



GUIDE TO KENNEL CLUB J REGULATIONS FOR RETRIEVER

FOR JUDGES & COMPETITORS

Although we are subject to all The 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

RETRIEVER FIELD TRIALS

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

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

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

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

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

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

This Guide should be read in conjunction with:

- 1) The Kennel Club **Guide for Field Trial Judges**
<https://www.thekennelclub.org.uk/media/1246/guide-for-ft-judges.pdf>
- 2) The Kennel Club **J Regulations**
- 3) **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-retriever-field-trial-competitors/>

1) The Kennel Club Guide for Field Trial Judges

This guide consists of ten sections.

The guide is intended as a useful reference for those participating in Field Trials.

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

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

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

The 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 the Seminar the relevant sections are:

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

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 Kennel Club J Regulations for Retriever 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

This 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. However, more may be asked of competitors than would be expected of an average gun's dog.

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. Avoid creating artificial circumstances where the Trial effectively becomes a cold game test. Judges must, in particular, keep in mind their obligation under J(A)4.c which requires that all wounded game must be dispatched at the earliest opportunity. On a normal shooting day, the 'pickers up' would position themselves where they anticipate they will have a clear opportunity to pick wounded game as it falls. This means that generally the pickers up will position themselves well to the rear or side of the line of guns, in a safe position with a view of the action from which it will be possible to send dogs promptly for birds which are wounded and run. As this is what would happen on a shooting day, then it should, so far as is possible, also happen at a Trial where the game is driven taking into account that Novice dogs should not be sent during a drive where game is likely to be shot over them. It will not always be appropriate to sit the competing dogs in line with the guns though there will be occasions when the Steward of the Beat, for example, wishes to have the dogs in line for reasons of shoot management.

It has become common practice for Judges at driven Trials to wait until the end of the drive before sending dogs to retrieve. Where all the game shot is known to be dead this may be appropriate, but it can have the effect of turning the trial into a cold game test.

Retriever Trials are run in the game shooting season.

Please refer to the BASC website for further details of quarry species and shooting season

<https://basc.org.uk/advice/quarry-species-shooting-seasons/>

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 J8a.(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, Judges and others, and to properly brief and inform competitors and spectators.

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

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

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

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

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

Part of this regulation is obvious, and part often not properly practised in Retriever Trials. Where a dog is to be eliminated for 'hard mouth' ALL the Judges should examine the game (except in the circumstance below). 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.

Where the damage occurs on the first of a round of two retrieves, the Judge has no alternative but to seek the opinion of the co-Judges, even though this may be inconvenient, as the dog cannot be given another retrieve until the issue has been resolved.

The only possible exception to the above arises where the Judge, or 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, and those who have achieved a Diploma of Merit or Certificate of Merit 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 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 re-states 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.*

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.

There are differences in the methods of working across the different breeds of Retriever and Judges should recognise these differences and judge the dogs accordingly.

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 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 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, according to their number, in line at any time. It is however, the handlers responsibility, if running more than one dog, to make sure that only the number of the dog required is displayed, and to have the correct dog. J8.b.(9)

- d. All Judges, Chief Stewards and others responsible for the organisation of the Trial should be courteous and co-operative with the Host and Steward of the Beat and fall in with their arrangements to achieve the best result possible in an atmosphere of friendliness and confidence.***
- e. At the start of the day, the Judges should be introduced to each other and decide their positions in the line which will remain the same throughout the body of the Stake. The Judges should brief the guns and handlers and if, at any time, conditions force them to depart from the arrangements they have set out the Chief Steward should be informed so that he or she can advise the competitors, guns and others affected.***
- f. Judges should also make themselves aware of any special prizes which are to be awarded in the Stake.***
- 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. At driven Trials Judges should, after consultation with the Steward of the Beat, ensure that dogs sitting at a drive are positioned as to have the best opportunity to retrieve runners or wounded game during the drive only when it is practical to do so (they should also, however, be mindful of Regulation J(A)4.b). They should moreover 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 the Host, Steward of the Beat and often the Head Gamekeeper, to find out what may be expected in the way of the game supply so that the Trial can be organised accordingly. Judges must make sure that 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 ask a handler to 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 it 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 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, unlike Working Tests where every retrieve is largely identical for every dog, the dogs will hardly ever get identical retrieves, but, the Judges should endeavour, as far as that is possible to give every dog a fair chance to show what it can do and impress the Judges by its performance.

