



**Royal Kennel Club**

**GUIDE TO ROYAL  
KENNEL CLUB J REGULATIONS FOR  
Pointers & Setters**

**FOR  
JUDGES & COMPETITORS**

Although we are subject to all The Royal Kennel Club Rules and Regulations this Seminar will be concerned with the 'J' Regulations and the 'Guide for Field Trial Judges' with specific reference to

**POINTER & SETTER FIELD TRIALS**

This document provides the basis or script upon which the Approved Presenters make their presentation and should be read in conjunction with the Guide for Field Trial Judges and Field Trial Regulations

All Judges, competitors and those involved with Field Trials should keep updated with any KC rule changes and Guidance Notes. These can be found in the KC FT Newsletter (quarterly). You can subscribe to this and/or download from the KC website using the following link:

<https://www.thekennelclub.org.uk/events-and-activities/field-trials-and-working-gundogs/already-competing-in-field-trials>

Changes to FT Regulations are also in the back pages of the KC Field Trial Regulations booklet.

There is a free download at the bottom of the website page:

<https://www.thekennelclub.org.uk/events-and-activities/field-trials-and-working-gundogs/judging-a-field-trial/>

Examples on how to 'Lay out a Judging Book' are also on this page.

**This Guide should be read in conjunction with:**

- 1) The Royal Kennel Club **Guide for Field Trial Judges**
- 2) The Royal Kennel Club **J Regulations**
- 3) **Code of Best Practice for Pointer & Setter Field Trial Competitors**  
<https://www.thekennelclub.org.uk/about-us/about-the-kennel-club/the-kennel-club-codes/code-of-best-practice-for-pointer-and-setter-field-trial-competitors/>

## **The Royal Kennel Club Guide for Field Trial Judges**

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This guide consists of nine sections.

The guide is intended as a useful reference for those embarking on a Judging career in Field Trials.

It is important that the information in the guide is read in conjunction with The Royal Kennel Club Regulations and in particular the "J" Regulations.

Let us now look at the "Guide" in a little more detail and go through each of the nine sections:

- 1) **General**
- 2) **Code of Best Practice**
- 3) **Invitation to Judge**

- 4) **Appointment to the Panel of Field Trial Judges**
- 5) **Before the Trial**
- 6) **At the Trial**
- 7) **After the Trial**
- 8) **Overseas Judges and British Judges overseas**
- 9) **Pitfalls**
- 10) **Social Media**

## **THE ROYAL KENNEL CLUB J REGULATIONS**

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**The “J” Regulations are divided into eight parts, they are:**

J	General Regulations
J (A)	The Management, Conduct and Judging of Field Trials
J (B)	Retrievers
J (C)	Spaniels
J (D)	Pointers and Setters
J (E)	Breeds which Hunt, Point and Retrieve
J (F)	Show Gundog Working Certificate
J (G)	Gundog Working Tests

**For the purposes of this Guide the relevant sections are:**

1. J General Regulations
2. J(A) The Management, Conduct and Judging of Field Trials
3. J(D) Pointers and Setters

## **J – General Regulations**

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The **J Regulations** are mandatory and represent the basis upon which all Field Trials are conducted. This section covers the following:

- 1) Introduction
- 2) Welfare of dogs
- 3) Stakes
- 4) Application and documentation
- 5) Judges
- 6) Entries

- 7) Awards and prizes
- 8) Control of dogs and competitors under Trial
- 9) Championships and Champion Stake
- 10) Removal of dog(s) from the Trial
- 11) Objections
- 12) Disqualification and forfeit of awards
- 13) Fraudulent and discreditable conduct at Trials
- 14) Penalties

PLEASE READ THE J REGS (GENERAL) – they are NOT covered in the Guide for Royal Kennel Club J Regulations for Pointer and Setter Field Trials below as they are self-explanatory (but may be in the J Regulations Examination).

J.8 'Control of dogs and competitors under Trial' regulations are particularly important for Judges and Competitors to know.

Before embarking on a journey through the J Regulations it will be worth spending a few minutes looking at the difference between the meaning of the words **MUST**, **MAY**, **SHOULD** and **WILL**.

The Oxford English Dictionary defines them as follows:

<b>MUST</b>	to express necessity or obligation, thing that must be done
<b>MAY</b>	used to express a wish, possibility or permission
<b>SHOULD</b>	used to express duty or obligation
<b>WILL</b>	used to express promise or obligation

This guide will illustrate how these words are applied.



## J(A) – The MANAGEMENT, CONDUCT and JUDGING of FIELD TRIALS

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### 1. General

**a. *A Field Trial should be run as nearly as possible to an ordinary day's shooting.***

This regulation should be read in conjunction with Regulation J(A)3.(a) which sets out the Judge's task which is to find the dog which, on the day, pleases them most by the quality of its work from the shooting point of view, and consequently requires judges to take natural game finding to be of the first importance in Field Trials.

