



# **GUIDE TO ROYAL KENNEL CLUB J REGULATIONS FOR HPRs**

## **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

### **HPR FIELD TRIALS**

This document provides the basis or script upon which the Approved Presenters make their presentation

# The Royal Kennel Club Guide for Field Trial Judges

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:

- **General**
- **Code of Best Practice**
- **Invitation to Judge**
- **Appointment to the Panel of Field Trial Judges**
- **Before the Trial**
- **At the Trial**
- **After the Trial**
- **Overseas Judges and British Judges overseas**
- **Pitfalls**

## THE ROYAL KENNEL CLUB J REGULATIONS

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 Seminar the relevant sections are:**

- J General Regulations
- J(A) The Management, Conduct and Judging of Field Trials
- J(E) Breeds which Hunt, Point and Retrieve

## J – General Regulations

The J Regulations are mandatory and represent the basis upon which all Field Trials are conducted.

This section covers the following:

- Introduction
- Welfare of dogs
- Stakes
- Number of runners
- Application and documentation
- Judges
- Entries
- Awards and prizes
- Control of dogs and competitors under Trial
- Championships and Champion Stake
- Removal of dog(s) from the Trial
- Objections
- Disqualification and forfeit of awards
- Fraudulent and discreditable conduct at Trials
- Penalties

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;

**MUST** to express necessity or obligation, thing that must be done

**MAY** used to express a wish, possibility or permission

**SHOULD** used to express duty or obligation

**WILL** used to express promise or obligation

So with these definitions firmly implanted in our minds, we can proceed through The Royal Kennel Club J Regulations fully understanding what, as a judge, you MUST, MAY, SHOULD or WILL do.

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

### 1. General

- *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(E)3 and 9 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 a 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. Care should be taken to ensure that if game is plentiful and the shooting good the Trial does not become biased towards retrieving.

There are differences in the pace and styles of working across the various breeds of HPRs and Judges should recognise these differences and judge the dogs accordingly.

- ***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.

- ***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 J9.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 is to liaise with the Host, Steward of the Beat and others and the need to properly brief and inform competitors and spectators is set out.

- ***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, although the Chairman or other official of the organising Society may undertake this duty.

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

This is mandatory, the only exception being in Pointer and Setter Trials.

- ***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 sometimes not properly practiced in HPR Trials. Judges should be completely familiar with what action each major fault or eliminating fault describes. Where a dog is to be eliminated for 'hard mouth' BOTH the Judges MUST have examined the game. This should be carried out as tactfully as possible. Should the Judges be separated by some distance so that it is impractical to show the game to the other Judge immediately then a Judge may retain the game in his possession until an appropriate moment. He must not, under any circumstances pass the game to a Steward or game carrier until the other Judge has examined it. For this reason Judges should be prepared for such an eventuality. Nor should he permit anyone other than his co-Judge and the handler of the dog in question to examine the game. It is sometimes seen at Trials that an item of allegedly damaged game is surreptitiously passed around for the assembled experts to assess the damage for themselves and this is quite wrong. If the Judge suspects this may happen he should retain the game in his possession until he can deposit it on the game cart or as directed by the Steward of the Beat.

## **2. Water Tests**

- *A Water Test requires a dog to enter water readily and swim to the satisfaction of the Judges.*
- *If a separate Water Test is included as part of a Stake, all dogs placed in the awards must have passed this test.*
- *A handler is not entitled to ask for a shot to be fired.*

Where a Special Water Test is conducted for part qualification for the title of Field Trial Champion (in accordance with the provisions of Royal Kennel Club Regulations for entries in the Stud Book, Champions, and Warrants, paragraphs K2. c.) it must be held between September 1 and April 1 inclusive.

## **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 please them the most from a shooting point of view.

- *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, more typically relying on air scent and so on. 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.

- *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.

- *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.

- *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.*

- *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.*
- *Judges should also make themselves aware of any special prizes which are to be awarded in the Stake.*
- *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.*

These four 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 Guns understand what is expected of them, particularly where game is being shot over the dogs in a walked up situation. This can be a tricky task and must be conducted politely and tactfully. Having done all of the introductory work the Judges are tasked to make sure they have the right dogs in line. Often Judges mistakenly depute this obligation to the Chief Steward who is in charge of seeing that there is a steady flow of dogs into the line, or indeed the Chief Steward may try to exercise authority over the Judges in this respect. However, ultimate responsibility rests firmly with Judges to make sure they have the right dogs in line at any time.

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.

- *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.*

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. This is not to be taken to mean that a Judge should never send a dog over a fence or out of sight into a wood where hazards may exist, but reasonable care should be taken to ensure the safety of dogs.

- 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 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.

- ***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.

- ***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. 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.

- ***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. All Judges will have their own personal standard for scoring the work they have judged, but, once a dog has had a poor run, or poor work within a run, that poor work cannot be expunged from the record of that Trial, and subsequent top class work for which the dog may be awarded high marks cannot be averaged out to put the dog above those which have been consistently good in all their runs.

It is of the utmost importance to make short meaningful notes about each dog's run as, over the course of a Stake, it is possible that Judges will witness perhaps **32** or more runs, 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.

Although HPR Judges are expected to judge as a pair there may be times when they are separated, perhaps by a hedgerow, so that a dog's work on both sides can be assessed. Judges must ensure that they report to each other any incidents that may have occurred which were seen by themselves alone. Except in the case of 'hard mouth' Judges should act immediately on eliminating faults if they occur and be ready to justify their actions to their co-judge.