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

This small regulation covers a multitude of sins! Judges must not judge a dog on the basis of the dog's history (which of course may be well known to them), but must judge the dog on the day. They must keep their own counsel and should not discuss any dog's performance with anyone other than its handler or owner (and co-judges). 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 retrieves, and should come to a consensus view with their co-Judges. It is helpful in this respect for judges to get together with their co-Judge where judging in pairs to settle upon an agreed grading for any work where the grading is not necessarily obvious, as soon as is conveniently possible so that when they get together with the other two Judges they will not have two different assessments of the same retrieve.

Once a dog has had a 'A-', 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 8 'A' retrieves will be placed ahead of a dog with 6 'A' retrieves, one 'A+' and a 'A-'.

Occasionally the judges at the other end of the line have a better view of the dogs work than the sending judges. It is important for these co-judges to watch all the dogs work, where possible, and if they see a dog commit an eliminating or major fault, they must report back to the sending judges as soon as they are able. Notes must also be made for excellent dog work (e.g. taking a line on a runner, ignoring live game, etc) and should be mentioned when the judges bring their books together if it is not possible to pass on at the time. There are also occasions when game may be found when the line moves forward, resulting in dogs which were previously tried being eliminated. Generally gradings should never be retrospectively adjusted once written in the grid but in both these circumstances gradings may be changed.

It is of the utmost importance to make short meaningful notes about each retrieve as, over the course of a 24 dog Stake it is possible that Judges will witness in excess of 100 retrieves, not only made by the dogs under them but by the dogs under the other Judges, and when the Judges get together at the end to discuss placings it is important to be able to justify a mark by being able to describe the work in detail and memory will let you down. Comments on 'dry runs' 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 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.

Judges should always send dogs by number and never by the handler's name. The Judge should know which dog will be sent next before the opportunity occurs to send it, and then send the dog by saying 'Number blank, send your dog' in a clear tone which the handler will easily hear.

- 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.***

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 deputise 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. As a Trial is required to be run as nearly as possible to an ordinary day's shooting (J(A)1.a. refers), Judges must take care to ensure that every effort is made to pick wounded game before dead game. In particular, at a driven Trial this means that Judges should, wherever possible place the competing dogs and handlers in positions which will facilitate the retrieving of wounded game during drives rather than waiting until the end of the drive to begin work on runners and wounded game because there is dead game in the way. Where necessary, the Judges may move dogs during drives to positions from which they can be sent for wounded game. Where there is a problem preventing a competing dog being quickly sent to retrieve the injured game, then the task should be immediately delegated to the picking up dog and handler.

In addition, where game is wounded but does not run, it is completely unacceptable to allow it to remain during the drive to be tried for later. This would not occur on a well run shooting day and it is appropriate where necessary for a Judge to go forward to dispatch wounded game humanely rather than knowingly allow it to continue to suffer.

Carrying out this duty during drives, Judges will not want to send a dog for a wounded bird in the middle of a big flush of birds where there is a high probability that birds will be shot over it; the dog is more likely to pick one of these instead of the bird for which it is being sent. This would negate the purpose of sending the dog in the first place as there is still a delay in getting the dog onto the wounded game. Judges should, therefore, not hesitate to move a dog closer to the fall of wounded game to give the dog the best chance to pick it. If a wounded bird runs during a flush, get the dog away as soon as it is practical to do so when there is a pause in shooting.

Judges should try to give the competing dogs an opportunity to mark at driven Trials. They should not hesitate, where circumstances permit, to allow dogs to demonstrate their ability to mark by sending for appropriate retrieves during drives. Selection of appropriate opportunities during drives also calls for fine judgement, and if a dog has a bird shot over it during a retrieve then the Judge must make a judgement on the basis of what he sees.

- 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.***

In Open Stakes particularly, it has become very common for Judges to begin cross retrieving right from the first bird of the Trial. This is neither desirable, nor is it in accordance with the regulation quoted, or the principle that Trials should be conducted as far as possible like a day's shooting. Wherever possible, in the first round, judges should only send dogs for birds shot by their own guns. Dogs should have the opportunity in the first round to see game shot, be tested for steadiness and marking and to demonstrate natural game finding ability. However, it is important that retrieves should not be wasted and therefore cross retrieving is permissible but only where circumstances dictate, such as where game is shot very close to the line and would be a more useful retrieve to the other side. In this case it should 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.

- 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, and then stand quietly watching and assessing the performance. Once you have seen enough, if the dog is performing indifferently, call it up and send the next dog. Do not say, 'Last Cast'. This only puts pressure on the competitor. Better to say nothing until you decide you have seen enough.

