

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE FIELD TRIALS LIAISON COUNCIL
HELD ON WEDNESDAY 6 MAY 2026 AT 10.30 AM IN THE BOARDROOM,
ROYAL KENNEL CLUB, CLARGES STREET**

MINUTES

Mr K Barraclough	Cocker Spaniel Club Mid Sussex Working Spaniel Club Kent Working Spaniel Club
Mr G J Bird	Labrador Retriever Club of Wales Golden Retriever Club Shropshire Gundog Society
Mrs C Bridgwater	Essex Field Trial Society Kintbury Gundog Club Meon Valley Working Spaniel Club
Mr D Brown	Coventry & District Gundog Society Midland Gundog Society East Midland Gundog Club
Miss C Calvert	Strabane & District Setter & Pointer Club Ulster Irish Red Setter Club Northern Ireland Pointer Club
Mr S Capstick	North West Labrador Retriever Club Lancashire & Merseyside Field Trial Society Cheshire, North Wales & Shropshire Retriever & Spaniel Society Clwyd Retriever Club Yellow Labrador Club
Mrs C Carpenter	Wiltshire Working Gundog Society Arun & Downland Gundog Society Weimaraner Club of Great Britain
Mrs M Cox	West Of England Labrador Retriever Club North Devon Working Gundog Club Cornwall Field Trial Society
Mr S Crookes	Golden Retriever Club of Northumbria Northern Golden Retriever Association Yorkshire Golden Retriever Club Golden Retriever Club of Scotland
Mr R Gould*	Gordon Setter Field Trial Society Southern & Western Counties Field Trial Society Southern Pointer Club
Mr D Hall	Pointer Club English Setter Club

Ms M Halliday	International Gundog League (Pointer & Setter Society) Gordon Setter Association Mid Herts Gundog Club
Ms E Harvey*	Irish Setter Association, England English Springer Spaniel Club Bristol & West Working Gundog Society Midland English Springer Spaniel Society Duchy Working Gundog Club
Mr J Henderson	Tay Valley Gundog Association Strathmore Working Gundog Club Scottish Gundog Association
Mrs S Jenkins*	West Dartmoor Working Gundog Club South Western Golden Retriever Club Westward Gundog Society
Mrs A Johnson	Italian Spinone Club of Great Britain Norfolk & Suffolk HPR Field Trial Club Hungarian Vizsla Society
Mr R Johnston	Labrador Retriever Club Of Northern Ireland Mid Ulster Gundog Association Ulster Select AV Retriever Club
Mrs F Joint	Burns and Becks Gundog Club Suffolk Gundog Club Cambridgeshire Field Trial Society
Mrs B Kuen	Chiltern Gundog Club International Gundog League (Retriever Society) Mid Norfolk Gundog Club
Mr S Kimberley*	German Wirehaired Pointer Club Worcestershire Gundog Society German Longhaired Pointer Club
Mr R Major*	Hungarian Wirehaired Vizsla Association Large Munsterlander Club Brittany Club of Great Britain Hungarian Vizsla Club
Mr S McGrath*	Wye Valley Retriever Club Norfolk Gundog Club United Retriever Club Flatcoated Retriever Society Hungarian Vizsla Club
Miss M McNally*	Carmarthenshire Working Gundog Society English Springer Spaniel Club Of Wales Pembrokeshire Working Gundog Society Glamorganshire Field Trial Society