- *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.*

One of the most important duties of an 'A' Panel judge is to assess the 'B' and/or non-Panel Judges with whom he officiates and to report upon them on the form provided. This also relates to 'B' panel Judges who will be asked to provide an assessment on any non-Panel Judges, when judging under the four judge system. Over the course of the Trial it is the Judge's duty to ensure that he engages in enough discussion with his co-Judges 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.

#### **4. For all Sub-groups required to retrieve**

- *A dog should be steady to shot and fall of game and should retrieve tenderly to hand on command. Handlers should not send their dog until directed by the Judge.*
- *Judges at Open Stakes and Championships should ask their guns not to shoot directly over a dog when it is already out working on a retrieve. In other Stakes, Judges should ask their guns not to shoot when a dog is already out working on a retrieve unless by so doing they are certain there would be no chance of distracting the dog from its task.*

These two paragraphs are fairly straightforward but the duty is placed on the Judges to make sure at the outset that everyone understands what is required and why.

- *All wounded game should, where possible, be gathered and despatched immediately. Unless exceptional circumstances prevail, wounded game should always be tried for before dead game. If game cannot be gathered, the Judge must depute this task to the official handler and dog appointed for this purpose.*

This is a regulation which is sometimes ignored, but it is mandatory to collect wounded game at the earliest possible opportunity. There are good humanitarian reasons for this, and certainly in almost all circumstances the Judge has an obligation to see wounded game picked as quickly as possible so that suffering may be alleviated. Where there is a problem preventing the early despatch of a competing dog to retrieve the injured game, then the picking up dog should be swiftly despatched.

- *If, game is shot very close to a dog which would make a retrieve of no value, the retrieve may be offered to a dog under another Judge.*

This regulation does not really apply to HPR Trials. It is, however, important to remember that the work of the HPR is to retrieve the game it has found and pointed. If this is achieved the dog can be assessed on all aspects of its work including steadiness to flush and fall, marking and retrieving and perhaps taking the line of a runner.

- *Handlers should be instructed where to try from and be given reasonable directions as to where the game fell. If the dogs tried fail to complete the retrieve the Judges should search the area of fall and, if they find the game, the dogs tried, save in exceptional circumstances, will be eliminated. However, should a dog or dogs prove to have been tried in the wrong area they should not be so penalised.*

Judges must not interfere with the way that handlers handle their dogs. Give the handler clear directions as to the area in which you believe the game lies, if the dog or handler has not had a chance to mark, and leave him to get on with it. It is entirely inappropriate for a Judge to say to a competitor 'try to get your dog into the area!' If you think the handler does not understand where the area is, make sure he is properly instructed, and then stand quietly watching and assessing the performance. Once you have seen enough, if the dog is performing indifferently, call it up and send the next dog. Do not say, 'Last Cast'. This only puts pressure on the competitor. Better to say nothing until you decide you have seen enough. Where a handler has had an opportunity to mark he should not need direction and all you will be required to do is instruct him to send his dog. If he has failed to mark when the opportunity was there to do so then that should be taken into account in your assessment of the dog's overall performance on the retrieve.

Judges should always send dogs by number and never by the handler's name. The Judge should know which dog will be sent next before the opportunity occurs to send it. They should ensure that the Chief Steward has the next dog standing by close to the line so that it can be called up quickly in the event of a failure to retrieve by the dog currently attempting the retrieve.

In the event of a failure, wherever possible, all Judges should go to look for the game. Judges should search the area in which the handler was told to search but where game is found by the Judges they must then make a value judgement as to whether that game was found in what could reasonably be described as the area or whether the handlers may have been given a wrong mark, or the game could have moved. If there is doubt, then the benefit of that doubt should be given to the dog.

Where Judges have searched for and failed to find game in the area, if upon the line moving forward again game is found which the Judges consider to be the game for which they were searching then except in exceptional circumstances, for example where the game is hung up or is a very long distance out of the area, the Judges should eliminate from the Trial the dogs which failed to find it. If, on the other hand, after the line has moved on, a picker up who has been delegated to search for the lost game reports that it has been picked, the Judges should ignore this information entirely.

- ***Good marking is essential in a retrieving dog as it should not disturb ground unnecessarily. Judges should give full credit to a dog which goes straight to the fall and gets on with the job. Similarly, the ability to take the line of a wounded hare, rabbit or bird should be credited.***

This speaks for itself to a degree, but sometimes where a dog does not mark when it could have, and, as a result, the game has a chance to get away from the fall and become a runner, Judges will give the dog full credit for picking a runner quite forgetting that the dog had to be handled to a mark it should have made on its own and only had to pick a runner in the first place because of that. Meanwhile, another dog in the Stake may have marked every bird and picked all its live game off the fall because it got to the falls too quickly to give the game a chance to run. This is the better dog! The ability to take a line is of course of great value and the dog that takes a good line should receive full credit, all other things being equal.

- ***A good retrieve will include a quick and unfussy pick-up followed by a fast return. The handler should not have to snatch or drag game from the dog's mouth. Whilst Judges should not penalise a dog too heavily for putting game down to get a firmer grip, they must never, however, condone sloppy retrieving.***

Judges should reward tidy retrieving and good delivery. All too often Judges are to be seen with their books out writing a mark in the book before the game has been delivered to hand.

Judges should watch the whole retrieve before awarding a grade and should penalise sloppy retrieving and bad delivery rather than taking clean retrieving for granted.