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 rather than creating artificial circumstances where the trial effectively becomes a cold game test. 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 he should not need direction and all you will be required to do is instruct him to send his dog. If he has failed to mark when the opportunity was there to do so then that should be taken into account in your assessment of the dog's overall performance on the retrieve.

When the first dog fails the second and subsequent dogs should be given at least as much time as the first dog, so long as they are working well. In the event of a failure, wherever possible, Judges should go to look for the game. Judges should search the area in which the handler was told to search. Notice that it says 'the judges' and not 'all the judges'. Why does this matter? Well, judges have an obligation to keep a watchful eye on dogs under them yet, in walked-up retriever trials especially, we invariably see all the judges leave the line unattended as they stride out to search the area of a fall. Would it not be better if one of them remained behind to keep the line in view? If 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. Only the Judges should go to look for the game (i.e. not the gun, marker or anyone else).

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 the Judges should eliminate from the Trial the dogs which failed to find it (unless there are exceptional circumstances, for example where the game is hung up or is a long distance out of the area). 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 handled 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, a 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 stands over it, looking at the handler, waiting for an instruction. This should not be confused with dogs locating the game with a slight indication/point before picking a bird, especially if it is 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.

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

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 dogs tried after made a poor effort in comparison.

A significant delay may be caused by the terrain. For example, the dog may have to swim across a river or make its way through a particularly thick area of cover in order to reach the fall area.

- 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).

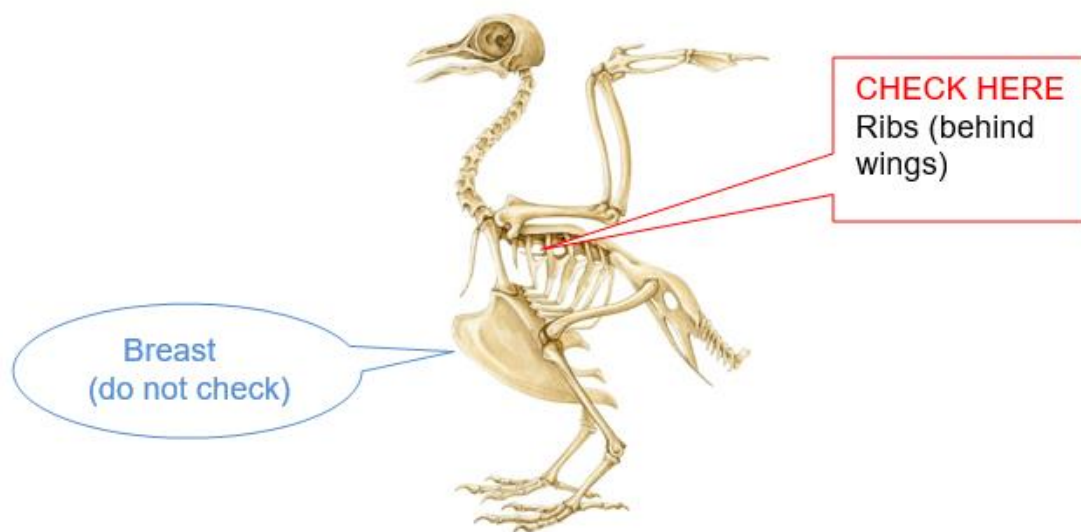
When checking a bird for broken ribs place the bird on the palm of your hand with the breast facing upwards. Use that same hand to check for damage where the ribs meet the spine. The ribs are on the underside of the bird when it is held this way. Consequently, holding the bird this way enables you to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

1. *Basic Requirements*

Dogs shall be required to be steady by the handler whilst being shot over until commanded to quest for dead or wounded game, from land or water, and retrieve tenderly to hand.

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

This simple little paragraph seems very clear but looked at in more detail covers a lot more than is obvious when first read. What exactly does 'steady' mean? It means that the dog must remain with its handler at a drive or at heel if walking up without the handler having to restrain it in any way. The handler must not speak to the dog except to instruct it to retrieve, nor may the handler touch the dog if in doing so he is effectively restraining it. From time to time a handler may reassure his dog, but should not do so when the dog is at a drive nor do so in a way which could be calculated to prevent the dog from running in. The dog must be quiet in terms of whining or barking, but cannot be penalised for puffing or panting. A dog should be reasonably still at a drive but should also take an interest in what is going on around it. It is fine for the dog to stand, sit or lie down in a drive. When in line walking up the dog should walk at the handler's side, though an otherwise well-behaved dog may shift its position occasionally in order to mark more efficiently. Certainly a dog should not forge ahead of the handler and should not dive out in front of the handler to mark. The dog 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.