Mr W Megaughin	English Springer Spaniel Club Of Northern Ireland North West Ulster Spaniel Club Fermanagh Gundog Club
Mrs S Miles	South West Scotland Gundog Association Forth & Clyde Working Gundog Association Central Scotland Gundog Club
Mrs P Money-Coutts*	Herts, Beds, Bucks, Berks & Hants Retriever Society South Eastern Gundog Society Guildford Working Gundog Club
Mr S North	Dukeries [Notts] Gundog Club Midland Counties Field Trial Society Welsh & English Counties Spaniel Club Norwich Gundog Club
Mrs J Reed	Utility Gundog Society East Anglian Labrador Retriever Club Eastern Counties Retriever Society London Working Spaniel Society
Mrs E Robinson	Barton On Humber Gundog Club Three Ridings Labrador Club Midland Counties Labrador Retriever Club
Miss T Siwek	Eastern Counties Spaniel Society Western Counties & South Wales Spaniel Club Leconfield Working Spaniel Club
Mrs V Stanley*	Vale of York Working Retriever Club Labrador Retriever Club Arfon Working Gundog Club
Mrs J Venturi Rose	Kent, Surrey & Sussex Labrador Retriever Club Hampshire Gundog Society Isle Of Wight Gundog Club
Mrs R Webster	German Shorthaired Pointer Association German Shorthaired Pointer Club Hunt, Point & Retrieve Gundog Association
Miss S Whyte	Northumberland & Durham Labrador Retriever Club Yorkshire Retriever Field Trial Society Lincolnshire Gundog Society Yorkshire Gundog Club Yorkshire Retriever Field Trial Society Yorkshire Sporting Spaniel Club

* denotes attendance via Microsoft Teams.

GUESTS

Mr J Bailey Royal Kennel Club Field Trials Committee Chairman and Board Member

IN ATTENDANCE

Miss D Deuchar Senior Manager Canine Activities
Miss K Broers Gundog Events Manager
Miss A Morley Activities Liaison Manager
Miss C Hickman Field Trials Liaison Advisor

ITEM 1. TO ELECT A CHAIRMAN FOR THE REMAINDER OF THE TERM OF COUNCIL

1. Miss S Whyte was proposed and seconded as Chair and, there being no other nominations, was duly elected.

IN THE CHAIR: MISS S WHYTE

ITEM 2. TO ELECT A VICE CHAIRMAN FOR THE REMAINDER OF THE TERM OF COUNCIL

2. Mrs S Jenkins was proposed and seconded as Vice Chair and, there being no other nominations, was duly elected.

ITEM 3. TO ELECT COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES TO THE FIELD TRIALS COMMITTEE FOR THE VARIOUS SUB GROUPS EFFECTIVE FROM JULY 2026

3. The Council considered the election of representatives for each of the four sub-groups to the Field Trials Committee. Two representatives were required for each sub-group.
4. Miss Whyte, in her capacity as Chairman of the Council, automatically became a representative on the Committee, and would represent the Retriever sub-group. Two further candidates were proposed and seconded to represent the sub-group: Mr Capstick, and Mr Johnston. Following a ballot, Mr Johnston was duly elected to the role.
5. Miss Siwek and Mr Megaughin were proposed and seconded to represent Spaniels and were duly elected.

6. Mr Kimberley and Mr Major were proposed and seconded to represent HPRs and were duly elected.
7. Mr Hall and Miss Calvert were proposed and seconded to represent Pointers and Setters and were duly elected.

ITEM 4. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

8. Apologies were received from Mr Canham, Mr Doran, Mr Forbes and Mr Kean.
9. The Council welcomed Mr Bailey to the meeting in his role as the Royal Kennel Club Field Trials Committee Chairman and Royal Kennel Club Board Member.

ITEM 5. TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 1 MAY 2025

10. The minutes from the meeting held on 1 May 2025 were approved as an accurate record.

ITEM 6. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING AND RESULTS OF RECOMMENDATIONS PASSED TO THE FIELD TRIALS COMMITTEE (RESULTS OF RECOMMENDATIONS)

11. The Council noted the Results of Recommendations document.

ITEM 7. PROPOSALS FROM SOCIETIES

Drive Certificates – Regulation K2.c.(3)

12. The Yorkshire Gundog Club, represented by Miss Whyte, wished to propose an amendment to Regulation K2.c.(3) to remove the requirement for a Drive Certificate as part of the qualification for a Retriever to be awarded the title of Field Trial Champion.
13. The proposal was seconded by Mr Henderson.
14. It was raised that the Drive Certificate was an essential part of the requirements for a Field Trial Champion as it showed a dog's ability to work across both walked up and driven trials.