***A good game-finding dog should not rely on the handler to find the game. It should, however, be obedient and respond to its handler's signals where necessary.***

***Dogs showing game-finding ability and initiative when hunting and retrieving should be placed above those which have to be handled to their game. Usually, the best dog seems to require the least handling. It appears to have an instinctive knowledge of direction and makes a difficult find look simple and easy.***

Game finding is of first importance but dogs should also handle well when required. Judges should not confuse a well-trained dog which handles well and easily with a dog which relies too heavily upon its handler in game finding. A dog should not be penalised because it can easily be got to a fall when others have struggled and hunts for itself when it gets there. It should instead be given credit for the fact that it handles well. This should not be confused with the dog which requires continuous handling when it should not.

- ***If a dog is performing indifferently on a runner, it must be called up promptly. If more dogs are tried on the runner, the work of all these dogs must be assessed in relation to the order in which they are tried. The handlers of the second and subsequent dogs down may be allowed to take their dogs towards the fall, as may the handler of the first dog if it has not had a chance to mark the game. Game picked by the second or a subsequent dog constitutes an 'eye wipe'. Dogs which have had their eyes wiped during the body of the Stake, however it may have occurred, will be discarded. All eye wipes should be treated on their merits.***

There are distinctions to be made, for instance, between game-finding eye wipes, where a dog finds in an area previously worked by another dog or dogs, and the sort of eye wipe which is typically more dependent on handling where a dog collects game from an area which was not, for whatever reason, reached by the dog or dogs previously sent.

***If the first dog sent shows ability by acknowledging the fall and making a workmanlike job of the line, it need not automatically be barred from the awards by failing to produce the game, provided that the game is not collected by another dog tried by the Judges, or by the Judges themselves, when searching the area which they directed the handler to search. Moreover, there will be occasions when circumstances make it impossible to send a dog promptly. If this happens and a significant delay ensues, a dog disadvantaged in this way should not be penalised as a first dog down.***

Dogs should be called up promptly whenever they are performing indifferently, be it on a runner or on game thought to be dead.

While there are distinctions to be drawn between eye wipes where, for example a dog goes to a fall behind another dog and takes a runner and picks it, and where a dog picks game which other dogs have tried and failed to reach, or on reaching the area have failed to find the game, it is not correct to diminish the eye wipe on the basis that the dog picked game because it could be handled easily to hunt an area in which it found the game when others could not. This must be distinguished from over handling.

Except in a run-off, where a dog has its eye wiped by another dog sent by the Judges, or by the Judges themselves, it must be eliminated from the Trial.

- ***All game should be examined for signs of hard mouth. A hard-mouthed dog seldom gives visible evidence of hardness. The dog will simply crush in one or both sides of the***

*ribs. Visible inspection and blowing up the feathers on a bird will not disclose the damage, digital examination is imperative.*

*Place the game on the palm of the hand, breast upwards, head forward, and feel the ribs with fingers and thumb. They should be round and firm. If they are caved in or flat this may be evidence of hard mouth. Be sure the game reaches the co-Judges for examination. Judges should always satisfy themselves that the damage done has been caused by the dog, not by the shot or fall. Judges, for instance, must be clear about the difference between damage to the ribcage caused by shot and the quite distinctive damage caused by a dog.*

*Handlers must be given the opportunity of inspecting the damaged game in the presence of the Judges, but the decision of the Judges is final.*

*A sure sign of good mouth is a dog bringing in live game whose head is up and eye bright. Superficial damage, if any, in this case can be ignored. At times, the rump of a strong runner may be gashed and look ugly. Care should be taken here, as it may be the result of a difficult capture or lack of experience in mastering a strong runner by a young dog.*

*There should be no hesitation or sentiment with hard mouth. The dog must be eliminated.*

When checking a bird for broken ribs place the bird on the palm of your hand with the breast facing upwards. Use that same hand to check for damage where the ribs meet the spine. The ribs are on the underside of the bird when it is held this way. Consequently, holding the bird this way enables you to examine the bird correctly. Ignore the breast as a damaged breast is not an indication of hard mouth. Rabbits need to be held by the head/ears/front legs and feel, with your other hand, the ribs on both sides down the length of the spine. If you hold the rabbit the wrong way up (ie by the back legs) the guts will fill the rib cage, making it harder to notice any damage.

A hard mouthed dog will generally crush the ribs high up behind the wing joint, on both sides, where the ribcage meets the spine. Where one side of a bird or rabbit is damaged, this may not have been caused by the dog. For example, a pheasant falling on bare grass may be damaged by the fall, while a bird falling from the same height onto a road may not!

In a trial, unless there is no doubt that the dog did the damage, the dog should not be discarded on the first occasion but should be given the benefit of the doubt. Where an item of game is questioned in this way, the handler should be given the opportunity to examine it, and should be told that the dog is not being put out of the stake for this but that the fact that the game is damaged has been noted. Of course, even though the game is damaged, if the Judge is satisfied that the dog did not do it, for example where the game has been seen to hit a hard object on the way down, then the damage should be ignored completely. Sometimes the Judge will be able to see the dog doing damage. If there is no doubt that the dog did the damage, the dog should be discarded.

It is good practice while out on a shoot to pick up freshly shot game, untouched by dogs, to feel the ribs and, if damage is found, consider the circumstances. Things to consider are the direction of shot, the bore of the gun, the type and hardness of the ground amongst other things.

