



GUIDE TO ROYAL KENNEL CLUB J REGULATIONS FOR SPANIELS

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

SPANIEL FIELD TRIALS

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

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

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

Changes to FT Regulations are also in the back pages of the **KC Field Trial J Regulations booklet**. There is a free download of the booklet at the bottom of the KC Website page.

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

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

This Guide should be read in conjunction with:

- 1) The Royal Kennel Club Guide for **Field Trial Judges**

<https://www.thekennelclub.org.uk/media/1246/guide-for-ft-judges.pdf>

- 2) The Royal Kennel Club **J Regulations**

- 3) **Code of Best Practice for Spaniel Field Trial Competitors**

<https://www.thekennelclub.org.uk/about-us/about-the-kennel-club/the-kennel-club-codes/code-of-best-practice-for-spaniel-field-trial-competitors/>

The Royal Kennel Club Guide for Field Trial Judges

This guide consists of ten sections.

The guide is intended as a useful reference for those embarking participating 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 ten sections:

- 1) **General**
- 2) **Code of Best Practice**
- 3) **Invitation to Judge**
- 4) **Appointment to the Panel of Field Trial Judges**
- 5) **Before the Trial**
- 6) **At the Trial**
- 7) **After the Trial**
- 8) **Overseas Judges and British Judges overseas**
- 9) **Pitfalls**
- 10) **Social Media**

THE ROYAL KENNEL CLUB J REGULATIONS

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:

1. J General Regulations
2. J(A) The Management, Conduct and Judging of Field Trials
3. J(C) Spaniels

J – General Regulations

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

This section covers the following:

- 1) Introduction
- 2) Welfare of dogs
- 3) Stakes
- 4) Application and documentation
- 5) Judges
- 6) Entries
- 7) Awards and prizes
- 8) Control of dogs and competitors under Trial
- 9) Championships and Champion Stake
- 10) Removal of dog(s) from the Trial
- 11) Objections
- 12) Disqualification and forfeit of awards
- 13) Fraudulent and discreditable conduct at Trials
- 14) Penalties

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

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

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

The Oxford English Dictionary defines them as follows:

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

The guide will illustrate how these words are applied.

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

1. General

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Part of this regulation is obvious, and part often not properly practised in Trials. Where a dog is to be eliminated for 'hard mouth' all the Judges MUST have examined the game. This should be carried out as tactfully as possible and need not, in all circumstances, be done immediately, although that is preferable. Should the Judges be separated by some distance so that it is impractical to show the game to the other Judges 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 all Judges have examined it. For this reason Judges should be prepared for such an eventuality, for example, carry a game bag. Nor should anyone other than the co-Judges and the handler of the dog in question be permitted 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.

The only possible exception to the above arises where a pair of Judges, have examined the game and shown it to the handler who, after feeling it, agrees that his dog caused the damage and accepts his exclusion from the Stake for this reason. In these circumstances the Judge may save the handler the embarrassment of having the Trial stopped while an obviously damaged bird is carried about to be examined by all the Judges.

2. Water Tests

- a. A Water Test requires a dog to enter water readily and swim to the satisfaction of the Judges.***
- b. If a separate Water Test is included as part of a Stake, all dogs placed in the awards must have passed this test.***
- c. 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.(3), K2.c.(6) and K2.c.(8)) it must be held between 1 September and 1 April inclusive.

Note that the dog must enter water readily and swim; there is no requirement for it to retrieve from or over water in such a test. Where a separate water test is included, all dogs must have passed the test but this is not to be taken to mean that where natural water retrieves occur during a Trial that all dogs must be tested in water.

The Water Certificate must be signed by two field trial judges, one of whom must be on the 'A' Panel. It may be withheld where a dog has committed an eliminating fault during the test. However another attempt may be made on another occasion.

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.

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

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.

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.

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

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

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

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

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

Having done all of the introductory work the Judges are tasked to make sure they have the right dogs 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.

- d. All Judges, Chief Stewards and others responsible for the organisation of the Trial should be courteous and co-operative with the Host and Steward of the Beat and fall in with their arrangements to achieve the best result possible in an atmosphere of friendliness and confidence.***
- e. At the start of the day, the Judges should be introduced to each other and decide their positions in the line which will remain the same throughout the body of the Stake. The Judges should brief the guns and handlers and if, at any time, conditions force them to depart from the arrangements they have set out the Chief Steward should be informed so that he or she can advise the competitors, guns and others affected.***
- f. Judges should also make themselves aware of any special prizes which are to be awarded in the Stake.***
- g. Judges should ask the Steward of the Beat what the game position is likely to be and regulate the amount of work or number of retrieves for each dog accordingly. They should also satisfy themselves that arrangements have been made for the collection of dead or wounded game not gathered by the competing dogs and where necessary its humane despatch.***

Regulations d – g above:- 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.

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.

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

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.

It may become clear that there is a hazard while the first dog is out working on a retrieve and that is not safe to try a second dog. In these circumstances it is acceptable to call up the first dog and not to try a second dog.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

not confuse their co-Judges with hieroglyphics and should come to a consensus view with their co-Judges.

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

Occasionally the judge(s) at the other end of the line may have a better view of a dogs work than the sending judge(s). It is important for the co-judge(s) to watch the dogs work and, if they have seen anything that the sending judge(s) should be made aware of, good or bad (such as taking a line or swapping game), to report back to the sending judge(s) as soon as they are able. There are occasions when game may be found when the line moves forward, resulting in dogs which were previously tried being eliminated. In both these circumstances gradings may be retrospectively adjusted.