15. It was noted that item 7.b. also related to Drive Certificates, therefore it was queried whether they should be considered together. However, it was agreed that the outcome of this item would be addressed before proceeding to the next item.
16. It was raised that driven shoots were the predominant style of shooting that occurred in the UK and therefore the Drive Certificate was an essential part of assessing a dog's ability. It was raised that in Scotland there were very few driven trials, making it harder for competitors from that area to have the opportunity to achieve the certificate and required competitors to travel to England to gain the qualification.
17. Having considered the proposal carefully, the Council concluded that the proposal could not be supported. A vote took place, and by a large majority it did not recommend the proposal for approval.

Drive Certificates at Novice Driven Trials – Regulation K2.c.(3)

18. The Cheshire, North Wales and Shropshire Spaniel and Retriever Society, represented by Mr Capstick, wished to propose an amendment to regulation K2.c.(3) to allow Drive Certificates to be awarded at novice driven trials to alleviate the pressure on judges at Open trials.
19. It was raised that this would make the certificate more accessible to help handlers and dogs competing in Scotland.
20. It was raised that any dog that had sat through a drive should be awarded a certificate and therefore the regulation amendment should also apply to All-Aged stakes.
21. It was recognised that issuing a Drive Certificate to every dog at a trial would create a significant additional administrative burden for the Field Trial Secretary, and it was suggested that only award-winning dogs should receive a Drive Certificate. It was argued that awarding Drive Certificates to all dogs would devalue the achievement, particularly as the certificate contributed towards a dog attaining the title of Field Trial Champion.
22. It was noted that some competitors had found the transition to Open Stakes challenging and that by allowing Drive Certificates to be awarded at Novice stakes it would make the certificate more accessible in future.

23. The Council was reminded that the Drive Certificate had originally been removed from Novice trials as it had been awarded to dogs which had never gone on to gain their Field Trial Champion title.
24. Following the above discussion, Mr Capstick proposed an amendment to the proposal.

Regulation K2.c.(3)

TO:

(3) Proviso for all Retrievers Before any Retriever is entitled to be described as a Field Trial Champion it must also have a Water and Drive Certificate. The Water Certificate must have been conducted before two Panel judges, one of whom must be an A Panel, at one of the following: the Retriever Championship, a Field Trial Open Stake, or at a subsequent special test. (J(A)2 refers.) The Drive Certificate must be conducted before two Panel judges, one of whom must be an A Panel, at the Retriever Championship or a Field Trial Open Stake **or 1st, 2nd or 3rd at a Novice or All Aged field trial.**

(Insertion in Bold. Deletion struck through)

25. Mr North seconded the amended proposal.
26. A vote took place, and by a large majority, the Council was in favour of the proposal. Therefore, the amended proposal was **recommended** to the Field Trials Committee for approval.

Water Tests at HPR Trials - Regulation J(E)1

27. The German Wirehaired Pointer Club, Worcestershire Gundog Society, and the German Longhaired Pointer Club, on behalf of the Hunt Point Retrieve Field Trials Association and represented by Mr Kimberley, wished to propose an amendment to regulation J(E)1 regarding the return of a Water Test at HPR Field Trials.

Regulation J(E)1

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 **from land and water.**

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

In Open, All Aged and Novice Stakes to receive an award dogs must complete a water test at the end of the trial (If this is not possible due to conditions a water certificate may be issued to be completed within three weeks of the trial under 2 judges one of which should be an A panel) consisting of a marked retrieve of a Dummy from water of at least 10 to 15 metres completed on command and delivered to hand.