If you have not been shown how to check for hard mouth ask various experienced judges, using dead game, to show you until you are confident in assessing any damage yourself. Senior judges should check that their junior judges know how to assess game properly.

## **J(E) – BREEDS WHICH HUNT, POINT AND RETRIEVE**

### **Introduction**

- ***Basic Requirements***

***Dogs shall be required to quarter ground systematically in search of quarry (hereafter game), to point game, to flush on command, to be steady to flush, shot and fall, and to retrieve tenderly to hand on command.***

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

This paragraph states simply what Judges must, at least, see from the dogs under trial if they are to receive an award. During the course of the Trial they will need to consider all features of the dog's work before deciding if the dog has performed to a high enough standard to deserve a further run or, at the end of the trial, if its work merits an award and what that award might be. For instance in its quartering the dog may have covered the ground systematically but did it need to be pushed along by its handler? How much force did the handler need to get the dog to flush? How steady was the dog following the flush? Did it stop without a reminder from the handler's stop whistle? Did the dog mark well and complete the retrieve wasting as little time as possible? Did the dog look workmanlike and aware of the sequence of events which make up the 'hunt, point and retrieve' process? Sometimes one sees dogs competing which have had little experience of putting the whole process together. The dog must be quiet in terms of whining or barking, but cannot be penalised for puffing or panting. Judges should be aware that handlers are not permitted to touch their dogs whilst they are competing either by restraining them or when directing them to a retrieve.

- ***Number of Runners***

***With the exception of the Hunt, Point and Retrieve Championship, to qualify for entry in The Royal Kennel Club Stud Book, the number of runners permitted in Stakes is as follows:***

- ***Open Stakes: maximum 16, minimum 10.***
- ***Other Stakes: maximum 16 minimum 8.***

These are the minimum and maximum numbers if the Trial is to qualify for inclusion in the Stud Book. The stake may be run with less but will be of no benefit to anyone.

- ***The Trial should run as nearly as possible to an ordinary day's rough shooting for a small party of guns, numbering not more than 4 in total***

Judges should have a good understanding of the character of rough shooting and the work required of a rough shooting dog. They should have experience at observing dogs working under rough shooting conditions in all weathers and on different types of terrain and be able to analyse what they see. They should be aware of the nature of game and have had experience at examining game that has been shot. They should be able to despatch wounded game efficiently. They should be aware of the safety aspects involved with regard to guns and in particular rough shooting over dogs and they should be aware of shooting field etiquette.

The aspects of the Trial which make the day not an 'ordinary day's rough shooting' are the number of people and dogs involved. Judges must instruct the Stewards to control the gallery so that everyone not in line keeps together and with the Red Flag carrier at all times. Noise from the gallery is often a problem and anyone continually disobeying the Steward should be reported to the Judges. Judges must give clear directions to the Stewards as to where the gallery can stand and be aware at all times of the safety issues involved. They should make themselves aware of where guns are placed and stops.

Judges should have informed the guns of the procedure for the day and given advice to any gun that has not shot over a pointing dog before. They should be prepared to continue to offer such advice politely during the course of the Trial if they consider a gun may not be giving himself the best opportunity to kill game.

Judges should have established what game is to be shot; there may be exclusions such as ground game and/or hen pheasants in January. They should have discussed with the Steward of the Beat the direction the Trial is to take with particular emphasis on the need to run dogs into wind wherever possible.

#### **4. Competing**

***Dogs shall be run singly in order of draw under two Judges, judging as a pair. A dog, unless discarded must have been tried at least twice in the line, before it may receive an award or certificate of merit.***

It is common for some competitors to understand from this Regulation that, unless they have committed an eliminating fault, they should inevitably get two runs but this is not so and the regulation should be read in conjunction with J(E)9.

It is important for Judges to remember that they are judging a competition the purpose of which is to find the dog which pleases them most on the day, namely the winner. A dog must have been tried twice in the line before it may receive an award but providing it has performed all the basic requirements to a high standard in one of its runs, or in the course of two runs, that is all that is required. It is foolish and a dereliction of a Judge's duty to insist on running a dog for a third time when its work during two runs has been excellent. Judges are in these circumstances unnecessarily risking losing the dog and jeopardising the result.

Judges should be able to assess the capabilities of a dog on two runs and they should only go to a third round for those dogs which, although pleasing, have not had the opportunity to perform all the basic requirements or may not have been tested sufficiently in any aspect of HPR work. The terrain and game supply often varies considerably on an HPR Field Trial ground and a dog may be fortunate to run in an area where game is plentiful and it can achieve points with little effort. Judges may wish to see the dog run in a more testing area where it has the opportunity to show good ground treatment before coming to a decision on its ability. If there are dogs remaining in the stake whose performances cannot be separated they may be run-off against each other for specific places and will only be eliminated from those places by committing an eliminating fault. If one or more of them are so eliminated lower ranked dogs may not be brought up to fill the now vacant places as they were not adjudged good enough to be in the run-off in the first place.

#### **5. Credit Points**

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

***Hunting with drive and purpose***

***Style on point and production***

***Dropping to wing***

***Speed and efficiency in retrieving***

***Good marking***

***Quiet handling***

***Good water work***

These are the features which Judges will need to consider when assessing the dog over and above the basic requirements and the quality of which will bring one dog above another. It is possible that a dog will achieve the basic requirements of pointing and retrieving quite separately because it may point game which is not shot or it may be given a retrieve of game which it did not itself find and point. However, the purpose of a rough shooting dog is that it will hunt, find and point game and retrieve that game when it is shot and Judges should make every effort to see this whole process from each dog.

