



RESULTS OF RECOMMENDATIONS FORWARDED TO THE FIELD TRIALS COMMITTEE FROM THE FIELD TRIALS LIAISON COUNCIL HELD AT THE KENNEL CLUB ON 31 MAY 2022

MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS

Handlers with more than one dog

At its meeting in July 2022, the Committee agreed to the formation of a working party, to be named the Retriever Field Trials Working Party, to further consider issues relating to handlers with more than one dog. It would consist of Mrs S Jenkins, Mr S Richardson, Mrs S Chichester, and Mrs B Kuen. Formal recommendations would be made by the Working Party and referred to the Committee for consideration.

Following the Working Party's initial meeting, a verbal report was provided to the Committee at its meeting in September 2022. The Working Party acknowledged that there was a perception within the field trialling community that there was unfairness, but wished to obtain a clear and balanced view as to whether this was actually the case, and if so, to what extent, prior to making any recommendations. Accordingly it agreed that it was necessary to carry out further detailed research, and undertook to do so.

The Working Party's next meeting will take place after the current season, and its report and recommendations will be submitted to the Committee as soon as possible.

PROPOSALS

No recommendations arising from proposals were made by the Council.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

1. Eye wipes
Mr P Smith

The Council discussed concerns that there was confusion about what constituted an 'eye wipe', and expressed its view that absolute clarity was necessary. It agreed that guidance, consisting of an extract from the

seminar script, should be issued via the Field Trials Newsletter to ensure that a consistent approach was taken by judges.

The Committee was in full agreement with the Council's wishes. Accordingly, the guidance requested was published within the summer issue of the Field Trials Newsletter.

2. Experience required for judges

The Labrador Retriever Club

The Council considered a suggestion that before accepting a first judging appointment, and to improve the aspiring judge's experience of how field trials are organised and judged, a person should have volunteered and actively helped at a number of trials over a minimum period of two years, as well as competing. It wished the Field Trials Committee to consider a number of suggestions:

- Suitable guidance to be issued for aspiring judges as part of the educational process.
- Societies should be encouraged to undertake training days for judges at which a group of non-Panel judges could shadow an A Panel judge to observe a number of retrieves and to discuss relevant judging issues as they arose. Some societies were already holding such seminars and had found them to be very successful.
- Training days for stewards or other helpers may also prove to be of value.
- Introduction of a mentoring scheme be set up whereby an aspiring or less-experienced judge could be mentored by an experienced judge.

The Committee noted the Council's views, but expressed some reservations at imposing what may be perceived as unduly onerous requirements on aspiring judges, such as any necessity for them to maintain records of occasions on which they had assisted at trials and in what capacity, and for them to have done so on a set number of occasions. It noted that helpers in field trials did so on a voluntary basis and was of the view that obliging them to assist at trials may prove to be counterproductive.

It also considered that societies had a responsibility not to invite non-Panel judges to officiate where there was any concern at a lack of suitable knowledge or experience.

Accordingly, it did not consider that the Council's suggestions should be progressed at this time, but wished to draw attention to the following Codes of Best Practice for field trial competitors for all sub-groups, which set out a number of 'target' activities, including assisting at trials:

<https://www.thekennelclub.org.uk/about-us/about-the-kennel-club/the-kennel-club-codes/code-of-best-practice-for-breeds-that-hunt-point-and-retrieve-field-trial-competitors/>

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

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

3. Publication of regulation clarifications and guidance

The Flatcoated Retriever Society, and Midland Gundog Society

The Council expressed the view that, subject to feasibility, guidance and clarifications relating to the J regulations which were published within the Field Trials Newsletter should also be reproduced as an appendix within the J Regulations booklet.

The Committee accepted that there would be advantages to doing so but expressed concerns that without regular review, which would require staff resources, the booklet could become out of date. It would also be necessary to decide which guidance should be included, and from how far back.

It noted that published guidance was available via previous issues of the Field Trials Newsletter, and suggested that several years' worth of previous issues could be stored on The Kennel Club Academy where they could be readily accessed.

Accordingly a link will be published on The Kennel Club website in the near future, giving easy access to anyone wishing to check previous guidance.

The three previous issues of the newsletter are currently available at:
<https://www.thekennelclub.org.uk/events-and-activities/field-trials-and-working-gundogs/already-competing-in-field-trials/>

4. Substitute dogs – online entry systems

Yorkshire Gundog Club

The Council discussed the difference between a substitute dog and a second dog. It noted that it was at the discretion of societies as to whether they accepted substitutions, depending on their own

constitution. Notice of any restrictions or conditions attached to the stakes, including arrangements for the substitution of dogs, must be stated within a schedule.

It noted that for entries made via FTMS or Fosse Data, there was no facility for substitute dogs. The Field Trials Committee was requested to check that all online systems used to take entries were fully compliant with Kennel Club requirements.

On checking, the Committee was assured that FTMS had a facility in place for substitute dogs, and that a similar facility was being developed in relation to Fosse Data.

5. Exceptional circumstances - odds & evens
Yorkshire Retriever Field Trial Society

The Council noted that the matter of the odds and evens system had been considered by the Field Trials Judges Sub-Group earlier in the year, and would be further discussed by the Field Trials Committee in the near future. It was anticipated that suitable guidance would be included within the summer issue of the Field Trials Newsletter.

However, the matter has now been referred back to the Field Trials Judges Sub-Group for further discussion. An update will be provided in due course.

6. Wrong retrieves at Retriever trials
Cheshire, North Wales and Shropshire Gundog Society

The Council discussed the provision of further guidance/clarification as to the correct procedure in respect of 'wrong retrieves' in relation to Retrievers, and as to how a 'wrong retrieve' was defined and under what circumstances a dog should be eliminated. The matter was discussed specifically in respect to Retrievers.

The Committee noted the Council's view that every scenario was different, and that it was important that judges were able to use their own discretion depending on the circumstances. It was in full agreement that the issue should be addressed via judges training, with particular reference to the way in which judges were educated in the practical aspects of judging.

7. Use of a judge's stick
South Western Golden Retriever Society

The Council discussed the use of a judge's stick in the ground to show the whereabouts of a bird for retrieval and the close proximity of the judge to the bird. It concluded that the practice, whilst becoming more widespread, was highly undesirable, and that the use of a stick in such a manner was only acceptable under exceptional circumstances.

The Committee was in full agreement with the views expressed by the Council on this issue. It raised no objection to the use of a judge's stick to indicate an area, but considered that the practice of placing the stick into the ground was unfair, giving some competitors an undue advantage.

Relevant guidance has been included in the winter issue of the Field Trials Newsletter.

Subsequently, the following amendment to J regulations was approved by the Board and will come into effect on 2 February 2023:

Regulation J(A)4.e.

TO:

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...

(Insertion in bold)

8. Appointment of judges for the Hunt, Point and Retrieve Championship The Weimaraner Association and Dukeries (Notts) Gundog Club
The Council wished the Committee to consider a process for the appointment of judges for the Hunt, Point and Retrieve Championship, whereby clubs holding Open Stakes would be invited to nominate two A Panel Judges to a short list to be considered by the HPR Championship Working Party.

The Committee accepted the Council's views on the matter and agreed that clubs holding HPR open stakes would be invited to nominate two judges to a short list to be considered by the HPR Championship Working Party and subsequently by the Field Trials Committee. The nominated judges should have been on the 'A' Panel for not less than five years by the date of the Championship and should have been an active field trial judge within the last three years.

Relevant guidance will be included in the spring issue of the Field Trials Newsletter.