Taken together these regulations require the Judges to run the Trial, in so far as this is within their power, as a shooting day might be run and to give the opportunity for game finding ability to shine.

There are differences in the methods of working across Pointers and the different breeds of Setter and judges should recognise these differences and judge the dogs accordingly.

**b. *All Competitors, Judges and Officials must be present when the Secretary or Chief Steward has announced the Trial has commenced or when the Trial is deemed to have commenced.***

This is self-explanatory but defines when the Trial is deemed to commence which has a knock on effect elsewhere.

**c. *The Chief Steward should liaise closely with the Steward of the Beat who will have planned which ground is to be used for the Trial. He or she should, where necessary, welcome all on behalf of the society and introduce the Host, Steward of the Beat, Judges, Guns and other officials. The Chief Steward, moreover, should explain the outline of the day, with instructions about transport, lunch, toilets and other arrangements. The Chief Steward should also issue warnings on safety.***

This, together with J8.a.(1), defines the role of the Chief Steward and his obligation to ensure that the regulations are observed. However, this Regulation also makes it clear that the Chief Steward has no input whatsoever into the Judging of the dogs. The general duty of the Chief Steward to liaise with the Host, Steward of the Beat and others and to properly brief and inform competitors and spectators.

**d. *At the end of the day, the Chief Steward should ensure that the Host, Guns, Judges and officials are properly thanked.***

The Chief Steward should see that the appropriate thanks are given at the end of the day, as above and including the Keeper (usually the Steward of the Beat), although the Chairman or other official of the organising Society may undertake this duty.

**e. *Dogs must not wear any form of collar when under the orders of the Judges except for identification where necessary.***

This is mandatory, but is qualified by Regulation J(D).6. for Pointer and Setter Trials.

- f. Dogs MUST be excluded from further participation in the Stake if they have committed an 'eliminating fault'. The Judges MAY also discard dogs for 'major faults'. Where a dog is eliminated for 'hard mouth' all the Judges must have examined the injured game before the dog is discarded. The handler shall also be given the opportunity of examining the game in the presence of the Judges; but the decision of the Judges is final.*

Part of this regulation is obvious, and part has no relevance in Pointer and Setter Trials. The important part of this regulation for our purposes is a clear statement that dogs *must* be excluded from the stake if they commit eliminating faults, which will be dealt with later, but *may* also be discarded if they demonstrate major faults.

## **2. Water Tests**

N/A to Pointer and Setter Trials.

## **3. Judging**

This regulation sets out in general terms the duties and responsibilities of Judges at all Trials and restates the principle that the Judges should select the dogs which pleases them the most from a shooting point of view.

- a. The task of the Judges is to find the dog which, on the day, pleases them most by the quality of its work from the shooting point of view. They must, therefore, take natural game-finding to be of the first importance in Field Trials.*

With this in mind they should conduct themselves generally as might be expected of them on a normal days shooting. In particular they should make themselves known to all the principal participants, the host, gamekeeper and others and be courteous and polite to all concerned, including the competitors. Having done all these things they should bear in mind that they are engaged in a shooting day, and as far as possible, judge the dogs on the basis of what might be expected of a top class shooting dog.

*A Judge must also have a very good working knowledge of the breed or breeds under Trial and have the interest and future of the breed or breeds at heart since final placings may influence breeding plans and so determine the course of breed development.*

Judges need to know that there are different styles of work across the breeds, some carrying a higher head than others. All breeds have different styles and the Judge should be able to appreciate those styles and judge the best of the dogs in the Trial without any preconceived ideas about working characteristics.

- b. No Judge should accept an invitation to judge a Trial and no competitor should enter a Trial unless they are fully conversant with the Field Trial Regulations.*

*The Chief Steward of a Field Trial should ensure that each of the Judges at a Field Trial has a copy of the current Field Trial Regulations.*

- c. *Judges are responsible for the proper conduct of the Trial in accordance with Royal Kennel Club Rules and Field Trial Regulations. Judges are also expected to maintain and abide by the highest standards in accordance with the appropriate Codes of Best Practice as published from time to time.*

The Judges have an obligation to ensure that the Trial is conducted in accordance with Royal Kennel Club Field Trial Rules and Regulations with which they are required to be familiar.

If the judge discovers any problems regarding the card or schedule that contravenes the J regs, for example a dog running that has been in the judge's ownership within the last year, the Chief Steward should be informed in the first instance.

