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> pick up. WHY – Increased memory fade and suction – especially if dogs have to travel through two shorter marks to a very difficult long mark with tight separations.

I'd be obliged to now factor in the likelihood of overall increased memory challenges for the dogs on all the marks compared to the TRIPLE MARK EXAMPLE ONE.

In that situation I find it reasonable to lower overall expectations a little but still penalise accordingly on a sliding scale.

Bottom line. Handlers are being assessed on how quickly and efficiently they can organise the cleanout.

So it is understandable if astute handlers -who are great problem solvers on behalf of their dogs- activate a quick, sharp, efficient cleanout on difficult memory work by stepping in at critical moments when things could go pear shaped. They shouldn't be excessively punished for it.

The ultimate aim is the premium 'No Command' approach on multiple marks to get the job done by directness, staying in the fall area etc. being scored on some graded scale and second best is the sharp, precise handled approach to wrap things up with as little input as the handler can get away with also on some graded scale.

In multiple falls the dogs in the comp not handled or minimally handled will still significantly outscore the others anyway.

As an aside - whatever, hand, arm, leg, voice cue is used to align dogs best to accurately attack the correct fall should be lauded, rather than seen as a fault – as long as it is snappily done, and it isn't quite evident that the dog has completely forgotten, and it appears the handler is lining as per a blind.

# Judges' Training Notes Provided by Noel Eltringham

## Guidance for Judges in Setting Novice Runs

- Do not face the sun on marked retrieves.
- Keep runs that are within the distance requirements of the rules, i.e. Novice max distance 100 metres.
- Try to locate the gallery in a position where they can observe the run. Avoid locating the gallery in a location where they can interfere with the run i.e. a minimum of 20 metres from the control point and not behind the line of sight from the firing point to the bird.
- If terrain permits put 10 meters between the control point and firing point.
- If terrain permits make sure there is at least 2.0 metres between the pegs at the firing point.
- In setting a run ensure that you as judge can see the dog for most of the run especially as the dog picks up the bird. You cannot judge a dog, which is out of sight.
- Put sufficient obstacles in a run so that the dogs are differentiated during the course of the run and not necessarily between the pegs.
- Do not put too many obstacles in the retrieve that will specifically eliminate dogs from the stake.
- Make sure you run dogs on land and in or through water.
- On water retrieves make sure dogs can enter and exit the water safely by avoiding hazards in water that may injure the dog.
- Try to ensure the entry to the water is at right angles (90°) to the bank in novice retrieves.
- Make sure the area of the fall is large enough to accommodate some variation in the cast.
- Try to avoid casting birds onto stony ground or where there may be hard objects that could damage the bird.
- Try to include an amount of skyline in the cast (for at least 50% of cast) of the bird especially as it falls.

- In novice stakes try not to put obstacles in the retrieve which require dogs to deviate from the direct line to complete the retrieve as most novice dogs will overcompensate when going around an obstacle. This does not exclude heavy cover which strong dogs will face.
- Avoid casting birds into heavy cover where it becomes a raffle if the dog finds the bird or not.
- In a novice run ensure you test to retrieve at a greater distance than an individual can throw a dummy to test if the dogs have been given marking training.
- Try to include a run in a Novice stake where the dog has to judge the distance from the cast of the bird not from the fall of the bird onto the ground. An obstacle such as a channel bank, ridge or reeds at thirty to forty metres will test this if the bird is cast at a distance behind the obstacle.

### **Guidance for Judges in Setting Restricted Runs**

- In addition to the general guidance provided by the Novice Guidelines the following can provide a standard against which to set stakes for Restricted level dogs. These guidelines are for guidance only and each judge should set his or her own standards against which to assess Restricted level dogs.
- Restricted stakes are essentially a steppingstone from Novice to All Age. The restricted stake should be considered an introduction to the concepts of multiple leg runs including combinations of sighted and blind retrieves.
- On mark retrieves including water angle entry can be introduced to mark retrieves at Restricted level.
- When setting blind retrieves ensure that there is a large area in which to handle the dog. Do not set blinds which require a tight test of control, this is the domain of all age and championship.
- If putting water in a blind find retrieve make the entry to the water is square to the edge and ensure the water blind find is reasonably short distance.
- If setting a double mark retrieve:
  - Generally don't nominate the order of retrieve;
  - If nominating an order of retrieve it is advisable that there is at least 60 degrees of angle between the birds;

- If nominating the order of retrieve ensure that the dog can be viewed between the two birds.
- If setting a mark and 'blind' retrieve:
  - Generally allow the mark bird to be picked up first;
  - If nominating the blind retrieve first make sure there is a wide angle between the two birds i.e. must be greater than 60 degrees and preferably greater than 90 degrees.
- If setting a 'two bird' retrieve make sure the dog will have a clear line of sight to the 'two bird' as it is cast. Try to cast the bird parallel to the direction the dog is running. Do not cast the 'two bird' so that it lands at the dogs feet. Remember the 'two bird' has to be at least 20 metres from the fall of the first cast bird.
- Remember diversionary birds and double fall retrieves are not legal in a Restricted Stake.

### **Guidance for Judges in Setting All Age Runs**

- In addition to the general guidance provided by the Novice and Restricted Guidelines the following can provide a standard against which to set stakes for All Age level dogs. These guidelines are for guidance only and each judge should set his or her own standards against which to assess All Age level dogs.
- All Age stakes are essentially the application of the building blocks assessed in Restricted Stakes.
- On blind and mark retrieves angle entry to water can be utilised in retrieves at All Age level.
- On blind retrieves dogs can be expected to be handled between avenues of cover. Blinds are a test of control and obstacles that may force the poorly trained dog offline can be utilised in the retrieve.
- If setting a double or triple mark retrieves:
  - Nominate of the order of retrieve that is expected;
  - If nominating an order of retrieve at least 10 degrees of angle is required between the items of game as stated in the rules;
  - If nominating the order of retrieve dogs should be able to be viewed between the birds at some stage.
- If setting combinations of mark and blind retrieves:

- If setting a 'two bird' retrieve make sure the dog will have a clear line of sight to the 'two bird' as it is cast. Try to cast the bird parallel to the direction the dog is running. Do not cast the 'two bird' so that it lands at the dogs feet. Remember the 'two bird' has to be at least 40 metres from the firing point and at least 20 metres from the fall of the first cast bird.
- Remember diversionary birds and double fall retrieves are not legal in a Restricted Stake.