It is of the utmost importance to make short meaningful notes about each dogs work, so that when the Judges get together at the end of the day to discuss placings they will be able to justify a mark by being able to describe the work in detail and memory will let you down. Comments on unpicked retrieves are also important and may prove invaluable when deciding the final placing of dogs in the awards.

It is important to remember when judging that natural game finding to be of the first importance and dogs showing game finding ability and initiative to be placed above those that have to be handled (as discussed above Reg J(A) 3.a. & J(A)4.g)

n. Judges on the A Panel and the B Panel must submit assessments of B Panel or non-panel Judges, as appropriate, with whom they officiate. All evaluation forms to be received by The Royal Kennel Club within 30 days of the trial.

One of the most important duties of an 'A' Panel judge 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.

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

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

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

4. For all Sub-groups required to retrieve

- a. *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.***
- b. *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.

- c. *All wounded game should, where possible, be gathered and despatched immediately. Unless exceptional circumstances prevail then 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 a competing dog being quickly sent to retrieve the injured game, then the task should immediately be delegated to the picking up dog and handler.

- d. *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. During the first round of the Stake dogs should, whenever possible, have the opportunity to pick game shot by their own guns.***

This regulation has less relevance to Spaniels than to Retrievers, however, where game is shot very close to the line so that it will not make a useful retrieve for the Judge whose gun shot it, it may be offered to the other Judge, otherwise, even though it may only be a short retrieve it should be used by the Judge whose gun shot it if the game was flushed by the dog under them.

- e. *Handlers should be instructed where to try from and be given reasonable directions as to where the game fell. Whilst dogs are retrieving, judges should not use their stick or any other aid as a marker to show the precise whereabouts of shot game or the fall area. 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, 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.

Natural game finding ability is of the first importance at a field trial and judges should run trials as near as possible to a shooting day. They should allow the opportunity for game finding ability to shine. Judges may use their stick to indicate the area of shot game if they feel the dog or handler has been unable to mark the fall or the handler is unable to see the dog working, but not to the extent that the handler is given the exact location. Placing a stick in the ground in the area of the fall is unacceptable.

Where a handler has had an opportunity to mark they should not need direction and all you will be required to do is instruct them to send their dog. If they have 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.

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.

- f. 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.

- g. 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.***

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.

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.

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.

Equally, the dog should not be penalised for obedience if it had, for example, been stopped on the whistle by the handler on reaching the fall area, and it coincided with the dog being at the point of picking. The judges would have to make a decision whether the dog had already stopped to stand over the game (and eliminate) or it had stopped because it was obedient to the whistle. 'Standing over game' is when the dog finds the retrieve but instead of picking it promptly stands over it waiting for the handler to give an instruction. This should not be confused with dogs locating the game with a slight indication/point before picking a bird, especially if still alive.

- h. 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.***

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

There are different types of eye wipes, for example, game-finding eye wipes where a dog goes to an area previously worked by another dog and either finds the game or takes a line and picks a runner, and that where a dog picks game which other dogs have tried and failed to reach. While there are distinctions to be drawn between the game-finding eye wipe and those that are more dependent on handling, 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. There is also the technical eye wipe which is achieved behind a dog of no merit and is graded simply on the retrieve itself.

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.

Sometimes a retrieve is unpickable, and may have flown or gone down a hole, unseen by the judge. If a dog has worked well on the fall and line it should be acknowledged for the work it has done (and appropriate notes made). It should not be automatically put out first dog down, especially if the dog tried after made a poor effort in comparison.

- i. 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.

A Judge is responsible for dispatching wounded game and should be competent at dispatching all types, not just game birds but rabbits and hares too. It must be done **immediately** the handler has passed the retrieve over. After the game has been dispatched the ribs must then be felt for any evidence of 'hard mouth' before handing it over to the game-carrier (only if not damaged).

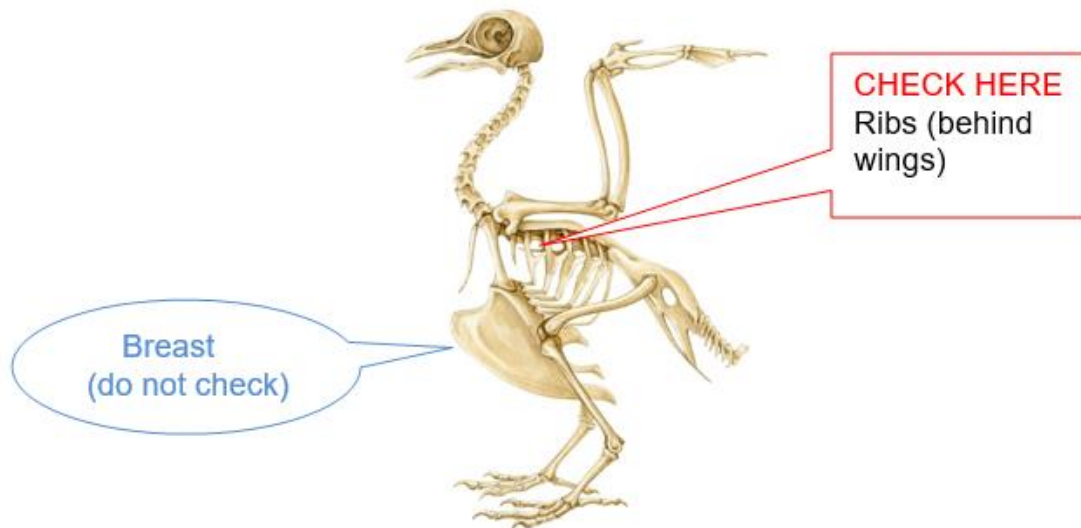
When checking a bird for broken ribs place the bird on the palm of your hand with the breast facing upwards. Use that same hand to check for damage where the ribs meet the spine. The ribs are on the underside of the bird when it is held this way. Consequently, holding the bird this way enables you to 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.