Having done all of the introductory work the Judges are tasked to make sure they have the right dogs, according to their numbers, in line. It is however, the handlers responsibility, if running more than one dog, to make sure that only the number of the dog required is displayed, and to have the correct dog. J8.b.(9)

- d. *All Judges, Chief Stewards and others responsible for the organisation of the Trial should be courteous and co-operative with the Host and Steward of the Beat and fall in with their arrangements to achieve the best result possible in an atmosphere of friendliness and confidence.*
- e. *At the start of the day, the Judges should be introduced to each other and decide their positions in the line which will remain the same throughout the body of the Stake. The Judges should brief the guns and handlers and if, at any time, conditions force them to depart from the arrangements they have set out the Chief Steward should be informed so that he or she can advise the competitors, guns and others affected.*
- f. *Judges should also make themselves aware of any special prizes which are to be awarded in the Stake.*

These three paragraphs, taken together place obligations on the Judges to make sure that they meet all the principal participants in the Trial at the start of the day, to be courteous and co-operative and to make sure that everyone involved understands what is required for the Trial. This, obviously, involves consultation with Host and Steward of the Beat, often the Head Gamekeeper to find out what may be expected in the way of game supply so that the Trial can be organised accordingly. Judges must make sure the Gun understands what is expected of him.

Finally, Judges must be aware if there are any special prizes to be awarded at the end of the Stake. Often these are overlooked until the last moment and devalued by the unseemly haste with which the Judges must make a decision when the Secretary asks for the winner of a 'Special' which the Judges have overlooked.

- g. *Judges should ask the Steward of the Beat what the game position is likely to be and regulate the amount of work or number of retrieves for each dog accordingly. They should also satisfy themselves that arrangements have been made for the collection of dead or wounded game not gathered by the competing dogs and where necessary its humane despatch.*

N/A to Pointer and Setter Trials.



- h. Judges should be careful for the safety of dogs and should not require them to negotiate hazards such as dangerous barbed wire fences, ice on ponds, unsupervised roadways or walls with high drops. Whilst Judges should take reasonable precautions for the safety of competing dogs, it is also the duty of the handler to satisfy himself or herself that their dog is suitably trained, physically fit and prepared to undertake the work allocated by the Judges before directing it to carry out the task specified.***

This regulation has only limited application in Pointer and Setter Trials, but Judges must be careful, as one would be on a normal shooting day, to ensure that dogs are not put at risk by being asked to carry out work where there is an obvious risk of injury, and to grade the dogs according to a consistent and justifiable system.

- i. A higher standard of work is expected in Stakes which carry a qualification for the title of Field Trial Champion.***

As will seem obvious to most, the dogs in an Open Stake may be expected to perform to a higher standard than those in a Novice Stake and the Judges should judge accordingly. It is quite wrong to say that a dog, having won a Puppy or Novice Stake is then an Open dog and should be expected to perform to Open standard before achieving a qualification. The fact that novice dogs may often be capable of such work does not mean that it should be made a precondition.

- j. All Judges must be satisfied that the conditions at the Stake were such as to enable the dogs to be satisfactorily tested. If there was insufficient game the stake must be considered void and must be reported to The Royal Kennel Club within 14 days.***

Judges must be satisfied that there was enough game to properly test the dogs and give every competitor as even a chance as possible.

- k. It is the duty of the Judges to give dogs every opportunity to work well by seeing that conditions are, as far as possible, in their favour. In all Trials the work of the dog is much affected by the way the handler behaves. Noisy handling, however occasioned, is a major fault. A good handler will appear to do little but watch his dog while maintaining at all times perfect control over it.***

In the course of the Trial Judges have an obligation to see that every dog is, so far as possible given a fair chance to show what it can do. Of course, the dogs will hardly ever get identical ground to work, but, the Judges should endeavour, as far as that is possible to give every dog a fair chance to show what it can do and impress the Judges by its performance.

- l. Judges should keep their opinions strictly to themselves and act on what happens on the day or days of the Trial at which they are judging, forgetting past performance.***

This small regulation covers a multitude of sins! Judges must not judge a dog on the basis of the dog's history (which of course may be well known to them), but must judge the dog on the day. They must keep their own counsel and should not discuss any dog's performance with anyone other than its handler or owner (and co-judge). Judges should be prepared, if asked, to discuss with a handler or owner the reasons for their assessment of a dog's performance, but this should be done discretely and should only involve the individual dog concerned and not the performance of other dogs in the Stake.

- m. At the end of each retrieve or run, Judges are advised to place each dog in a category such as A or B (+ or –) according to the work done. Such gradings may, quite properly, be supplemented on occasion by additional notation for reference purposes when Judges are going through their books. It is, however, imperative to appreciate that gradings must never be retrospectively adjusted. Neither should there ever be any attempt to sum sequences of grades to produce a single letter grading of a dog. When all dogs have been seen by a Judge, or Judges, they will wish to confer to determine which dogs they wish to discard or retain; it is vitally important for Judges to make short notes of each dog's work. Judges should never expect to be able to trust to memory.***

Judges must adopt a judging system which is comprehensible to, and comparable with, their co-Judges so that there is consistency of marking over the Trial. Some Judges will instantly drop a dog which receives a 'B' while others will have marked a dog 'B' for work that would be awarded an 'A-' by their co-Judge. All Judges will have their own personal scoring system to remind them of the differences between the work they have seen, and should come to a consensus view with their co-Judges.