These are the basic requirements and without performing these satisfactorily the dog may not receive an award.

2. *Number of Runners*

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

(a) Two-day Open Stakes: maximum 24, minimum 20

(b) One-day Open Stakes: maximum 16, minimum 10

(c) Other Stakes per day: maximum 16, minimum 10

These are the minimum and maximum numbers if the Trial is to qualify for inclusion in the Stud Book. The Stake may be run with less or more but will be of no benefit to anyone. In the event that there are not enough dogs to allow a trial to be run as a Qualifying Stake the Field Trial Secretary (or Chief Steward) should offer to take late entries to fill the stake. If this is on the day of the stake, then before its commencement, with all competitors present, an announcement should be made asking if anyone has a second dog they would like to run, giving preference to qualified dogs.

3. Competing

- (a) *The order of running shall be the order of the draw unless the Judges decide to split the competitors.*
- (b) *Initially, the dog with the lowest number under each Judge should be placed on the Judge's right. When there are three Judges for a Stake they must judge singly and when there are four Judges they must judge in pairs. If two of the four Judges are not Panel Judges they must not judge together. Moreover, if there are only two A Panel Judges present they must not judge together.*
- (c) *All dogs, unless discarded, must be tried in the first two rounds by more than one Judge if there are three Judges, or by more than one pair of Judges if there are four. Dogs must not come into line in the second round under the same Judges as in the first round. After the second round, dogs may be called back into line in numerical order to either side in a four Judge system or to any Judge in a three Judge system.*

This regulation clarifies something which seems to have caused some confusion and misunderstanding in the past. When a dog comes into line in the first round under a Judge (Three Judge System) or Judges (Four Judge System), if it is not discarded for some reason, it **must** come into line for the second round under a different Judge (Three Judge System) or Judges (Four Judge System). It is not correct for a dog, having come into line under two Judges (Four Judge System) in the first round to come into line for the second round under the same set of Judges. Were this to be permitted it would be quite possible for a dog to proceed through a whole Trial without ever being in line under two of the four Judges and this would be quite unfair and entirely negate the reason for having four Judges in the first place.

Another misunderstanding that can arise is that a dog is automatically entitled to a retrieve in the second round. This is not correct. The regulation states "all dogs, **unless discarded**". The judges may drop a dog after either of its first round retrieves.

This regulation also sets out the basic division of Judges so that the A Panel Judges, if there are two, shall not Judge together, nor may two non-panel Judges judge together. This is to ensure an even spread of experience so that the more experienced Judges can more easily run the Trial and provide the benefit of their experience to their less experienced companions.

*A reminder of the required number of Judges/Panel Judges for Stakes from Reg J.5.b(1):
Retrievers - 3 or 4 Judges*

Championship: all A.

Open Stakes: all Panel Judges with at least two A.

Other Stakes: at least two Panel Judges, one of whom must be an A.

- (d) In the event that the dogs are to be split between the Judges, this will be done odds and evens. Where the Trial is to be run under the 4 judge system, in the first round the odd numbered dogs will be seen by the right hand Judges and the evens by the left hand Judges. Where this system is adopted, in the second round the odd numbered dogs remaining in the Trial must be seen by the left hand Judges and the evens by the right hand Judges. The Judges can thereafter continue to rotate the dogs remaining in the stake in this way until they get together for a run-off, when the order of sending shall revert to numerical order. Where a handler is running an odd numbered dog and an even numbered dog, both dogs should be run on the side of the lowest numbered dog. The dogs on that side will be run in numerical order.***

The odds and evens system is best suited to driven stakes, usually where there may be difficult terrain such as a river or valley between the two sides. The trial would then run more quickly and smoothly using this system, as judges would not have to wait for dogs to be fed into line from the centre. Competitors may also have the advantage of being able to mark their own birds during the drive. The Judges should have four dogs in line, the two sending dogs and two back up dogs, all off lead. This helps maintain the correct order of sending, especially where handlers have more than one dog. The handler with more than one dog can only come in behind those already in line (if the two back up dogs are not in line they should be close by on the lead. In the body of the trial no handler can back himself up with his second dog.