WHERE TO CHECK A BIRD FOR DAMAGE FROM HARD MOUTHED DOG

- j. Only game shot by the guns during the trial should be used for dogs to retrieve whilst they are under the direction of the judges. Handlers may be required to use their dogs to look for game after the trial at the request of the keeper. Practicing with cold game on the trial ground is forbidden.**

Bringing cold game to a trial ground to give to dogs as a 'warm up' retrieve ahead of the trial is unacceptable, as is taking cold game from the game cart and using it for retrieves to give the dog experience.

J(C) – SPANIELS

1. Basic Requirements

Dogs shall be required to quarter ground hunting for game and other quarry species (hereafter game), to be steady to flush, shot and fall and to retrieve tenderly to hand on command.

Any dog that does not fulfil these basic requirements shall not receive an Award or a Certificate of Merit.

These are Basic Requirements and mean what they say. They reflect the minimum level of competence which is acceptable to a Judge in any Field Trial. A dog not conforming to these requirements should be discarded from the stake since it may not in any circumstances receive any recognition for poor work.

The dog must actually be hunting, not just running over the ground. It must exhibit good ground treatment in a quartering pattern with proper use of wind direction and hunt any cover found on its beat, whether light or heavy, with an effective pattern giving thorough ground treatment.

The dog must find game and stop to the flush of game. The dog must stop to the sound of a shot which is fired within a reasonable distance of the dog. It is not acceptable, for a dog to continue moving after flush or after shot, whether or not the shot is relevant to the dog or the flush, since it may endanger the dog.

The dog must, therefore, after flush or shot, remain steady. It must remain there in position without the handler having to restrain it in any way. The handler should not speak to the dog except to instruct it to retrieve, nor may the handler touch the dog if in doing so he is restraining it in order to prevent the dog from running in.

The dog should sit reasonably still. It must not run in. That is, it must not go for a retrieve until it is sent and, when sent, it must retrieve to hand without damaging the game.

The dog must retrieve tenderly to hand. That means it must not discard the game nor drop it close to the handler in a way which causes him to complete the retrieve by lifting the game from the ground. Neither should the handler be forced to move in a stretching or diving motion in order to snatch the retrieve from the dog's mouth.

The dog must not cause damage to game, whether it is dead or alive which would amount to 'hard mouth' (Regulation J(C)5).

2. Number of Runners

To qualify for entry in The Royal Kennel Club Stud Book, the number of runners permitted in stakes is:

- a. Open Stakes - maximum 18, minimum 14.***
- b. Other Stakes - maximum 18, minimum 12.***
- c. Any Variety Spaniel (except Spaniel [Cocker] and Spaniel [English Springer]) – maximum 18, minimum 10***

These are the minimum and maximum numbers if the Awards in the Trial are to qualify for a dog's inclusion in the Stud Book. The Stake may be run with less but will be of no benefit to anyone. There will be no preference gained in a draw for an Open stake.

3. Competing

Where possible dogs should be run in pairs, one dog under each Judge or pair of Judges. In the first round, odd numbers will run under the right-hand Judge(s) in consecutive order and, unless eliminated or discarded, will run in the second round under the left-hand Judge(s) and vice versa. A handler who is running two dogs in the Stake may already be running a dog when called for a run with his or her other dog. The Judge(s) should then call the next dog on that side to allow continuity of the Stake. When this occurs the Stake must revert to the original running order at the earliest opportunity. After the second round of a Stake is completed the Judges may call up any dogs they please and in any order.

This regulation sets out the format of any spaniel Trial. Where the Trial is being judged by two Judges, the 'A' panel Judge usually takes the right-hand side with the odd numbered dogs while the 'B' or 'Non Panel' Judge takes the left, commencing with 2, 4, 6, and so on.

Under the Four Judge System the stake must use "at least 2 Panel Judges, one of whom must be an A" (Regulation J5. Judges b.(2)). The Judges must judge in pairs. The 'A' Panel Judge and the Judge with whom he is paired usually takes the right-hand side and the other two (one of whom must be a Panel Judge), the left hand side.

The Judges must judge in pairs. Regulation J5. Judges b.(2) states "(If four judge system is used at least 2 Panel Judges, one of whom must be an A)" The 'A' Panel Judge and the Judge with whom he is paired taking the right hand side and the other two including the second Panel Judge, the left hand side.

Two judges working together should generally place themselves separately in order to best observe the working of the dog and handler. One judge staying with the handler at all times while the second judge should unobtrusively move to the side when the dog is hunting or forward of to observe a retrieve. A pair of Judges may confer during the dogs run but on completion of the run should quickly agree a suitable mark based on the dogs performance. This mark will be discussed in more detail when all judges decide the final places.

Under either systems, when a dog has completed his run satisfactorily or is discarded from the Trial the next dog is called into line. If that dog is unavailable because the handler is already in line with another Judge, working his other entered dog, the Judge should move forward to the next highest numbered dog. The Judges' Steward should be made aware of this change in order that the dog which has been passed over when not available in numerical order may be brought into line as soon as it is available and an opportunity next arises when the Judge is ready to call a new dog into line. Except in these circumstances it is the Judge's responsibility to ensure that the dogs are judged in the correct numerical order. The handler is responsible for making sure they have the correct dog with the correct number displayed and to ensure that the dog is being run in the correct order (if running more than one dog).