Once a dog has had a 'B', that poor work cannot be expunged from the record of that Trial, and subsequent top class work for which the dog may be awarded an 'A+' cannot be averaged out to make the dog a clean 'A' dog.

It is of the utmost importance to make short meaningful notes about each dog's work as, over the course of a 45 dog Stake it is virtually impossible for Judges to have total recall without notes and when the Judges get together at the end to discuss placings it is important to be able to justify a mark by being able to describe the work in detail, and memory will let you down. Notes should also be made about conditions such as weather, scenting conditions and terrain.

With the Pointers and Setters two judge system the judges generally walk a short distance behind the handlers (being mindful not to interfere with the dog's work), with the left hand judge watching the dog work on the furthest left and the right hand judge watching the dog on the furthest right, switching dogs when they cross. Occasionally one of the judges may need to inform the other which he is watching. At the end of the first round the judges will get together to go through their books and decide which dogs they wish to see again and which they discard. Dogs should not be eliminated without agreeing it with your co-judge first.

- n. Judges on the A Panel and the B Panel should bear in mind that they will be asked for assessments of B Panel or non-panel Judges, as appropriate, with whom they officiate. All evaluation forms to be received by The Royal Kennel Club within 30 days of the trial.***

One of the most important duties of an 'A' Panel judge in a Pointer & Setter trial is to assess the 'B' and/or non-Panel Judges with whom he officiates and to report upon them on the form provided. Over the course of the Trial it is the 'A' Judge's duty to ensure that he engages in enough discussion with his co-Judge to ensure sufficient knowledge of their suitability or otherwise, at that time, to be able to make a recommendation as to whether they should be advanced to one or other panel. Whilst the form is intended to be private and confidential judges should note that, in certain circumstances, the contents may be revealed to the Judge to whom they refer. It is important, therefore, that any personal comments should be avoided and only comments relevant to the Judges' suitability to be on a judging panel included.

Evaluation forms are usually submitted online. The following link takes you to the correct KC web page; there is also a link to contact the KC if you are unable to submit the form online

<https://www.thekennelclub.org.uk/events-and-activities/field-trials-and-working-gundogs/judging-a-field-trial/>

Hard copies of the form should be available from the Field Trial Secretary at the trial.

## J(D) Pointers and Setters

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### 1. Basic Requirements

*Dogs shall be required to quarter ground systematically with pace and style in search of gamebirds, to point gamebirds, to be steady to flush, and shot and, where applicable, to fall. Dogs should not be gun shy. The dog should work its point out freely, on command, without the handler either touching the dog or moving in front of it.*

*Any dog which does not fulfil the basic requirements shall not receive an award or a Certificate of Merit.*

This defines the essential functions of both Pointers and Setters. Any dog, which fails to perform one or more of these functions does not fulfil the basic requirements of the breed and cannot receive an award. Failure to fulfil even one of these basic requirements will prevent a dog receiving an award or Certificate of Merit.

Ground treatment is absolutely fundamental when considering the quality of the dog's work. When the beat is directly into the wind the dog should ideally have a straight flat first cast to the side on which it is drawn, at right angles to the wind. However, this may vary according to scenting conditions and game presence.

Ideally a dog should complete its first cast before either Judges or handlers move forward.

Back casting or turning down wind at the end of a cast is very undesirable in a Pointer or Setter as it means the dog is covering the same ground again, instead of taking fresh ground. Expending energy and time in this way is very wasteful particularly in warm weather and heavy difficult ground. However, before marking a dog down for this it is important to realise that an occasional back-cast may be caused by, for example, an eddy in the wind, resulting from the topography. If this is the case it will very often be confirmed by the other dog's back-casting in the same area.

It is essential that Judges familiarise themselves with the pattern required of a dog handling a cheek wind or running down wind.

Judges should be acutely aware of changes in wind direction and make allowances accordingly. Very often the first indication of a change in wind direction will be an alteration in the dog's pattern.

It is inevitable on moorland, bearing in mind the area of ground required to run a 20 brace stake, that there will be a variation in underfoot conditions and that some dogs will have much more favourable conditions than others. Judges must be aware of this, and it is strongly recommended that either very favourable or unfavourable conditions should be noted in the Judges book for later consideration.