(Insertion in Bold)

28. It was proposed that, since the Water Test had been removed from HPR trials, dogs within the HPR group were no longer being fully tested at trials. Only dogs that had won two Open Stakes were being required to undertake a water test in order to gain the title of Field Trial Champion. Consequently, many dogs had achieved other awards without having been fully assessed. Concern was growing within the HPR community regarding the wider long-term implications of this, particularly in relation to breeding programmes.
29. The proposal was seconded by Mr Major.
30. It was noted that the Water Test had been removed on welfare grounds by the Board of the Royal Kennel Club, as there had been concern around dogs entering water in cold weather.
31. It was noted that Water Tests were usually conducted at the end of the trial day to ensure the dogs were moved to a warmer environment immediately following the test.
32. Following a brief discussion, a vote took place, with a majority in favour and the proposal was **recommended** for approval to the Field Trials Committee.

Judges' evaluations on all judges - Regulation J(A)3.n

33. The East Anglian Labrador Retriever Club, represented by Mrs Reed, wished to propose an amendment to regulation J(A)3.n to require all judges to provide feedback on all those they judge alongside.

Regulation J(A)3.n

TO:

Judges on the A Panel and the B Panel must submit assessments of B Panel or non-panel judges, as appropriate. **B panel and non-panel judges shall, in addition, submit a brief evaluation of the A panel**

judge(s) with whom they officiate. All evaluation forms to be received by the Royal Kennel Club within 30 days of the trial.
(Insertion in Bold.)

34. The proposal was seconded by Mr Crookes.
35. It was raised that there were currently no repercussions for A Panel judges who received negative feedback. However, it was recognised that a complaints procedure was already in place for judges to report any negative interactions that were contrary to the code of conduct or regulations, and that feedback needed to be transparent and applied consistently across all judging panels. It was also noted that A Panel judges officiating on the day were primarily focused on assessing the dog and handler, rather than mentoring B and Non-Panel judges.
36. It was queried whether a judge's reputation for consistently writing negative feedback across multiple judges should be factored in.
37. The process of judges' development was discussed, and it was noted that the current reporting system did not provide an appropriate mechanism for judges to deliver overtly critical feedback. It was suggested that judges should be encouraged to seek feedback during their judging appointments. Concern was also raised that Non-Panel and B Panel judges were not being given the opportunity to respond to any feedback they received.
38. Bullying was recognised as an issue, and it was noted that there should be a method of reporting any concerns.
39. It was suggested that it should be implemented into the judge's seminar script that following trials judges talk through any feedback they had written with the judge they were evaluating.
40. It was queried whether an appraisal process should take place between judges, whereby the evaluated judge would countersign the evaluation form to confirm that the feedback had been discussed together. However, concern was raised that not all judges would feel comfortable with such an approach, as it could become confrontational. It was also suggested that a trial may not be the most appropriate setting for those discussions, particularly where hosts, guns, or gamekeepers were present nearby. It was suggested that any such discussions could instead take place away from the ground.

41. Further concern was raised that, following a trial, judges might not feel able to devote significant time to providing detailed feedback. It was also acknowledged that judges might be less willing to vocalise feedback directly than they would be to record it in writing on an evaluation form.
42. It was suggested that the matter could be taken to the Field Trials Committee for further discussion on how the proposal would work in practice.
43. Following a discussion, a vote took place, with a majority in favour and the proposal was **recommended** for approval to the Field Trials Committee.

Field Trial Champion Qualifications (Retrievers) - Regulation K2.c(2)(c)

44. The Utility Gundog Society, represented by Mrs Reed, wished to propose an amendment to Regulation K2.c(2)(c) to include dogs placed second in one 24-dog and one One-day Open stake under three different Panel A judges be given the title of Field Trial Champion.
45. The item was not seconded, therefore no further discussion took place.

Championship Qualifications - Regulation K2.c.(2)

46. The Utility Gundog Society, represented by Mrs Reed, wished to propose that a second place at the Retriever Championship would count towards the dog's Field Trial Champion title.
47. The proposal was seconded by Mrs Joint.
48. It was queried if the item would be for the International Gundog League (Retriever Society) to consider but it was noted that the title of Field Trial Champion was the Royal Kennel Club's to award and therefore the remit of the Royal Kennel Club.
49. The sentiment of the issue was recognised however it was felt to devalue the champion title.
50. Following a short discussion a vote took place, and by a large majority the Council did not recommend the proposal for approval.