However, "after the second round of a stake is completed then the Judges may call up any dogs they please and in any order". The final sentence of this regulation makes it clear that, once a Trial has progressed to the run-off stage the Judges may call up dogs in any order they wish. At this stage it will typically be the hunting ability of the dogs which is to be assessed. The sentence does not refer to the use of spare retrieves; though some mistakenly suppose that it does. Rather, it simply provides the Judges with a way of assessing dogs in a third or fourth run without any restriction as to order of running.

Should circumstances arise where a Judge cannot continue to officiate the following Royal Kennel Club policy should be followed:

Under the two Judge system it is essential that a stand in judge is appointed. The Trial cannot be concluded with one Judge. If a substitute Judge cannot take over the Judges Book then the Trial cannot proceed.

Under the Four Judge system, if another Judge of equivalent standing is available that judge should step in and take over the book from the Judge who cannot continue. However, if the Trial is at an advanced stage, or if another Judge cannot be appointed, in an Open Stake it would be quite proper to continue with only three Judges, that is, with only one Panel Judge on one side. If, in a Novice Stake or All Aged Stake, this would result in a Non-Panel Judge being left on his or her own, this would not be acceptable since there must be two Panel Judges.

4. Credit points

Natural game finding ability

Drive

Control

Clean quick retrieving and good delivery

Marking ability

Style

Quiet handling

Natural game finding ability

A dog which demonstrates good ground treatment and use of the wind should receive credit for this as, by doing so, it will find game on the beat naturally and with minimal assistance from its handler.

While retrieving, some dogs will require more assistance from the handler than others and the dog which demonstrates its ability to complete the retrieve naturally or with little assistance should be credited for this ability.

Marking Ability

A dog which demonstrates its ability to mark game down accurately and go directly to the fall when sent for a retrieve should be rewarded as, in so doing, the dog is disturbing less ground than a dog which has to be handled. This is particularly so where a good marking dog gets quickly to the fall of a runner and picks it before it can get away, whereas another dog might need to be handled to the fall area.

Drive and Style

A dog which hunts with pace and an attractive action will always be preferred as it is the Judge's task to select the dog which pleases him most as a dog to shoot over. Pace is, to a degree, dependent upon the cover which a dog has to face, but pure speed over open ground is not necessarily a measure of drive. The dog which demonstrates drive by entering cover willingly and maintains a good pace in all circumstances consistent with finding game should receive credit. Assessment of style is to a degree subjective, but a dog with attractive body and tail action while hunting will inevitably catch the Judge's eye and receive credit.

Control and Quiet handling

These can be linked and are an integral part of a well-trained dog. A hunting dog should at all times be well under the control of the handler, flowing along and searching where indicated with little effort: doing so easily in response to and, at all times, with the handler. It should be borne in mind that spaniels are not always in a position to mark the fall area. Judges should be careful to credit a dog which shows ability (gun sense) or can be handled quietly to attain the fall area in such circumstances. A spaniel should not be penalised if it

moves to the edge of cover to mark, especially if it stops naturally when it has done so. Regulation J(C)10. refers.

Clean Quick Retrieving and Good Delivery

A retrieve should be judged as a whole, including quickness in gathering the game, a good return and a clean delivery. A Judge should not turn his back on a retrieve at any time. The retrieve is not over until the handler has delivered the game to the Judge. The Judge must not turn away or start writing in his book until he has examined the game, as to do so will inevitably mean that he will fail to observe some part of the retrieve, for example, the dog 'standing over' the game, or delivering poorly.

5. Eliminating faults

Hard mouth

Missing game on the beat

Failing to enter water

Out of control

Being eye wiped

Without merit

Whining or barking

Running in or chasing

Refusal to retrieve

Picking wrong retrieve

Changing game whilst retrieving

ELMINATING Fault - Dog **MUST** be discarded. (Regulation J(A)1.f. refers).

At all times when a dog has been eliminated the handler should be informed of the fact and the reason why. It is inappropriate to enter into any discussion about the elimination with the handler while judging.

Hard mouth

This is a term used to describe what happens when a dog damages game unacceptably. How the Judges should assess damage and the course of action to be taken has been discussed in Regs J(A)1.f and J(A)4.i. above.

Missing Game on the Beat

Not finding game negates the whole concept of a hunting dog. On a normal shooting day or even at a Trial, game may be in short supply. A gun or handler will want his dog to find each and every head of game in the area where he is working his dog.

The work of a dog which cannot produce game for the gun, but allows it to flush behind, is unsatisfactory. A missed opportunity or possibly a dangerous shot could ensue. Keep in mind the basic requirements for a spaniel of any breed, which call for good ground treatment and a quartering pattern together with proper use of wind direction. While hunting cover, light or heavy, the essential principle is, that the dog must find game on the allotted beat within reasonable distance of a handler.

A Judge may help produce game when cover is patchy or when game is scarce by directing the handler, thus ensuring that all likely holding areas on the edge of the beat are hunted. A Judge should not point out the lie of game to the handler, it is up to the dog to find it and flush it.

A Judge must be aware of wind direction, the beat changing direction, the type of ground, the openness of ground cover before taking action. It is possible for game to run back behind the handler and flush or run back partway and tuck in. Game can flush to the side of the beat. The Judge must be clear about the lie of game in relation to the work of the dog when making such a decision.

The Judge should always be in a position to see the work of the dog but if he is uncertain where the game was when the dog passed that way he may give the benefit of the doubt to the dog. However, the dog must be eliminated when the Judge is certain that the dog has not found game when it should have done so.