The essence is that, irrespective of wind direction all the ground allocated is covered by the dog. A dog which achieves this with the minimum of handling is superior to one which requires handler intervention. It may be, for example that a dog is slightly sticky in producing its birds. In this case it has not failed to perform the basic requirements and must not be eliminated for this, but it should be marked down.

By a change in its action a dog will very often indicate the presence of game prior to pointing. However, the dog cannot be considered to be either on point or setting until it is stationary.

Full credit must be given to a dog that draws and points naturally, without assistance from the handler, as opposed to one which indicates game and is brought on to point by the handler.

When a dog comes on point, the handler should claim by putting his hand in the air and alert the handler of the other dog if need be. Before going to the point, the handler and judge should check that the other dog has stopped working and is under control. The Judge nearest the pointing dog will then go with the handler, being careful not to walk in front of the other dog, and instruct the handler to produce the birds with his dog. The other judge will remain with the second dog.

A dog must demonstrate that it is steady to gunshot and not gun shy. This is achieved by firing a shot into the air after the bird(s) flush, with the gun positioned, if possible, relative to the dog as on a shooting day. Ideally the gun should not be closer than five metres to the dog. In a puppy stake the minimum equivalent distance would be about ten metres.

When producing the bird, the dog should move freely on command at a pace which would enable it to produce a moving bird. However, it should not rush in at such a speed that a gun cannot comfortably maintain contact with it. However, if the bird is running (especially in the case of a pheasant) the dog may need to go in faster in order to flush it and should be judged accordingly. The flush should be judged from a shooting point of view and whether the bird flushed would have been in range for the gun. Sometimes by the time the judge (and gun) reach the dog the bird has already moved. The dog should not be penalised, when asked to flush, for breaking away to relocate the bird. Again, it should always be judged from a shooting point of view.

At the flush the dog must be steady, in other words it must make no movement towards bird(s) that it has seen departing. Ideally, the dog will drop to wing and this is considered a credit point as it greatly enhances the safety of shooting over the dog. In certain situations, particularly with a brood of young grouse, a dog may produce several birds in sequence in this manner.

After the flush and clean up when the judge is satisfied that no more birds remain, he should instruct the handler to pick up his dog. If birds are subsequently produced from this worked area the dog should not be penalised for missing birds. However, if the handler takes the initiative by picking up the dog and bird(s), subsequently flush from the area worked, the dog must be eliminated.

In the event of both dogs simultaneously pointing the same bird or birds, commonly referred to as a joint find, full credit shall be given equally to both dogs for the find. The handler of the forward dog would be asked to produce. As soon as it has done so and shown it is steady (and shot fired) the handler should be asked to put his lead on and come away to give the co-judge an opportunity to ask the handler of the other dog to produce. As long as at least one bird has been produced both dogs will be credited with a joint find. Only one shot is required if the gun is fired near to both dogs.

In this event both handlers should be informed by the judges that it has been treated as a joint find. Sometimes it may be unclear whether the second dog is backing or pointing and the judge should ask the handler to confirm whether he is claiming, before the first dog is taken forward to produce.

.When both Judges are satisfied that they have seen enough running from the brace, the instruction to pick up should be given. Each dog is under judgement until it is on the lead and under the full control of the handler.

## **2. Number of runners**

*With the exception of the Pointer and Setter Champion Stake, to qualify for entry in The Royal Kennel Club Stud Book, the number of runners permitted in stakes is as follows:-*

- a. Open Stakes: maximum 40, minimum 16.*
- b. Novice/All Aged Stakes: maximum 45, minimum 10.*
- c. Puppy Stakes: maximum 45, minimum 8.*

*Where an Open and any other type of stake are to run on the same day, the maximum number of runners over the whole day is 45.*

### 3. **Competing**

***Dogs are to be run in pairs and their handlers must walk within a reasonable distance of one another as though shooting together. Dogs should be placed as drawn on the card, with the first number on the left, and every dog must be brought up in its proper turn without delay.***

Because the dogs run in pairs it is incumbent upon competitors to ensure that they do not interfere in the work of the other dog by noisy handling or crossing in front of the other handler.

If one dog is on point and the other is backing, particularly if the dogs are close together, the handler of the pointing dog should be careful to ensure that the backing dog is under the other handler's control before passing behind (if possible) the backing dog. Otherwise the backing dog may be provoked into moving.

Similarly, Judges must be careful that their actions and positioning do not interfere with the ground treatment of the dogs, particularly when one dog is on point well in advance of the other and the other dog is quartering. The other dog must be allowed to continue quartering until it either backs, goes on point or is stopped by its handler.