## 6. *Eliminating faults*

*Hard mouth*

*Whining or barking*

*Flushing up wind*

*Out of control*

*Unsteadiness*

*Running in or chasing*

*Failure to hunt or point*

*Blinking a point*

*Changing game whilst retrieving*

*Being eye wiped*

*Picking wrong retrieve*

*Refusal to retrieve or swim*

*Missing game on the beat (excluding hare and snipe)*

*Failure to retrieve to hand*

*Without merit*

### *Hard mouth*

Royal Kennel Club rules are quite clear about what constitutes hard mouth. Game should be placed on the palm of one hand, back down and the rib cage examined with the fingers of that hand. If the rib cage is undamaged the dog is not guilty of hard mouth. Often in the course of gathering a runner or a wounded bird which has tucked in, a dog will damage the flesh of the bird, goring its rump or tearing the flesh around a leg where it has had to pull the bird out of cover. Dogs' teeth are by their nature hard while a bird's flesh is soft and consequently some fleshy damage to birds is inevitable from time to time. But this is not 'hard mouth'! A bird may be seen to be alive when the dog is sent for it, and may be delivered to hand dead. This in itself is not evidence of 'hard mouth'. The game has been shot, it is going to die at some time, and the additional insult of being caught and retrieved can be sufficient to cause a bird's death particularly where there has been a difficult capture and the flesh of the bird has been damaged in the process. If, on examination, the rib cage is found to be damaged as described in the regulations that is hard mouth and should be dealt with accordingly. Judges should be careful to observe how game is shot and how it lands.

*Flushing up wind* is described later under J(E)9.b. **Ground Treatment.**

### *Unsteadiness*

In HPR work unsteadiness can occur upon the flush and on the fall of game. A dog should be allowed to press forward towards the bird until it flushes but should then stop immediately. It should also be allowed to move to mark the fall and Judges have to be particularly observant here to ensure the dog moved only for this reason. This is not always easy to assess since handlers usually blow their 'stop' whistles immediately game is flushed. A dog which is steady to flush, shot and fall of game without any 'reminders' should obviously be given credit.

### *Failure to hunt or point*

This might appear to be obvious to assess but it is quite possible for a dog moving across the ground without any drive or purpose suddenly to come across game and point. The game may be flushed and

shot, and retrieved adequately. However, the dog's poor hunting and ground treatment cannot be overlooked. A better dog may have found the game much more quickly and gone on to find more in the same time. A dog should be keen to hunt as soon as it is cast off and should not require continual vocal encouragement to get on with the job. Judges should not waste any time at all on dogs which simply are not hunting, and certainly should not give them the opportunity of a second run to see if they can improve. As was emphasised earlier, they must recognise that not all the breeds within the HPR sub-group hunt at the same pace. However, they should be able to recognise enthusiasm to hunt and find game in any breed.

*Changing game whilst retrieving* is quite obviously an eliminating fault.

#### *Picking wrong retrieve*

When two or more items of game have been shot consideration must be given as to how close they may lie to each other. Judges should take particular care when directing a handler and the dog must be under full control when retrieving. If it is entirely practicable for a dog to be sent for a particular item of game, then it should be penalised if it returns with the wrong game.

#### *Missing game on the beat (excluding hare and snipe)*

Assessing this can cause problems in certain circumstances notably when there is an abundance of game, especially reared game which is running about. A dog can only be expected to work on one bird at a time and it is possible for other game to be flushed either side of the pointed bird which the dog has not had the opportunity to scent. Judges should be sure that the dog had the opportunity to find game before penalising it for missing, but they should mark a dog down for poor ground treatment which resulted in game not being found and pointed. Game which gets up without having been pointed between the working dog and the Judges must be considered as missed but Judges should normally disregard game which gets up behind them when the line has moved on. Such game may have been pushed into that area by, for instance, the approach of the gallery. Dogs must not be penalised for failing to point hares and snipe but they are expected to be steady to them when flushed and to retrieve them if they are shot.

#### *Without merit*

Any dog which is not behaving in a lively and biddable manner, or is not showing dedication to the allotted task, or is pottering about should be eliminated from the competition.

*Whining or barking* should not be tolerated from any dog.

#### *Out of control*

This is obviously an eliminating fault. However, a good wide-ranging dog on open ground should not give concern unless it cannot be controlled.

#### *Running in or chasing*

Dogs must be eliminated immediately for chasing unshot game including hares and snipe and must be steady to shot and fall of game. The handler should not command his dog to retrieve game until directed by the Judge. A dog must be eliminated for chasing stock, deer and foxes.

#### *Blinking a point*

If, when pointing game, a dog blinks by leaving the point and continues hunting that dog must be discarded. This must not be confused with failure to point where the dog simply finds game and flushes it immediately.

#### *Being eye wiped*

When a retrieve has been unsuccessfully tried for by one or more dogs and when another dog has been successful, then the earlier dog(s) tried have 'been eye wiped.' In this instance those earlier unsuccessful dogs will be discarded.

All dogs tried unsuccessfully will be discarded should the Judges walk out and, having searched the

area, find the game.

All eye wipes should be treated on their merits. Some will be more difficult than others. Judges should not try another dog on a retrieve when the game has been mouthed by an earlier dog.