Failing to Enter Water

A dog may in some circumstances require more than one command to enter water: but it should not be eliminated unless it will not go. A dog which runs up and down the bank of river or lake while game is floating out of reach should be discarded since the dog has shown that it will not take its handler's instruction. It is important not to waste time in these circumstances, time being of the essence for the second dog to be tried on the retrieve. When sending a dog Judges should be careful of any hazard there may be in entering or leaving the water.

Out of Control

The dog must be under control at all times. When it becomes clear that the dog is not responding to its handler's instructions, it must be eliminated forthwith. Judges should not allow handlers to continue to blow whistles at the dog to try to bring it under control but should instruct the handler to recall or to go and get his dog so that the minimum of disruption of the ground occurs.

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. The dog which was successful may be said to have gained an 'eye wipe'.

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.

Without Merit

This speaks for itself. Any dog that is performing indifferently and is not worthy of credit or an award should be discarded.

Judges should give an explanation and be polite when eliminating such dogs.

Dogs competing should be up to the standard of the stake they are running in. An Open Stake should demand a much higher standard of work than a Novice Stake. In addition to the above, Judges are instructed to withhold any prize or award if competing dogs do not show sufficient merit, (Regulation J7.g. refers).

Whining or Barking

This cannot be permitted at any time while the dog is in line. If a dog, while sitting, starts to whine or makes a noise when hunting or being sent on a retrieve, it should be eliminated.

Dogs will occasionally make a noise, such as a yelp, if they hurt themselves while hunting. A dog should not necessarily be eliminated immediately if it yelps in pain as this is quite different from a circumstance where the dog whines, yelps or barks because of over-excitement. A value judgement should be made as to whether the dog may have sustained an injury in the cover or not. A Judge should exercise his experience in such a position and if in any doubt about the cause of the noise may on a first occasion give the dog the benefit of the doubt. However, if it again makes a noise it should be eliminated.

A dog should not bark, whine or yelp when cast on a retrieve nor while seated. Generally speaking, noise equals elimination.

A Judge should not approach a handler to tell him his dog is making an inappropriate noise and if it does it again it will be eliminated. The handler probably knows already that the dog is making a noise, and in any event the handler cannot do anything about it. If a Judge is convinced that the dog has eliminated itself by making sufficient noise, then it must not be allowed to remain in the Trial. Quietly approach the handler, apologise for having to do so but advise that the dog has been eliminated for making a noise and instruct the handler to put the lead on and leave the line.

Running in or Chasing

A dog should, stop, to shot and the flush of game, but if it moves to mark the fall of shot game if this is obscured, this shows intelligence and should be credited.

If the dog sets off after flush of game, or for a retrieve without its handler's instruction to do so, it should be eliminated. Even if the dog chases and the handler stops it then it has committed the fault.

A dog must not be penalised for trying to mark, even standing up on its hind legs, and in thick cover a dog may push game into the open and then stop. However, a dog which moves from the flush in the direction of the game in other circumstances has not been steady. Sometimes a hunting dog will find game moving in front of it, in the same direction the dog is moving, at speed. The dog will take a little time to stop and should not be penalised, especially if the dog stops quickly and naturally. This can happen sometimes in patchy cover sometimes in the open.

Judges should take care when directing a competitor to send a dog for a retrieve that they do not by their actions cause the dog to run in.

Do not point at a retrieve unless it is absolutely necessary. Speak clearly so that the handler is left in no doubt that he is being instructed to send or being asked to bring his dog to heel, for whatever reason. It is not unknown for a spaniel out on a retrieve to flush game in which case the dog may follow up a short distance. That is not a chase. Provided the dog is not out of control and recovers the line or direction of the retrieve easily by itself, or with help from the handler, he should not be penalised.

Refusal to Retrieve

This should not be confused with failure to retrieve since there are many reasons why a dog may fail, all of which require consideration. However, if a dog ignores a retrieve, that is, it finds an item of game, stands over it, or will not pick it then that is a refusal to retrieve. The dog should then be eliminated. If the dog requires commands to pick up while beside fallen game then that is still committing the fault since the dog should pick up cleanly and return promptly.

Picking Wrong Retrieve

In the event that more than one item of game is shot, Judges may either ask the handler to pick a specific retrieve or pick from a specific area. Before issuing such an instruction, Judges should take into account the proximity of the retrieves, and the wind direction. It is unreasonable to expect a dog to pass shot game which it could scent on the way to the item of game designated as the retrieve.

If a dog is hunting in the right area but returns the 'wrong retrieve' it should not be penalised, even if the game is cold. There may be game shot from previous days on the ground. The judge's discretion on whether the game is acceptable should be used (eg for a stinking carcass). Similarly, it is imperative that wounded game must be sent for as soon as it is practically possible. Once a dog has reached the required area and is hunting for wounded game it should not be penalised for picking items of dead game which it encounters, whether while hunting in the area required or after being seen to have taken a line. It may be necessary for the Judge to move the handler and dog to a position where the dog will not be disadvantaged by scent or sight of other game.

If a dog picks dead game in the area to which it has been directed, particularly if it was downwind of the game, the handler should either be directed to send the dog back to the area for the intended retrieve or the retrieve accepted and the next dog sent. On the other hand, if the items of game are separated by a reasonable distance, then the Judges may take the view that with adequate control the handler should have been able to direct his dog to hunt the area required.

Changing Game Whilst Retrieving

A dog will be judged to have changed game if it clearly picks up an item of game and then puts it down in favour of picking another item of game. A dog may also be penalised for picking up game and while that game is in its mouth, carries on hunting, going to another item of game, obviously considering swapping but not actually putting one item down and picking the other. A dog should pick one item of game and return straight away to its handler. If the dog acknowledges another item of game whilst retrieving, on its direct return to its handler, it should not be penalised, as long as it does not detour.