### 4. **Draws**

***Prior to the Stake and before the commencement of each round a draw will be made. For second and subsequent rounds, if the judges are satisfied that they have identified the dogs which will figure in the awards, they may run them in pairs as they see fit, to establish the final places. When a handler has more than one dog in a stake, those dogs shall, when a draw takes place, be kept separate in every round.***

This means that the judges can, for example, run their highest placed dog with the second placed dog, third with fourth and fifth with sixth. This will, more often than not, greatly assist the judges in their final placings of dogs. Dogs should not be paired with the same dog as in the first round. If there are many dogs through to the second round the judges may ask the chief steward to do a draw.

When a handler has more than one dog in a stake and his dogs are drawn together, the first dog out of the hat remains in place and the second dog becomes the first dog in the following pair. The next dog out of the hat completes the first incomplete brace and the dog following this completes the next incomplete brace.

There may be an occasion when only one dog remains to be tested in the stake. The Judges should ask an eliminated dog to run without credit in order to complete the pair.

### 5. **Byes**

***When in any round in a Stake the number of dogs is unequal, the dog whose number is drawn last must be run against a dog chosen by the Judges. No dog shall have a second such bye.***

It is generally considered to be a disadvantage to be the bye dog. This is because the dog must be kept close up to the Judges in a state of constant readiness until such times as it is required.

In theory, although unlikely in practice, a dog may have to watch 22 brace of dogs run from a close up position before being called upon by the Judges. This rule simply prevents such a dog being disadvantaged in a stake more than once in this regard.

### 6. **Collars**

***The Judges may require any dogs to wear distinguishing collars.***

Particularly in the case of Irish Setters and Gordon Setters, dogs may be virtually indistinguishable except to their owners. To aid the Judges in making instant decisions as to which is which the dogs may be required to wear loose fitting collar made from a soft material, one in red and the other in white.

- 7. *The whole quality of a dog's work must be taken into consideration, not just the number of points it has made. The Judges should be looking for credit qualities rather than trying to eliminate dogs, and it is the better dogs which should be fully tried, not wasting ground and time on those with little or no merit. Minor faults should not be too heavily penalised when a dog has done good sound work. A dog's work should be exciting and a pleasure to watch, as would appeal to and interest guns particularly if game birds are scarce.***

Judges should be positive and recognise merit in the dogs which are being tested. However, it is essential to maintain the standard of the breeds and, therefore, any dog which commits an eliminating fault must be discarded from the stake. Judges are allowed no discretion in this.

Similarly, any dog which commits a major fault, irrespective of the quality of its other work must not be awarded first in a stake, where there are other dogs in the Stake which have not committed major faults and whose work is otherwise of sufficient quality to merit an award in the Stake, above those dogs, although in exceptional cases it may feature in the minor awards. However, that said, such a dog must not be placed higher in the awards than a dog which has not committed any major faults.

Judges should bear in mind that the stake is not a 'race to the game' and that one dog finding game in front of the other is not necessarily an indication of superior quality.

## **8. Credit Points**

***Systematically quartering with stamina, pace and style***

***Hunting with drive and purpose***

***Style on point and production***

***Dropping to wing***

***Natural backing***

***Quiet handling***

All of the above are in place because they have a very positive impact on a shooting day.

***Systematically Quartering with Stamina, Pace and Style***

A dog which demonstrates this is much more exciting, interesting and enjoyable to watch than a 'plodder'.

***Hunting with Drive and Purpose***

Again this greatly adds to the aesthetics of the occasion.

***Style on Point and Production***

This falls into precisely the same category as the two above. The judge should take account of the breed differences i.e. a setter should not be penalised for lying down (setting) while on point. The intensity of the point is to be credited. The workout may be a gentle walk in or some dogs, especially setters, may go in bursts of movement, especially if the bird is running. Both should be credited if the resulting production would have given a gun a chance of a shot.

***Natural Backing***

This is desirable because it prevents the backing dog interfering with the pointing dog by pressuring it. Also helps the handler and guns to locate the pointing dog and for the gun to be able to take a safe shot, without worrying where the other dog is.

***Dropping to Wing***

This is important because the dog will almost certainly be on undulating terrain, especially when in pursuit of grouse, and this gives the dog an extra margin of safety. In the case of a flushed bird it is acceptable if the dog remains standing (maybe on point) as long as it is steady. Dropping naturally is an extra refinement to be credited.

***Quiet Handling***

Excessive use of the whistle or especially the human voice undoubtedly disturbs game and makes it less likely to sit for the dog and gun and may be upsetting to brace mate.



## 9. Eliminating faults

*Flushing up wind*

*Chasing fur or feather*

*Whining or barking*

*Stealing a point*

*Interfering with the other dog on point*

*Not dropping to flush down wind*

*Missing gamebirds on the beat*

*Out of control*

*Unsteadiness to game*

*Blinking a point*

*Without merit*

**ELIMINATING** Fault – Dog **MUST** be discarded

All of the above are in place because they have a very negative effect on a shooting day. However, unless blatantly obvious, and it is always better to give the benefit of the doubt to the dog and discuss with your co-judge before eliminating.