#### *Refusal to retrieve or swim*

Refusal to retrieve is when the dog reaches the game and will not pick it up. It should not be confused with failing to find the retrieve. A dog should be eliminated immediately if it reaches game and will not pick it up and the handler should not be given time in coaxing it to do so. Abandoning a retrieve, where a dog picks the game, brings it some distance and then puts it down and leaves it, is also cause for elimination and the handler should not be given time in getting the dog to go back and retrieve the game.

Refusal to swim for a retrieve during a field trial obviously means elimination because the dog will not have completed the basic requirements. A dog should not require to be coaxed to enter water but in some circumstances it may require more than one command.

Consideration of course should be given to difficulties in entry but a dog which runs up and down a river bank or lake should be discarded since the dog is not showing willingness to enter water and obedience to its handler's instructions.

In order to attain the title of Field Trial Champion a dog must have gained a Water Certificate which can be taken at an Open Trial or at a special water test conducted by two panel judges, one of whom must be an 'A'. The test requires the dog to simply enter water readily and swim to the satisfaction of the judges. A retrieve is not required and a handler is not entitled to ask for a shot to be fired.

#### *Failure to retrieve to hand*

The Basic Requirements call for dogs to 'retrieve tenderly to hand'. A dog should not put game down on its way back to the handler unless it needs to adjust its grip and it should be able to achieve this without raising its head from the game. A dog putting game down and requiring further commands from its handler to make the retrieve, or dropping it at his/her feet is completely unacceptable.

### **7. Major Faults**

#### *Poor ground treatment*

#### *Persistent false pointing*

#### *Not stopping to flush down wind*

#### *Not acknowledging game going away*

#### *Failing to find dead or wounded game (subject to J(A)4.h)*

#### *Stickiness on point*

#### *Disturbing ground*

#### *Noisy handling*

#### *Catching unwounded game*

#### *Poor ground treatment*

A dog which covers its ground haphazardly or bores on into the wind is liable to miss game on its beat and will waste ground and time. Similarly dogs which consistently go back to ground already covered are ineffective hunters and should be marked down. Dogs which persistently dwell on ground scent waste time and are liable to bump game.

#### *Persistent false pointing*

A dog which persistently false points is frustrating and tiring for the guns to follow. One or two good productive points should not make up for persistent false pointing and such a dog should not feature in the awards. 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 small birds not on the quarry list such as pipits or larks.

#### *Not stopping to flush down wind*

It must be remembered that if a dog flushes down wind it is quite possible that the bird or animal will

present an opportunity for a shot by a gun perhaps on the flank of the dog's beat. It is important, therefore, that the dog stops to flush so that it can if necessary mark the fall and also so that it does not endanger itself. It is disconcerting for a gun to have a dog running around when he could take a shot. The dog should not resume its hunting until directed to do so by its handler on the Judges' instruction. Automatically stopping to flush shows that the dog is aware of its role and a good dog will also be looking to mark the possible fall.

#### *Not acknowledging game going away*

Again a dog which acknowledges game going away shows awareness of the task in hand and that the game may be shot. Failing to acknowledge game going away is a major fault and consequently should be judged accordingly.

#### *Catching unwounded game*

A dog should not deliberately catch unwounded game. However, on occasions when game is caught the dog must not be commanded to drop it but must bring the game to hand so that it can be examined for signs of ill health or having been previously shot. If the dog damages the game on bringing it to hand it should be eliminated, but if in the opinion of the Judges the game is sick or has been previously shot the dog should not be penalised. Difficulties often arise in HPR trials on grounds where there is an abundance of immature reared game at the beginning of the season, which is reluctant to take to wing and Judges have to make an assessment as to whether the game was able to flush easily.

#### *Failing to find dead or wounded game*

This subject is covered under JA(4) For all sub-groups required to retrieve.

#### *Stickiness on point*

Again, like false pointing, a dog which will not flush on command is frustrating for the guns and often gives rise to unnecessary disturbance and noise from the handler. However, a dog may be reluctant to go into flush against a fence for fear of catching game and Judges should be mindful of such circumstances. Judges must observe carefully that the dog does the flushing and not the handler. A sign of a good dog ready to flush on command is when its handler can direct it from some distance away and not by its side.

#### *Disturbing ground*

A dog which disturbs ground outside its allotted beat and does not respond to its handler is out of control and should be discarded. Also a dog which, having failed to mark the fall of game, fails to respond to handling so that it disturbs ground not yet worked and wastes time should be discarded.

#### *Noisy handling*

Judges should not accept excessive noise from handlers as this again disturbs ground yet to be worked. Vocal commands should be kept to a minimum and if a handler cannot get his dog to respond without shouting at it, it should be discarded.

- ***Judges should define the beat to be worked. As much discretion as is practical should be left to the handler as to how to work the ground.***

Judges should have decided, in consultation with the Steward of the Beat how much ground is to be worked and on open ground this is usually defined by two of the guns walking on the extreme right or left hand flank. This may not be the case on other types of ground, for instance in woodland or where there are clear borders or hedgerows and ditches. Handlers should be given clear directions as to their beat but they should be allowed to elect to work it as effectively as they see fit. For instance, if the beat has a ride running through the middle of it, the handler might like to take one side of the ride for some distance and then bring his dog back and work the other side. Where the dog is required to work both sides of a hedgerow or ditch-line the handler may decide from which side he wishes to handle his dog and this will probably be determined by the direction of the wind. The guns of course should at all times be briefed on what the handler wishes to do so that

they do not unwittingly walk on ground which is to be worked later. It is also important in these circumstances for the Chief Steward to be made aware of what is happening so that the gallery can be informed of where to stand. Judges should acknowledge that occasionally a dog may be drawn off of its designated beat for some distance by a moving bird and it should not be penalised for this providing it responds to its handler when called back.