GWT Novice Definition - Regulation J(G)2.b.(2)

51. Mrs Reed proposed an amendment to Regulation J(G)2.b.(2) to remove the Certificate of Merit from the Novice Gundog Working Test entry restrictions.
52. The rationale was that progressing from Novice to Open Gundog Working Tests represented a significant step, and that doing so prematurely could have a detrimental effect on a dog's training. It was also felt that dogs awarded a Certificate of Merit in a trial may have achieved that simply by completing the trial, and that such dogs might benefit from gaining further experience at additional trials.
53. The proposal was seconded by Mrs Carpenter.
54. It was noted that a dog awarded a Certificate of Merit at a Novice Field Trial had been tested and had met the required standard, and that it was unfair to describe the award as "just a pass". It was suggested that a dog holding a Certificate of Merit from a Field Trial was more than likely of the standard required for an Open Gundog Working Test.
55. It was also noted that a Certificate of Merit constituted a preferential qualification for entry into an Open Gundog Working Test.
56. The Council noted that there were higher numbers of competitors in Novice Gundog Working Tests, and as a result some clubs had added additional unclassified tests such as Graduate or Intermediate tests to be able to accommodate those dogs which had qualified out of Novice but had not reached Open standard yet.
57. Following a discussion a vote took place, and by a large majority the Council did not recommend the proposal for approval.

Welfare of dogs - Regulation J2

58. Mrs Reed wished to propose an amendment to regulation J2 to include choke chains.
59. It was proposed that choke chains had been used as a way of disciplining a dog and had been heard to be "rattled" in a pocket as a correction for heelwork and when removed dogs had been seen to show signs of apprehension. It was argued that this was unnecessary and outdated in modern training.
60. The proposal was seconded by Mr McGrath.

61. It was raised that the term 'choke chain' was antiquated and had negative connotations and that using another term, i.e. 'check chain' softened the perception of the collar, although it was raised that perhaps that was just semantics.
62. Concern was raised that in the wrong hands any lead / collar could be used as a punishment device or incorrectly used to cause harm, and that by banning choke chains, slip leads / collars may also be counted. It was noted that many people use choke / check chains very effectively and without causing any harm to their dogs.
63. The Council agreed that it was the judges' responsibly to assess whether a device such as a choke chain was being used for harsh handling. It was also noted that peer assessment (i.e. competitor to competitor) should also be used at trials and that no person should be seen harshly handling a dog.
64. Following a discussion a vote took place, and by a large majority it did not recommend the proposal for approval.

J Regulation Seminars – Addition of Regulation J5.c.(7)

65. Mrs Reed proposed the addition of Regulation J5.(7) to ensure that only Royal Kennel Club affiliated Clubs and Societies were able to run the Royal Kennel Club Judges' Training Programme seminar on Royal Kennel Club J Regulations.
66. The item was not seconded, therefore no further discussion took place.

Amendment to Regulations J4.c.(1)(viii), J6.(a)(ii) and J6.(c)

67. Mrs Carpenter proposed amendments to the above regulations and addition of J6.(a)(ii) to ensure that the requirements relating to the closing dates for entries were located in the appropriate sections of the J regulations, providing greater clarity for secretaries.

Regulation J4.c.(1)(viii)

TO:

(viii) The latest date for receiving applications for entry **must be a minimum of 14 days prior to the stake.**

(Insertion in Bold)

Regulation J6.(a)(ii)

a. (ii) Societies may determine the closing dates of entries and nominations, but must be a minimum of 14 days prior to the stake.