### *Flushing Upwind*

The handler is walking into the wind with the dog quartering either side – the dog should have the opportunity to scent the bird. On a shooting day this would mean that a shot could not be taken and game on the beat is, therefore, wasted.

### *Out of Control*

A dog in this situation is not systematically covering the ground and is liable to flush gamebirds which again means missed opportunities for the guns.

### *Chasing Fur or Feather*

This again results in wasted ground and missed opportunity. The dogs are there to provide opportunities for the guns to shoot.

### *Unsteadiness to Game*

A dog which is unsteady to game may prevent a shot being taken by moving into a dangerous position between the birds and the guns, particularly on undulating ground.

### *Whining or Barking*

A dog which is noisy is unpleasant to be around and detracts from the pleasure of the occasion.

### *Blinking a Point*

A dog which blinks does not produce game for the guns and therefore it defeats the whole purpose.

### *Stealing a Point*

Again this will very often lead to a premature flush as the dog which was first on point may try to reassert its position over the dog which is stealing.

### *Interfering with the Other Dog on Point*

This very often leads to a premature flush and therefore a missed opportunity.

### *Not Dropping to Flush Down wind*

If in this situation the dog drops immediately, the guns can go to the dog and may well have the opportunity of a shot as frequently the covey of birds will not all flush simultaneously and some will remain in front of the dog.

### *Missing Gamebirds on the Beat*

Similarly this constitutes a missed opportunity for the guns.

### *Without Merit*

A dog with no merit is boring to watch and incapable of the purpose for which it is there.

**10. Major Faults*****Poor ground treatment******Stickiness on point******Persistent back casting******Noisy handling******Persistent false pointing*****MAJOR** Fault – Dog **MAY** be discarded***Poor Ground Treatment***

Systematic ground treatment, appropriate for the wind direction, must be employed if the dog is to fulfil its basic function of locating all gamebirds on its allotted beat.

***Stickiness on Point***

If a bird is running in front of the dog and the dog is not moving freely it will literally be unable to put enough pressure on the bird to cause it to flush and will, therefore, not fulfil one of its basic functions.

In a summer grouse Trial it may be that a dog will stick because it has very immature grouse immediately in front of it. Grouse will not flush in this situation and asking the dog/handler to persist will almost certainly result in the immature grouse being “pegged”. It is vital that the Judge must be alert to this possibility and should pick the dog up without penalty if it occurs.

***Persistent Back Casting***

This is wasteful in terms of the dog's stamina and energy and boring for the guns as they know that there will not be a possibility of a find on the ground being covered for the second time. Judges should take into account the topography and wind direction when assessing a dog that is back casting.

***Noisy Handling***

Excessive use of voice or whistle will disturb gamebirds and will reduce the number of possible shooting opportunities.

***Persistent False Pointing***

This is a cause of extreme frustration for the guns and is anticlimactic. It is no exaggeration to say that guns will be reluctant to walk out a distance to a dog which has had a number of false points, especially on very rough or steep ground and it, therefore, detracts greatly from the enjoyment of the guns which is the main object of the exercise.

It is important to distinguish between false pointing and non-productive pointing. A false point is when there is no visible reason for the dog pointing or, alternatively, where the dog points ground game or small birds not on the quarry list such as pipits or larks.

A non-productive point occurs when the dog points residual scent. This can occur in locations where birds have been seen to rise or, alternatively, where there may be feathers and droppings, indicating the recent presence of birds. A false point should be marked down more heavily than a non-productive point.

**11. *Each brace should be tried for a reasonable time except when undoubted lack of merit of one or both dogs is confirmed by both Judges.***

Dogs should be run for long enough to give some indication of their stamina, except when one or both of the dogs displays an undoubted lack of merit. In this case the dog or dogs displaying lack of merit should be discarded. Before coming to this decision the Judges should satisfy themselves that very difficult conditions are not responsible for the poor performance.



- 12. The dog should quarter the appointed ground as drawn with pace and style making good all its ground, working correctly to the wind particularly if downwind or cheek wind, showing gamebird finding ability and working naturally with the minimum of handling. Dogs should be steady to fur, feather, flush and shot.**

This is covered at 1.

- 13. If a dog flushes a gamebird upwind it should be discarded. But if it is working downwind and flushes: or, on the first cast runs sideways into gamebirds and drops immediately, having had no chance to wind them, these do not constitute eliminating faults.**

With the exception of the first or maiden cast a dog working its ground systematically into the wind (upwind) has the opportunity to detect and point any birds on its beat. If the dog flushes a bird in these circumstances, unbidden by the handler, it must be discarded as it has failed to fulfil a basic requirement of the breed.