- ***Judges must judge as a pair, but record their assessments independently having established the categories to be marked. They should see as much work as possible from every dog, particularly those which impress favourably, and assess this work carefully in every aspect. Judges should remember that the main work of a dog which hunts, points and retrieves is to find game, and present it to the guns so that they have a good chance of a reasonable shot.***

Judges should be aware that the success or failure of a dog to complete the task of hunting, pointing and retrieving depends on the efficiency of the guns and this in turn often depends on whether the guns are experienced in shooting over pointing dogs. Judges should have established if this is the case and should be ready to offer help in directing the guns as to where they should be when the dog points if the handler does not do so.

They should have agreed between themselves and the guns whether all game on the beat is to be taken if it presents a good shot or only that pointed by the dog. A sure way of proving the effectiveness of a dog is only to have the game that it actually finds and points shot. This also effectively prevents the scenario of having a number of birds down at any one time and retrieving taking precedence over hunting.

Judges should be looking for the dog which serves the guns efficiently on all of its runs. A dog's poor work in its first run cannot be forgotten if a subsequent run is better, and a brilliant first run should not compensate for mistakes in subsequent runs. As has been said before a good efficient dog which gets on with the job in hand and is quietly handled will make it look simple and uncomplicated. Finding and pointing game is the dog's main work and superb retrieving should not take precedence over this but no allowance should be made for sloppy inefficient retrieving which wastes good hunting time.

Judges should be constantly aware of the wind conditions which may change from time to time. They should also be able to make an assessment as to the scenting conditions which appear to prevail during the day but cannot be lenient because scenting conditions seem to be poor. They can only judge on what they see and if a dog fails to point game it must be eliminated even though poor scenting conditions may have been a contributory factor.

Judges should always bear in mind that they have only a limited time to evaluate sixteen dogs, particularly late in the season, and that conditions on the day such as lack of game, too much game, poor shooting or adverse weather conditions will hamper their efforts. Although they must record their assessments independently, they should talk to each other to ensure that neither has missed anything important, particularly if they have been separated at any time. If circumstances are such that Judges are separated during the course of a dog's run neither Judge should hesitate in picking up a dog if it commits an eliminating fault, except in the case of Hard Mouth when they must both agree. They should not wait until the end of the dog's run when they meet up, to decide to eliminate the dog.

Judges must remember that the Trial is a competition and not a training exercise. They must not offer advice to competitors as to how they should handle their dogs, and should only intervene if they feel a handler appears not to have understood an instruction. They must not distract him from the task of handling his dog by continuing a conversation with him. They should not discuss a dog's run with a handler after it has been picked up but should thank him and tell him that he will be seen

again in the second round if appropriate, or that he is being discarded for whatever reason. They should make up their minds there and then if a dog is worthy of a second run and not tell a handler that they were not completely satisfied with his dog's work and he will get a second run if time permits.

Judges should conduct the Trial according to its status – Novice, All-Aged or Open and must expect a higher standard of work in an Open Stake. Judges must not be lenient when applying the rules in a Novice Stake but they may make certain concessions such as allowing a handler to take his dog nearer to the fall of game before sending it for a runner which it was unable to mark. They may accept that a Novice dog may not be as experienced at capturing a strong runner or it might 'point' a live bird when sent to retrieve and require a little encouragement from its handler to complete the retrieve. However, Judges should not make allowances for a dog's incompetence at retrieving a species of game which its handler may remark it has not had the opportunity to retrieve before.

The term 'Novice' means 'beginner', but this means beginner to Field Trials and not beginner to the shooting field. Judges must not waste time allowing handlers to give their dogs shooting field experience which they should have had before being entered.

*Particular note should be taken of the following:*

- ***Game Finding Ability. This is of the highest importance. The Judge must assess game finding by observing the way the dog works its beat with regard to the wind, covers all likely game holding pockets and responds to scent generally, and also by its drive and sense of purpose.***

It will readily be seen if the dog has a sense of purpose and is out to find game, whatever its breed. A good dog will be turning into the wind, not dwelling on ground scent, and will not cover the same ground twice. The dog will be interesting to watch and will not require encouragement from its handler to get on with the job. It will not be continually stopping to look back to its handler but will be obedient to its handler when required. Fast running does not necessarily mean the dog is hunting and a dog which is simply 'running about' will sooner or later bump into game. Judges must also remember that when judging game finding ability the quantity of game available and the terrain must also be taken into account. Where game is plentiful in woods or other cover it requires little effort or purpose for a dog to find and point game, whereas a good find on open ground where game is scarce deserves much more credit.

Judges should avoid at all costs taking dogs into areas where game is artificially concentrated, perhaps near release pens, simply to 'get a point' for a particular dog which has not hitherto managed to point.

- ***Ground Treatment. In all stakes it is highly desirable that all dogs be worked into the wind wherever possible. Dogs should quarter the beat systematically and with purpose, regulating their pace to suit the type of ground and cover.***

***If a dog flushes game upwind it should be discarded, if it is working downwind and flushes or runs sideways into game having had no chance to wind it, these do not constitute eliminating faults. However, the dog should always acknowledge game so flushed and stop.***

It is not only beneficial for dogs to be worked into the wind but it makes the job of judging much easier, and provides all dogs with an equal opportunity to find and point game. Judges should liaise with the Steward of the Beat to achieve this. Again the word 'purpose' appears in this regulation and a systematic approach to its work will obviously lessen the chance of a dog missing game. A dog flushing game upwind has either failed to point it or pointed and deliberately flushed without command and should, therefore, be eliminated.