Where a Trial is being judged on the odds and evens system, the point at which the order of running may revert to the order of the draw would depend on circumstances applying at the time and would be at the discretion of the Judges. Generally, this would be in the third round. It must never be before completion of the second round as all dogs must be seen by both pairs of judges.

The Chief Steward should make sure all dogs that have finished their first round go to the other side for their second round as soon as there is an opportunity (i.e. do not remain with their first round judges or wait in the centre). Care should be taken when they walk back that they do not interfere with the dogs that are out working and that any game on the ground is avoided.

At the end of the second round a third round dog may need to be requested as back up for the remaining second round dog (lowest numbered clean dog), in order for the second round to be completed. Normally judges then meet up to put their books together to discuss the dogs work, whether any are to be dropped and confirm whether the trial will revert to the order to the draw. Judges however should be flexible and use their own judgement and discretion to assess each situation on its own merits, provided they can be justified within the terms of the J Regulations. This will aid them to make appropriate decisions in order to keep the trial flowing smoothly as well as fair.

- (e) Where the Trial is to be run under the three Judge system, the dogs should be split equally, and in numerical order, between the three Judges, i.e. 1,2,3,4 with the right hand Judge, 5,6,7,8 with the middle Judge and 9, 10, 11 and 12 with the left hand Judge in a one-day stake and 1-8, 9-16 and 17-24 in a two day. Dogs should then rotate from right to left so that the dogs under the left hand Judge in the first round should be seen by the right hand Judge next and so on. The rotation should continue until a run-off when numerical order will resume.***

The Three Judge system used to be popular but is now not so common. This is the procedure for the order of running if the Judges decide to split the trial (similar to 'odds and evens')

4. Credit Points

Natural game finding ability.	Control.
Drive and style.	Quiet handling.
Good retrieving and delivery.	Nose.
Quickness in gathering game.	Marking ability.

Credit Points are not in the order of importance, they are all important in their own way and the end mark should take them all into account. 'Marking' and 'Nose' are part of 'Game Finding'

Natural game finding ability

A dog with natural game finding ability seems to be able to put itself in the right position to find game, whereas some dogs, whilst doing what they are told never seem to be able to do it for themselves. Sometimes handling is necessary, but where a dog demonstrates its ability to do the job by itself then that should be noted and credit given for its ability to do so. A dog which demonstrates its ability to mark game down accurately and go directly to the fall should be rewarded as in so doing it is disturbing less ground than a dog which has to be handled to a similar retrieve. This is particularly so where a good marking dog gets smartly to the fall of a runner and picks it quickly before it can get away, while another dog takes what seems to be an excellent runner, which would never have been a runner if the dog had marked and got to the fall efficiently.

Drive and Style

A dog with drive and style catches the eye. Provided the dog is doing its job efficiently, a dog which does so with drive and determination, and exhibiting a stylish action is always to be preferred over a dog which, while performing the allotted task, does so in a less exciting manner. However, a dog with lots of pace, drive and eye catching style is no good to anyone if it is out of control!

Good Retrieving and Delivery, Quickness in Gathering Game

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. This is grossly unfair to the competitor who will not get credit for his dog's good performance and will witness the Judge failing to penalise another competitor's poor performance as he has turned away or started writing in his book, consequently failing to see what takes place.

For a good presentation of the game the dog may be standing or sitting, in front of the handler or at the heel position.

Control and Quiet Handling

Control and quiet handling are an integral part of a well-trained dog's armoury. Not every dog will have the chance to mark and will consequently have to be handled. In driven Trials it is inevitable that dogs will have to be handled into the area directed by the Judge. Where the dog demonstrates that it is at one with its handler, is under control and can be quietly and efficiently handled into the required area then it should receive credit for that. This is a different concept from over dependence and noisy or inappropriate handling where the handler demonstrates his lack of confidence in the dog by over handling and trying to 'find the game for it'. It is completely unfair to penalise a dog whose handler can easily get it where he wants on the basis that he found the game and not the dog. Such a dog will usually find the game quickly when it reaches the area because it will have been efficiently put in the right position to do so. This is a credit to the dog and handler.

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

Judges should use their own discretion as to degree of noise, and as to what was acceptable under the circumstances prevailing at the time.

Nose

'Nose', whilst being a necessary element of natural game finding ability is nevertheless a characteristic to be weighed up on its own. In some scenting conditions some dogs will struggle to find game while another dog will seem to be able to wind its game from afar. The dog which, on the day, demonstrates the facility with which it can find game while others struggle must get the credit for it rather than being dismissed as lucky!