(Insertion in Bold)

Regulation J6.(c)

TO:

c. A society may make its own arrangements as regards the pre-payment of entries and, except where otherwise defined in the Regulations, conditions of stakes. ~~Dates of closing of entries or nominations must be a minimum of 14 days prior to the stake.~~

(Deletion struck through)

68. It was proposed that the amendments clarified the placement of the requirement relating to the closing dates for entries. The addition of Regulation J6(a)(ii) ensured that the requirement for closing dates to be a minimum of 14 days prior to the stake was clearly stated within the entries process.
69. The proposal was seconded by Mrs Venturi-Rose.
70. It was agreed that the amendments were clear and helpful.
71. Following a brief discussion, a vote took place, with a majority in favour and the proposal was **recommended** for approval to the Field Trials Committee.

ITEM 8. DISCUSSION ITEMS

Reducing the length of two-day Open Retriever stakes

72. Mr Capstick presented the discussion item on behalf of the Cheshire, North Wales and Shropshire Spaniel and Retriever Society. The Council was requested to discuss whether a two-day open retriever trial could be finished in one day under certain circumstances.
73. It had been queried due to the recent three day Any Variety Spaniel (Except Spaniel [Cocker]) Championship finishing on the morning of the second day.
74. It was highlighted that a two day trial might be considered null and void if it was reduced to a one-day stake.

75. It was clarified that the AV Spaniel Championship had only been extended to three days due to the volume of dogs now qualifying.
76. It was raised that if a 24 dog stake was held and only one or two dogs remained in the stake, it could seem unnecessary to call handlers and dogs back for only a few retrieves on the following day.
77. Clarification was sought as to whether the trial was a two-day competition, or if it was a competition between 24 dogs, and it was noted that if 24 dogs competed in a single-day stake, that should still count as an A qualification towards the Retriever Championship.
78. It was recognised that should the trial be running low on dogs then it would be the responsibility of the judges to preserve the second day of the trial. It was noted that judges, hosts, guns and competitors had all given up their time to run the trial over two days.
79. It was highlighted that the reduction in days of the Any Variety Spaniel [Excluding Cockers] Championship had been due to extenuating circumstances and had not happened previously.
80. The Council noted that a dog which had performed well on day one of a stake might not necessarily perform to the same standard on day two of a trial, and that such dogs should therefore be tested over multiple days.
81. The Council agreed that the discussion item did not warrant further discussion and that two day retriever trials should not be not permitted to be reduced to one day stakes.

Judges judging together more than twice a season

82. Mr Capstick presented the discussion item on behalf of the Cheshire, North Wales and Shropshire Spaniel and Retriever Society. The Council was requested to discuss whether a limit should be introduced whereby no two panel judges could judge together as a pair more than twice in one season.
83. It was noted that judges often preferred to judge alongside others who were aligned in their approach and outlook. It was also queried how such an expectation could be formally legislated and enforced.
84. It was raised that Northern Ireland and Scotland had a limited number of judges and the suggestion would limit that further. It was also raised that,

by separating couples who typically judged together, often to reduce costs for the society, could in turn limit the number of trials they were able to enter.

85. The Council agreed that the discussion item did not warrant further discussion.

Correct procedure in a run off at a driven trial

86. Mrs Reed presented the discussion item on behalf of the Utility Gundog Society. The Council was requested to discuss whether the Royal Kennel Club needed to publish advice regarding procedure in a run off at a driven trial.
87. It had been observed that, on occasion, both senior panel judges had moved forward to observe dogs working, leaving the non panel judge, often less experienced, alone to send dogs. This had at times resulted in procedural errors or the incorrect elimination of dogs.
88. It was noted that it was the responsibility of the panel judges on the day and should be managed appropriately according to the circumstances. However, it was suggested that this should apply as the procedure across the entire stake, rather than solely for run-offs.
89. It was queried as to whether this procedure had been detailed in the seminar script, however it was confirmed that that was not the case.
90. The Council agreed that guidance on the matter should be published in the Field Trials Newsletter regarding an inexperienced non-panel judge being left unattended. The Council agreed that wording would be suggested to the Field Trials Committee to consider.