Except in circumstances where items of game are lying very close together, if a dog goes to one item of game and acknowledges it but leaves it and selects another it should be eliminated since it has failed to retrieve the first item of game and changed to the second even though it has not had the retrieve in its mouth.

If game is lying very close together and it is deemed after discussion with your co-judge that it would be unfair to the next competing dog, one of the retrieves may be picked up by hand and removed.

6. Major faults

Disturbing ground

Catching healthy game

Noisy handling

Not stopping to shot and game

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

Poor control

Not stopping to flush

Not quartering or making ground good

MAJOR fault - Dog **MAY** be discarded (Regulation J(A)1.f. refers).

Disturbing Ground

Good marking and control will prevent a dog from disturbing ground. A dog must hunt the allotted beat flowing naturally in a pattern. It should not break that pattern to hunt off the beat unless directed to do so by the handler on the instructions of the Judge. Hunting too wide a beat may also interfere with another dog's hunting.

A spaniel when sent out on a retrieve may disturb, or may flush game on the way. That can be unavoidable, as the shot game has to be tried for. However, this is completely different from a dog running around, deliberately hunting in a wood or field of rushes. The object is for the dog to be an asset on a shooting day and not to flush all the game in the field before others get an opportunity to hunt that area.

Catching Healthy Game

This is a Major Fault which arises when healthy game is lifted from its seat or is captured when it moves off.

There may be situations where game cannot escape, such as cold wet weather conditions or the early onset of a virus which may affect the well-being and energy levels of game. Live game can feel lifeless in the hand. The catching of a live animal or bird presents a situation which the Judge must consider with very great care, taking particular note of the specific circumstances.

The Gamekeeper or the Steward of the Beat may be able to advise on the health of game or there may have been a shoot in the neighbourhood before the Trial. Shot, dead, injured, wounded, immature, sick or otherwise unhealthy game if found on the beat should be brought to hand.

Uninjured, unshot, or non sick game is by definition healthy and well and should not be caught by the dog whose principal function is to flush that game for the gun to shoot.

The regulations also require that wounded game should be despatched as soon as possible. Game which a Judge knows has been gathered by a hunting dog, should not be released nor should it be allowed to escape. The dog must bring the game to hand. Without killing it, the handler should pass it to the Judge who, if he is satisfied that the game is sick or wounded, should humanely kill it on the spot.

There can be extenuating circumstances (Regulation J(C)8. refers). A spaniel on finding game which does not flush freely, (or was impeded from doing so), may, having attempted to flush it, or having indicated its location, retrieve it to the handler who will hand it to the Judge.

The Judge is now in a better position to examine the game for injury or sickness and he can humanely despatch it. The game can be shown to the handler if the Judge thinks the dog damaged it, in a way amounting to 'hard mouth', in the capture. The Judge is free to assess the situation, take advice from fellow Judge(s), or decide if it was from an earlier shot or failed retrieve. The Judge is then free to retain the dog or to discard it. That decision, entirely properly, can be taken only by the Judge.

It follows, therefore, that where a hunting dog catches game, the handler should not instruct the dog to release it in any circumstances, since by doing so he is acknowledging that in his opinion the dog has pegged unshot healthy game. In effect he is usurping the Judge's authority to decide whether the dog has in fact caught game which it should not have done, or whether it should have the benefit of the doubt if such doubt exists.

Noisy Handling

Noisy handling and Poor Control often, but not always, go together. A spaniel should flow naturally in a pattern which has been instilled during training. It should not require the use of noisy whistling to maintain that pattern. Noise will undoubtedly, disturb game.

When retrieving the dog should understand the difference between hunting and taking a straight line to the fall. It should not need continually to be sent back. The dog should be capable of being stopped and redirected without noisy commands.

Some retrieves are more difficult than others and it may be necessary for the handler to give the dog a good deal of help. The Judge should be able to differentiate between a difficult situation requiring a lot of handling, and the unnecessary use of the whistle or voice.

Not Stopping to Shot and Game

We have already discussed unsteadiness under Basic Requirements above. This should not be confused with 'Not stopping to flush'.

Sometimes game can flush freely in close proximity to the dog or a shot may be fired within a reasonable distance of the spaniel at such game. In both instances the dog should treat both shot and flush as a command to stop hunting. Judges should not fault a dog for failure to stop to a flush unless satisfied that the dog was aware of the flush.

Failing to Find Dead or Wounded Game

A spaniel which, while out on a retrieve or whilst hunting a beat fails to find game which may or may not be known to the Judge to be dead or injured has committed a Major Fault. Should the Judge be aware of such game not being picked up, then unless there is considered to be good reason, that dog may be discarded.

However, should the Judge(s) deem that a retrieve could not be picked by a dog which, having performed well but unsuccessfully in the attempt, due to game being inaccessible such as caught up on wire or a tree branch, then a decision may be taken to retain the dog(s).

Poor Control

See under 'Noisy handling'. A spaniel should flow naturally in a quartering pattern which has been instilled during training. It should not require the constant use of a turn whistle while hunting nor use of noisy whistling or voice commands while retrieving, all of which will disturb game. Any command, however given, should be promptly responded to.

Not Stopping to Flush

When a spaniel whilst hunting a beat finds game, it is expected to flush the game to provide a shot and then a retrieve and we have already discussed this above. It is correct when a bold flush is followed by a natural stop. Not stopping impedes the shot and may lead to 'running in or chasing' or 'being out of control' both of which are Eliminating Faults.