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.

5. Eliminating Faults

Hard mouth.

Running in.

Failing to enter water.

Changing game whilst retrieving.

Without merit.

Whining or barking.

Out of control.

Refusal to retrieve.

Chasing.

ELIMINATING Fault – Dog **MUST be discarded**

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 & J(A)4.i above.

Running In

Running in sounds fairly straightforward, and mostly it is. If the dog sets off for a retrieve without its handler's instruction to do so, it should be eliminated. Judges should take care when directing competitors to send the dog that they do not by their actions cause the dog to run in. When walking in line the Judge who is sending the dogs should walk a step or two behind and to one side of the handler whose turn it is next on the side opposite to the dog. This will prevent the Judge sending the wrong dog and enable the Judge to get out of the way easily if something is shot behind. If the dog is swapping sides then remain on one or other side but still out of the way.

Always try to approach the handler from the side opposite his dog. Do not point at a retrieve unless it is absolutely necessary. **Do not point your stick over the dog's head. Do not stand over the dog. Send the handler by his number** and not by his name as this prevents any confusion as to who is being sent. Speak clearly so that the handler is left in no doubt. Do not say things like 'OK, on you go Willy'. Instead say: 'Number blank. Send your dog'.

If the handler says he has not marked the retrieve then the Judge must make a value judgement as to whether he and his dog had a fair chance to mark and although assisting the handler with directions, judge the retrieve accordingly. Where there is a lot of activity in the line and more than one item of game is shot, a handler may have marked one or more items of shot game but not the retrieve he is asked to go for and allowance should be made for this. Where a handler has not marked in these circumstances, resulting in some delay in sending the dog while a mark is given, there would be no justification for classing the dog as second dog down.

A dog should not be penalised for trying to mark by moving a metre or two and stopping of its own volition, depending on the situation, or standing up on its hind legs at heel. However, a dog which moves to the point where the whole dog has passed the handler must be penalised as it is no longer at heel.

Sometimes a bird may fall on top of the dog, especially at a drive, which it picks without actually 'running in'. Judges' discretion is called for in these circumstances, as is also when a dog is at heel and picks up wounded or dead game without leaving its handlers side.

Failing to Enter Water

A dog may in some circumstances require more than one command to enter water but should not be eliminated unless it will not go. The difference between these is not hard to judge.

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.

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.

Whining or Barking

Whining or barking is not permitted at any time while the dog is in line. However, there are degrees of culpability. If a dog makes one small noise at a drive or in line or while it is working, it should not be eliminated immediately, but should be if it barks or continues to make noise. It is quite inappropriate for a Judge to approach a handler and tell him his dog is whining and if it does it again it will be eliminated. The handler probably knows already that his dog is making noise, and in any event he cannot, legally, do anything about it. Instead, wait until you have made up your mind that the dog has eliminated itself by making sufficient noise that you are not prepared to allow it to remain in the Trial and then quietly approach the handler, apologise for having to do so but tell him his dog has been eliminated for making noise and instruct him to put his lead on and leave the line.

Out of Control

The dog must be under control at all times. It is the Judge's job to differentiate between the dogs in this respect and a little loss of control in an otherwise good performance will be tolerated while being noted for later discussion. On the other hand when it becomes clear that the dog is effectively self-employed and will not respond it must be eliminated forthwith. Judges should not allow handlers to continue to blow whistles at the dog to try to call it up but should send the handler forthwith to get his dog so that the minimum of disruption of the ground occurs.

A dog may also be eliminated when out of control but not in line, even if it is still on the lead (e.g. lunges at the game in another dog's mouth) *J.8.b(4)*

Refusal to Retrieve

If a dog 'blinks' a retrieve, that is, finds the game but ignores it to carry on hunting or 'stands over the game', or will not pick it then that is a 'refusal to retrieve' meriting elimination. (*'Standing over game' was discussed earlier under J(A)4.g*)

If a dog mouths the game but does not retrieve it, not only must the dog be eliminated but also the game must be picked by hand, as it may have been damaged and cannot be used for another dogs retrieve

Chasing

Chasing once again sounds simple but may not be so. If a dog is hunting hard and flushes game it may well proceed several strides after that game. That is not chasing. A dog chases when it flushes unshot game and abandons the task of finding the shot game for which it has been sent. The handler's ability to stop the dog is not the issue. Often a handler will blow a stop whistle at a dog when it flushes game and this is a reflex action. Where this happens and the Judge does not think the dog was intending to chase anyway then it should be ignored. However, if the dog chases it must be eliminated, even if the handler managed to stop it.