"Panel judges should avoid leaving a less experienced judge(s) without supervision during a trial."

(Miss McNally left the meeting)

Talking to your dog or touching your dog during a trial or working test

91. Mrs Reed presented the discussion item on behalf of the East Anglian Labrador Retriever Club. The Council was requested to discuss whether the Royal Kennel Club needed to publish advice regarding handlers talking to their dog or touching their dog during a trial or working test.

92. It had been reported that competitors had been given a zero score in working tests or eliminated or warned in field trials for briefly praising their dog, for example by saying "good dog" or giving a single pat.
93. It was noted that across all subgroups handlers could not touch their dogs until after the judging had finished. It was noted that the issue may have arisen due to inexperienced judging at working tests.
94. It was noted that in the Seminar Script under the Retrievers section (Regulation J(B)6 -Basic requirements) the following guidance was included:

"The handler must not speak to the dog except to instruct it to retrieve, nor may the handler touch the dog if, in doing so, they are effectively restraining it. From time to time a handler may reassure their dog but should not do so when the dog is at a drive nor do so in a way which could be calculated to prevent the dog from running in."
95. The Council agreed to suggest to the Field Trials Committee that the above wording be published as guidance in the Field Trials Newsletter.

Toileting during a trial

96. Mrs Reed presented the discussion item on behalf of the East Anglian Labrador Retriever Club. The Council was requested to discuss whether the Royal Kennel Club needed to publish guidance regarding regulations around a dog toileting during a trial.
97. It was noted that it was not an eliminating fault, although dogs had previously been eliminated for it. It was suggested that this could be considered a major fault under 'slack or un-businesslike work'. It was raised that the judge should be able to distinguish between persistent scent marking, and a dog that really needed to relieve itself which should be permitted.
98. It was recognised that toileting when on a run or at heel was not an eliminating fault, however there were a number of situations where toileting may occur, and it would be at the judge's discretion as to whether the behaviour constituted a major fault.
99. It was noted that it occurred more frequently in working tests whereby dogs were given zero marks for the test if they had toileted during the exercise.

(Mr Johnston left the meeting)

100. The Council proposed that the matter be taken to the Field Trials Committee to finalise guidance to be published in the Field Trials Newsletter.

Pointing at a bird for the dog to mark

101. Mrs Reed presented the discussion item on behalf of the East Anglian Labrador Retriever Club. The Council was requested to discuss whether the Royal Kennel Club needed to publish guidance on a competitor “pointing” at a bird for the dog to mark.
102. It was clarified that Judges should not impose their style of handling onto competitors. It was noted that if a competitor was having to ask the dog to mark, the command may be used to impose steadiness or other control. It was recognised that dogs should be able to mark on their own accord. It was noted that the following guidance had been issued in the Spring 2026 Field Trials Newsletter regarding style of handling:

“Judges should not impose their own style of handling on to the handler, or impose any penalties due to the competitor's style of handling, unless the handling was in breach of J regulations. Handlers should have the freedom to use such commands as they see fit, and to use items such as handkerchiefs should they wish to do so.”

103. It was noted that, as well as the judge, a handler should not interfere with any other competitor or dog or would be found to have breached regulation J8.b.(5).
104. It was recognised that the Council would need to be clear on what guidance it wished to publish; however, the Council was unable to agree a set of guidance, and therefore the discussion item was not taken any further.

IGL Retriever Championship Qualifications

105. Mrs Reed presented the discussion item on behalf of the Utility Gundog Club. The Council was requested to discuss whether a dog placed second in the Retriever Championship should receive formal recognition equivalent to a B qualification.

106. It was felt by the Council that this could be seen to devalue the first-place award. However, it was agreed that a second-place award at the Championship was a high standard of achievement and should be counted as a B qualification for the following season.
107. The Council proposed that the matter would be taken to the Field Trials Committee before referring the matter to the International Gundog League (Retriever Society).