Not Quartering or Making Ground Good

We have already discussed quartering and hunting to make ground good under Basic Requirements above.

7. Trial Procedure

A Spaniel's first job is to hunt and find game and flush it within range of the handler. A Spaniel should at all times work within range with good treatment of ground and must not miss game on the beat it is working. During this period, the Judge(s) can assess the game-finding ability, pace, drive, and, possibly, courage. A dog should have drive and face cover well, but at the same time, should be lively and biddable. In short it should be exciting and a pleasure to watch. It should show good treatment of ground with a minimum of help from its handler. All things being equal, the stylish dog should be given credit. However, Judge(s) should be satisfied that the fast stylish dog is also the best gamefinder.

The direction of the wind has a considerable influence on the way a dog will work ground. With a head-on wind the dog should quarter the ground systematically, making good all likely game-holding cover, but keeping within gunshot distance of the handler. With a following wind it could be very different. The dog will often want to pull well out, then work back towards the handler. Judge(s) must regulate the pace of the line to allow the dog to do this and make good its ground.

When hunting, lines and foot scents should be ignored. Persistent pulling on foot scents is unprofitable and can result in game being missed. However, the ability to take the line to a shot rabbit or hare and birds which have run should be credited.

A run without a find should not automatically bar a dog from the final placings.

All of the above we have covered to some extent in looking at earlier regulations. Here, however, the spaniel's hunting method is emphasised and set out clearly.

Here is information about wind direction and how the hunting spaniel should automatically cope with head and following winds. The speed of the line should be regulated to suit different types of ground. This is so that the dog should not be mistakenly penalised for missing game, due to leaving ground unhunted, caused by circumstances outside it or its handler's control.

The taking of lines when hunting and following after foot scent is poor work. This regulation re-emphasises that the spaniel must use a quartering pattern and avoid breaking that pattern by running forward. The dog should know the difference between hunting a pattern and taking a line when sent to retrieve.

If a spaniel has one run without a find this need not necessarily preclude the dog from winning the Trial or featuring in the awards. A spaniel has two runs, one under each Judge or set of Judges. If there is no game on one of the beats then the dog will not have been able to produce it.

Provided the Judges are satisfied that the ground has been thoroughly hunted and most importantly the dog has had a find on game and a retrieve then depending on its overall work, it may be placed.

Where a blank run has occurred under one Judge it is imperative that, the Judge must always check with co-Judges for confirmation of a find, a steady flush and a retrieve. This should take place as a matter of course when the Judges get together to discuss the awards. Dogs, which have not had a find on game, nor had a retrieve in the Stake, must not be given any recognition since they have not fulfilled the basic requirements for their breed.

- 8. Any game caught by a dog whilst hunting must be retrieved to its handler and handed to the Judge(s) for despatch. After examination the Judge(s) may discard the dog unless there are extenuating circumstances.**

This topic has been fully addressed earlier in this presentation. (see Major Faults 'Catching healthy game').

- 9. It is a refinement if a dog indicates the presence of game before flushing the game positively.**

This is self explanatory. A dog may indicate the presence of game before flushing. Failure to flush is unacceptable since the dog is not fulfilling a key element of the Basic Requirements (J(C)1 and J(C)7 refer). Providing the dog flushes positively then the indication of the presence of game by pointing is considered to be a refinement and not something to be penalised. A strong steady flush after indication is a pleasure to watch.

False pointing is contrary to the requirement that a spaniel should hunt to find game and flush it for the gun.

- 10. A dog should stop to flush, game and shot, but if it moves in order to mark the fall, if this is obscured, this shows intelligence and should be credited.**

We covered 'stopping to flush' earlier under Regulation J(C)1 Basic Requirements.

However, this regulation is not a licence to move any distance. A spaniel may be working head down in rushes or hunting a bramble patch when it misses the direction in which game has departed or dropped, if so it may move with the flush to the edge of the cover in order to mark or see more clearly. Ideally, however, it should stop naturally when able to do so. It may not move later, after the game has gone away.

- 11. A Spaniel should pick up cleanly, return quickly and deliver tenderly to hand. Such a retrieve is desirable; but too much should not be made of a momentary check if the dog has had a long gruelling hunt up to the time of flushing, thus making the retrieve possible. This should be allowed for. Whenever possible, and always bearing the conditions in mind, a dog should not be sent on a long unseen retrieve, but should be taken to within a reasonable distance of the fall.**

Normally, it is unwise to try more than two dogs on one retrieve. If both dogs are tried and fail to complete the retrieve and the Judges have satisfactorily searched the area, the line will continue to move forward. Should any subsequent dog find dead or wounded game, however, this will not necessarily be considered to be an eye-wipe.

We covered part of this earlier under Regulation J(C)1 Basic Requirements. However, when on a retrieve, momentary checks after long hunts, should be overlooked on the understanding that game is not discarded. On unseen retrieves that is to say, unflushed, unmarked, or when taken across the line as second dog down, the distance should be reasonable. Generally no more than within gunshot distance of the fall. Judges should not usually try more than two dogs on a retrieve. They may do so where they have good reason, for example where they believe the game to be collectable. If the dogs tried fail on any retrieve, the Judges must go to search for the game. Preferably, the Judges should carry out this task unaided, but it is not always possible to prevent a host or keeper assisting. If they also fail then the Trial will resume. Provided a dog has made a good workmanlike attempt it is not usual to penalise the dog unless the game is found within an area the dog has searched. The first dog tried should suffer a penalty if the Judges think it could have made the retrieve but didn't. However, if the second dog makes the retrieve, then this constitutes an 'eye wipe' and the first dog is normally out of the stake. If the Judges find the game then all dogs tried are normally eliminated.