6. Major Faults

Unsteadiness at heel.

Being eye wiped.

Disturbing ground.

Poor control.

Slack and un-businesslike work.

Failing to find dead or wounded game

Noisy or inappropriate handling.

Sloppy retrieving and delivery.

MAJOR Fault – Dog **MAY** be discarded

Unsteadiness at Heel

We have already discussed unsteadiness at heel under Basic Requirements. While a dog may not behave badly enough to warrant its elimination from the Trial, nevertheless, bad heel work, evidenced by constant swapping of sides, surging forward, pulling in front of the handler or lagging behind should all be noted and marked down as major faults.

Disturbing Ground

Good marking and control will prevent a dog from disturbing ground. A dog pursuing a runner may disturb some game, and that is unavoidable, as runners have to be tried for. However, that is completely different from a dog raking about through a wood or field of sugar beet free hunting. 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 anyone can get a shot. As said earlier a good marking dog will disturb less ground than one that needs handling.

Slack & Un-Businesslike Work

Drive & Style are Credit points and slack and un-businesslike work is the antithesis. Regulation J(A)3.a provides:

“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.”

Slack un-businesslike work will not find favour with Judges who will be looking for a dog with drive and style.

Noisy or Inappropriate Handling

Noisy or excessive inappropriate handling and poor control often, but not always go together. We have looked at both of these above.

Some retrieves are more difficult than others and from time to time it will be necessary for the handler to give the best 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 which constitutes inappropriate handling.

Being Eye Wiped

When a dog has a bird picked behind it in the body of the Stake this is a major fault which will normally lead to the dog's immediate dismissal from the Trial.

Poor Control – 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.

Failing to Find Dead or Wounded Game

A dog that has been sent for a retrieve but fails to find game has committed a Major Fault. Unless there is considered to be good reason, that dog may be discarded.

However, the Judges may decide to retain the dog if it is found that the game was inaccessible such as caught in a tree or if the game has run and the dog sent shows ability by getting to the area quickly, acknowledging the fall and taking a line. Likewise, if there is a significant delay that disadvantages the dog it should not be penalised.

Credited Retrieves - Judges may credit a dog with a retrieve when, even though it has not brought the game to hand, the dog went to the area required and, in the course of hunting that area flushed game which, in the opinion of the Judges, was the item of game they were looking for. Where this occurs the Judges should not send another dog to search the area, nor should they search the area themselves. The Judges may, however, see an item of game flushed from the area without being sure that this is the game for which the dog was sent. They may then send another dog and, subsequently, search the area themselves. Then, depending on their assessment of the circumstances, they may decide to credit the dog which flushed the game for its work, scrub the retrieve or discard the dog which was first down.

However, if, while the dog is working on a wounded bird, the bird is seen in the same area (for example, flips up), but it is not retrieved, the dog should be eliminated (see Reg J(A)4.h above)

Sloppy Retrieving and Delivery

Sloppy retrieving and delivery should be penalised when they occur. In Trials today good retrieving and delivery are taken for granted, but are still the icing on the cake of a fine performance. Where they are absent and where, for example, the dog continually puts game down to get a better grip or will not deliver to the handler this may be sufficient to have the dog dropped from the Trial. The dog must retrieve tenderly to hand.

7. Trial Procedure

a. The Three Judge System

If there is one A Panel Judge, then it is advisable that he or she takes the centre of the line, to be available to the other Judges if required, and be able to keep some contact with all the line.

If there is only one A panel Judge, then the A panel generally needs to go in the middle to control the Trial; but this depends to a degree on the terrain and the A panel Judge must in any event decide in consultation with the Steward of the Beat where he would be best placed to run the Trial efficiently. Always bear in mind that, once the Trial has commenced, the Judges cannot change places. This regulation has been drafted with the intention of maintaining a flexible system.

b. The Four Judge System

If there are only two A Panel Judges they should not judge together.

Where there are four judges, two of whom are 'A' Panel they must not judge together as their expertise needs to be split between the junior judges.

c. The Line

(1) In walked-up trials the Steward of the Beat will be in charge of the line and dictate the pace of the line.

(2) In a three Judge walked-up Trial, the Judges will be positioned left, centre and right. Each Judge will usually have two guns shooting for him and he would normally place himself and his dogs between his guns. If there are extra guns then it should be decided which Judge they are to shoot for. This will go a long way towards avoiding two dogs being sent for the same game.