Regulation J(A)3.g

108. Mrs Reed presented the item and invited the Council to discuss whether there was a need to provide clearer guidance or expectations around the positioning of dogs at driven trials, particularly in relation to opportunities to retrieve wounded or runner birds during a drive.
109. It was noted that this was in the seminar script and that the regulations were clear.
110. The current regulation wording was highlighted to the Council and it was agreed that no further changes were required.

Regulation J(A)4.e

111. The item had been withdrawn for consideration.

ITEM 9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Field Trials Liaison Council Chairman representing a sup-group on the Field Trials Committee

112. An item was raised as to whether the Chair of the Council should be independent from the subgroup which they represented. It was considered that each subgroup should have two representatives on Committee, plus the Council Chairman. A view was expressed where it was felt that the whole Council wouldn't be represented fairly as it was believed that the subgroup which the Chairman specialised in would not be equally represented.
113. It was clarified that each of the representatives from Council should be representing the views of the Council as a whole rather than just the views of their own subgroup. It was also recognised that the Chairman would represent both the whole Council, and their own subgroup and count as one of the two subgroup specialists.

114. It was clarified that it was not within the remit of the Field Trials Liaison Council to amend the Committee structure.

Novice Dog/Novice Handler

115. At its last meeting the Field Trials Committee amended wording to regulation J(G)2.b.(4) regarding the Novice Dog/Novice Handler Gundog Working Tests to provide further clarity. The Committee proposed the amended wording to the Council for further discussion.
116. The proposed amendment would be moved to under the unclassified regulation, as follows:

Regulation J(G)2.b.(4)

TO:

~~(4) NOVICE DOG/NOVICE HANDLER. Confined to dog and handler who have not gained any award in a field trial or classified GWT or won a Novice Dog/Novice Handler test.~~

(54) UNCLASSIFIED. Open to all dogs of a specified breed or breeds, but may be restricted by conditions as determined by the society. To include water and team tests. A water test can include dogs of any sub-group competing together. However, if dogs of more than one sub-group are competing as a team, each sub-group will compete and be judged in accordance with the Royal Kennel Club Gundog Working Test Regulations relating to that group.

NOVICE DOG / NOVICE HANDLER TEST is confined to a dog or handler who have not gained any award in a field trial, including or a COM, or any award in a classified GWT in any subgroup.

The test may also be restricted by any other awards determined by the society.

(Insertion in Bold. Deletion struck through)

117. It was raised that clubs were running special puppy tests as unclassified to avoid the winner of such a test being over qualified to enter Novice Dog/Novice Handler tests. It was raised that the amendment would remind societies that they were able to add their own parameters to stop that from happening.
118. It was queried why the regulation had originally been introduced. The office advised that some experienced competitors were finding ways around the entry requirements and entering Novice Dog/Novice Handler tests when it was not considered that they were eligible

119. It was suggested that “including” be changed to “or” as it had been confirmed that a Certificate of Merit was not an award.
120. It was queried as to why the Certificate of Merit was not classified as an award as it gave the dog a studbook number. It was suggested that this be submitted as a discussion item for consideration at the next Council meeting if appropriate.
121. It was raised that, as the Novice Dog/Novice Handler test was unclassified, clubs would be able to determine any restrictions. It was therefore suggested that the test should remain within the Unclassified category and not be specifically listed.
122. The Council was of the view that Novice Dog/Novice Handler should not be listed in the regulations and recommended to the Field Trials Committee that the Novice Dog/Novice Handler regulation be removed altogether and instead fall under the Unclassified category.

The meeting closed at 14:08

MISS S WHYTE

<i>THE ROYAL KENNEL CLUB'S STRATEGIC AIMS</i>
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Champion the wellbeing of dogs</i>• <i>Safeguard and enhance the future of pedigree dogs, addressing breed-associated health issues</i>• <i>Protect the future of dog activities together with our grassroots network</i>• <i>Become relevant to more dog owners to increase our impact</i>• <i>Deliver an excellent member experience and widen our community</i>• <i>Ensure we are financially secure and sustainable</i> |
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