If the shot game has not been recovered and subsequent dogs hunting further afield should find dead or injured game which may or may not be the game tried for, the Judge must not necessarily consider this to be an 'eye wipe' situation. This depends on the circumstances, the distance involved and any other mitigating factors which the Judge(s) from experience must consider. When a dog is retrieving, Judges should not be static but should place themselves suitably to see the whole work of the dog.

12. *Judges should refrain from holding a conversation with anyone whilst a dog is actively competing. From the moment the dog starts working, Judges should make every effort to keep the dog in view. When the dog is sent out for a retrieve, the Judge should also, where possible, observe the dog's every move until the game is delivered to hand.*

This is self-explanatory. Judges need to concentrate on the dog work and should not be static. They should move about to obtain the best vantage spot from which to view the dog work, always bearing in mind that they must not obstruct either the dog or handler. It is basic common sense that a Judge should be in a position at all times to get the best possible view of the dogs work, to observe the flushing of game and the fall area of shot game and to observe the presence or departure of any game which may have been passed by the hunting dog.

13. *Judges are under an obligation never to waste game and if a spare retrieve becomes available it must be offered in the first instance to the dog on the other side, if this dog has not yet had a retrieve. The Judges may subsequently offer a spare retrieve to a dog that has already had a satisfactory run without a retrieve in sequence starting with the lowest number.*

In a Field Trial game may be in short supply and it may be that not all dogs will get a retrieve during one or other of their runs, consequently the Judge or Judges will not have had the opportunity to assess this aspect of the dogs work. In these circumstances the Judge will have to use his co-Judge's assessment if the dog has a retrieve in its run on the other side. That is, unless game is shot which is not required to test the dog in line. This may occur where the dog in line has had a retrieve, or has committed an eliminating fault or in a variety of other circumstances. Where one of these circumstances occurs the retrieve would normally be offered to the co-Judge(s).

The co-Judge(s) are at liberty to use it or refuse it. The co-Judge(s) should only accept for a dog in line, if it has not had a retrieve. In certain circumstances, a co-Judge may accept, to test a dog on another retrieve.

Normally the retrieve returns to the original Judge who may decide to use it for the next dog in line or for an earlier dog without a retrieve, provided that dog has had a satisfactory run. Normally the Judge should start by calling in the lowest numbered dog first. If more 'spare' retrieves become available which are not needed on the other side then the Judge works in order through the higher numbers.

If the Judge, should decide that a retrieve or any remaining retrieves are not required then the co-Judge(s) should always have the opportunity to make use of them. A Judge may alternatively decide to collect the game or, acting urgently and humanely, ask the picking up dog to retrieve it, if not dead. The Judge may then decide to call up the next dog in line and continue with the Stake.

14. Run-Off

It is desirable to place the dogs on their work in the body of the Stake. If the Judges are unable to do this then the dogs may be further assessed by running them side by side. The main consideration now should be style, pace, ground treatment and each dog's response to its handler. Judges must ensure that competitors do not interfere with the other handler or dog (Regulation J8.b.(5)). In this run-off stage dogs will only be discarded if they commit eliminating faults.

It is often better for Judges to make awards after discussion thus avoiding a run-off. However, when Judges cannot decide between two or more dogs with equal marking from the body of the stake a run-off may be held as described above. Suitable ground must be found which gives a fair chance to all dogs. In order to better assess style or courage, Judges may wish to see dogs which competed in cover earlier tried on more open ground and vice versa.

When dogs are called into line for a run-off, the lowest number dog should always be on the right-hand side of the line. This means if a dog is in a run-off against more than one other dog it may need to swap sides if it has become the lower number.

The main consideration should now be style, pace, ground treatment and each dog's response to its handler. All things being equal the higher place will always go to the dog which exhibits these qualities best.

Two or more dogs with equal marking from the body of the stake may run for First, Second, Third or Fourth awards or even for a Certificate of Merit.

The selection of dogs for the run-off is based entirely on performance in the body of the Stake.

Should all of the Judges have discussed all aspects of the work and have agreed to commit dogs to two run offs then two dogs might run for First and Second places while other dogs might run for Third, Fourth or Certificate of Merit.

These are those dogs which will be granted a place which reflects the quality of a dogs overall ability. They will have been graded 'A+', 'A' or 'A-'. Since these dogs have gained a top grade the Judges will now finally place them in an order which reflects their ability.

When dogs with equal marking are run off together, then the lesser dog is automatically allotted the next lower place. It is wrong to drop a dog, say two places for poor work or even a Major Fault and then raise another dog with lesser marks in the body of the stake to replace it.

Committing a Major Fault may result in a dog obtaining a lesser Award.

A dog must not be excluded from the Awards for other than committing an Eliminating Fault.

Should a dog commit an Eliminating Fault in the run-off for First or Second place and, therefore, be discarded, then a Judge must carefully consider whether or not the best of the dogs which were running off for the lesser awards is worthy of being elevated to replace it. The lesser dog might thereby gain a higher award than its performance in the stake would have merited.

The following two regulations should be remembered when coming to a decision. J8g. states "Judges are empowered and instructed to withhold any prize or Award if, in their opinion, the dogs competing do not show sufficient merit". J(A)3.a. "Final placings may influence breeding plans and so determine the course of breed development". They may also create a qualification for Field Trial Champion or a preference for entry in a draw.

Handlers should respect another handler's work and while attempting to 'catch the Judge's eye,' should not hinder the other handler or his dog.

It is not necessary for game to be shot in the run-off.