- ***Pointing. Credit will be given to the dog that acknowledges game scent positively, draws in***

*deliberately, points staunchly, flushes only on command and is subsequently steady. Persistent false or unproductive pointing is a major fault. False pointing may be recognised by the dog leaving its point and immediately showing no further interest in the scent that apparently brought it on point. Unproductive pointing is when the dog points residual scent. Less experienced dogs tend to persist on such unproductive points, thereby wasting time, whereas a more experienced dog will recognise this residual scent for what it is and quickly resume hunting. If, when pointing game, a dog blinks by leaving the point and continues hunting, that dog must be eliminated.*

This regulation is self-explanatory but Judges should also be considering the quality of the point in relation to the terrain the dog is working and the quantity of game available for it to point and the remarks made above under Game Finding Ability equally apply here. Pointing is one area where the differences in the various HPR breeds are apparent. Some breeds seem to look less positive than others on point. It is common for handlers to raise their hand when they consider their dog is 'on point' and Judges should accept this indication and ask the handler to get his dog to produce the bird even if he, the Judge, is doubtful because the dog does not 'look' positive. Judges should accept that the handler should be able to read his own dog. Depending on the terrain a dog may need to continue some distance to get a bird in the air and this should not constitute a chase or unsteadiness so long as the dog stops on the bird taking to the air and the game is produced in a manner which enables the guns to take a shot.

- ***Retrieving. All retrieves should be completed as quickly as possible so the progress of the Trial is not interrupted unduly.***

This Regulation has been dealt with extensively under J(A)4. "For all sub-groups required to retrieve." In HPR Trials there **are** usually only one or two birds down at any one time and the dog running should be sent for them, providing it did not commit an eliminating fault prior to them being shot or by being unsteady after they were shot. In the first round, if a dog is not required to retrieve the game shot on its run because it committed an eliminating fault, or it fails on the retrieve, the next dogs in order of draw should be tried on the retrieve or retrieves. During the second round if there are spare retrieves, Judges may call dogs out of draw order to make retrieves so that they can test dogs which may not have had the opportunity to retrieve in the first round.

- ***Style. Before final assessments of the work are made, Judges should consider the style of the dogs. Credit should be given to a dog which embraces grace of movement, stylishness when pointing and when retrieving and which shows keenness and competence in what it is doing. Judges should recognise that each breed within the Hunt, Point and Retrieve sub-group has its own individual style, and they should acquaint themselves with these differences.***

A stylish dog will stand out. It may be a very good looking dog in the first place and have a lot of pace and commitment to finding game. When it points it will look positive so that guns will be keen to follow it and be ready to react. After flushing it will watch its birds away and, if a shot follows it will be keen to make the retrieve which it will do with the minimum of handling. It will look at one with its handler.

## **Awards**

A definition of Awards and Prizes is given in Regulation J.7. At the end of the Trial Judges have to discuss between themselves what they have seen from the dogs which have performed to a high standard and what awards they wish to make. They can withhold any award if in their opinion the dogs competing do not show sufficient merit. However, they should remember that conditions at HPR Trials are very seldom perfect and never equal for each dog. There is an element of luck and some dogs will have had more opportunity than others to show particular aspects of an HPR's work.

The decision on what awards to confer should also not come down to how many points or retrieves a

dog has made, or whether, for instance, it was tested for steadiness to fur. A blank run from any dog should not bar it from being placed in the awards or indeed receiving the top award provided that it has fulfilled the basic requirements to a high standard in the body of the stake and the Judges consider it to be worthy of such an award.

Furthermore, whilst it is desirable for a dog to have retrieved a bird shot from its own point and flush, there may be occasions when this does not happen due to the guns missing all the birds it produces for them, and the dog has been brought in and completed retrieves when other dogs have failed. This also should not bar the dog from being awarded first place providing all aspects of its work have been of the highest standard.

Judges may confer Certificates of Merit on those dogs which have performed to the Basic Requirements very well but are below those worthy of the first four places. Certificates of Merit may also be conferred if the first four awards are withheld.

### **Abandonment of a Trial**

Judges are obliged at the end of a Trial to confirm there was adequate game to conduct the Trial. This does not mean that every dog competing will necessarily have had game in front of it to point or that the bag at the end of the day should be large enough to confirm this. There will be good reasons why some dogs will not have encountered game. However, there may be occasions when Judges must decide whether, having commenced the Trial, it should be abandoned at some point. It is unfair on competitors to expect them to work their dogs on ground where game is not being seen, particularly when the dogs appear to be working well. There may also be occasions when a Trial should be abandoned due to extreme weather conditions. Judges should be firm in coming to such decisions and not allow the Trial to drift on when there appears to be no hope of an improvement in conditions. They should be polite and diplomatic in explaining the situation to the host.

All Judges, competitors and those involved with Field Trials should keep updated with any Royal Kennel Club rule changes and Guidance Notes. These can be found in The Royal Kennel Club Field Trials Newsletter (quarterly). You can subscribe to this and/or download from The Royal Kennel Club website using the following link <https://www.thekennelclub.org.uk/activities/field-trials-working-gundogs/>