There are, however, exceptions to the rule. Firstly, if it is a dog's first cast and it runs sideways into the bird(s) and drops immediately, not moving until instructed to by the handler, via the Judge. Secondly, if the dog is running downwind on its outward cast and it flushes but drops immediately, not moving until instructed to by the handler, via the Judge. In both cases the dog has not had a fair opportunity to wind the birds and cannot, therefore, be faulted. Further, in an actual shooting situation, if the dog honours the flush in this way there will very often be a bird or birds from the covey remaining and the dog will thus have given the guns a shooting opportunity.

In these circumstances the judge should go to the dog (with the gun) and ask the handler to work the point out with his dog. If the dog produces more birds a shot may be fired and the dog credited with a find. If there is any doubt as to whether the dog had the opportunity to wind the bird, the judge should always ask the handler to work the point out and then discuss the situation afterwards with the co-judge. Sometimes the wind may have changed or eddied and the dog had no chance to scent the bird.

Judges must remember that each dog will have a 'first cast' on both sides.

e.g. the dog on the right hand side has an excellent cast out to the right and then crosses with the other dog in front of the judges. The other dog now has its first cast out on the right.

- 14. Judges should appreciate that a backing dog may be disadvantaged in the following circumstances:**

***If a pointing dog is sticky on point***

***If a pointing dog is guilty of persistent false pointing***

***If a pointing dog is not positive in its workout***

In a situation where there is a pointing dog and a backing dog, particularly where they are close together, any stickiness on the part of the pointing dog unduly pressures the backing dog as the handler of the pointing dog urges his dog to move, especially since the command to flush will most probably be common to both handlers.

If a dog has a number of false or non-productive points which are honoured by its brace-mate, this will disrupt the brace-mate's quartering and may give a false impression of the quality of its run.

Similarly, if a pointing dog is not positive in its workout and takes an unduly long time to produce, or is constantly changing its attitude, it unfairly pressurises the backing dog.

In the above situation a Judge should consider telling the handler of the backing dog to pick up his dog as soon as he is satisfied that the backing dog is steady.

- 15. *When a dog has worked ground and gamebirds are proved to have been left on the beat, that dog has missed gamebirds and should be eliminated. If gamebirds are found on the ground which the dog should have worked but did not cover, the Judges should consider the circumstances before penalising the dog for faulty ground treatment (but not for missing gamebirds).***

The dog must find and point all game birds on its allocated beat. If a bird is shown to have been missed on ground which the dog has covered, it failed to meet the basic requirements and must be discarded.

If a bird is shown to have been on ground which the dog should have covered, and the Judge concludes that the opportunity was missed because of poor ground treatment, then that dog has committed a major fault.

Again, if there is any doubt as to whether the dog had an opportunity to scent the bird, it should be discussed with the co-judge and judged accordingly.

- 16. *If, when pointing gamebirds, a dog blinks by leaving the point and continues hunting that dog must be discarded.***

A basic requirement of the dog is that it should locate, point and, on command, produce the bird so that it presents a shooting opportunity for the guns. A dog which blinks the point, that is leaves the point where birds are present and recommences quartering of its own accord, does not produce the bird for the guns and, therefore, does not fulfil the basic requirements of the breed and must be discarded.

- 17. *Judges should appreciate that different breeds have different styles of working and should make themselves conversant with these styles.***

The different breeds have distinct differences in running action, head carriage, attitude on point and so on. It is essential for Judges to familiarise themselves with the characteristics of each of the breeds. Attending all four of the breed Stakes will greatly assist prospective Judges in this respect.

- 18. *Judges should conserve the ground by being as decisive as possible. They should keep up with the handlers to try to see everything that takes place, but not try to keep up with a dog that is obviously running out of its ground.***

Once Judges are satisfied that a dog has fulfilled the basic requirements of the breed and they have seen enough to be able to grade the dog relative to others in the stake, the dog should be picked up. To continue to run the dog uses up ground unnecessarily and is wasteful.

If there is no game on the beat then a decision has to be made to pick the dogs up and, if to the required standard, see them again in the next round.

The nature of the topography on grouse moors means that there is often a very short horizon. Judges need to take account of this by walking some distance apart where necessary to keep the dogs in sight. However, if the dog is going out of sight because it is off its allocated beat the handler should be warned and if repeated the dog should be discarded as out of control.

When a handler has been instructed to work out the point the Judge should ideally position himself as a gun on a shooting day which means that he is perfectly positioned to observe the detail of the dog's work, without interfering with it. The Judge should never lag or wait behind.

- 19. *If possible, it is desirable that the winner should have run with the second, and third with the fourth, to minimise the luck of the draw regarding variations in conditions, scent and gamebird supply.***

This is dealt with in 4.