The Steward of the Beat will normally be the Head Keeper on the estate where the Trial is being run. He is in charge of the ground provided for the Trial and will run the line. The Judges must consult with him on all matters to do with the ground and how the Trial will proceed. Given the above the rest of this Regulation describes what will be the format for a Three Judge walked up Trial. Whether it is a three or four judge system, it is essential that before the Trial starts the Judges decide between them which guns will be shooting for which Judges to avoid two dogs being sent for one retrieve. It is useful to have a strategy in the event that there is doubt about whose gun shot what, for example raising a stick to confirm to the other side, or the next Judge that the retrieve is theirs. As we will see later, arrangements can be changed as the Trial proceeds.

d. (1) Dogs must walk steadily at heel and remain steady and quiet at drives

We have already discussed this.

(2) If the game situation permits, two retrieves in the first round, then one retrieve in the second round is the usual procedure. It is imperative that the Chief Steward should be informed of any dogs eliminated or discarded for any reason. This will allow the Chief Steward to have the right dogs available when required.

The game situation is one of the most important factors which the Judges need to discuss with the Keeper/Steward of the Beat before the Trial begins. It is too late after three or four dogs have had two retrieves to realise that it would have been better to start with one. Where game is in short supply do not waste it on unmeritorious dogs by giving them more than one retrieve in any round. Also be sure that the Chief Steward, or if he has appointed a Dog Steward, that person is informed promptly which dogs are no longer required so that he may ensure they are not called into line again.

Nevertheless, two retrieves in the first round and one in the second is the norm as it is a well tried and accepted formula. It is just as important later in the body of the Stake to continue consulting with the Keeper/Steward of the beat before commencing a round to make sure of his ability to produce enough game, and his willingness to shoot it.

(3) The Chief Steward should send in the second round dogs to the appropriate Judge when there is a vacancy in the line (paragraph J(B)1.c refers). Second round dogs should have their opportunity to be tried against first round dogs when the situation arises.

This regulation reinforces the requirement for dogs to have their chance in numerical order and under both sides in a Four Judge Trial and at least two Judges under a Three Judge system. It is quite proper to send a second round dog behind a first round dog if it is his turn. So, for example, towards the end of the first round the right hand Judges may have two first round dogs in line neither of which have had a retrieve and the left hand side still has two first round dogs in line, each needing a second retrieve. If one of the right hand dogs runs in it will be eliminated, and if there are no first round dogs left to come into line, the first second round dog which had its first round under the left hand judges will come into line in its place. Thereafter, the first retrieve on the right will be given to the remaining first round dog. If it picks it, the next retrieve on the right goes to the second round dog, after which it will go out of line and the next second round dog come in. If, however, the first round dog fails then the second round dog should be sent behind him. It is quite wrong, if the first round dog fails to send one of the first round dogs on the left behind him thereby preventing the second round dog from having his proper chance of an eye wipe in numerical order.

To clarify, **there should always be a backup dog**. For example, should there be two first round dogs left (one on each side) then two second round dogs should be brought in to back them up.

However, it is general practice to run down to only one dog at the end of 2nd round, before bringing in third round dogs as back up. (Lowest numbered clean dog)

If there is only ONE dog left in the trial at the end of the first round the judges should continue the trial with all the guns shooting for the one dog until the judges think it has been sufficiently tested.

- (4) A Judge should be most careful to see that each dog gets its chance in the correct order, starting with the lowest number on the right. Should dog No. 1 fail, and dog No. 2 be successful, so eliminating his partner, No. 2 still has the first chance on the next retrieve. In these circumstances a dog may be given two consecutive retrieves.***

This rule is self-explanatory and should help anyone who is wondering whose turn it is next to work it out correctly as it continues to apply in later rounds where two retrieves are being given. In this respect clear thinking is required where a round of one retrieve is about to conclude and another round of two retrieves about to start to make sure the right dog gets sent. It is vital, if at all possible, to have the order of sending worked out at least two retrieves in advance and for the Judge who is sending to take up a position in relation to the handlers which will prevent him sending the wrong dog. The sending judge should be slightly behind the handler of the dog which is next to be sent, and on the opposite side to the dog, so that the dog has every chance to mark in front and behind. If this is done consistently it will enable the other Judge in a Four Judge system to be aware which dog his co-Judge intends to send next and to keep a check that the order is correct. It is vital that Judges should maintain their concentration. If the wrong dog is accidentally sent and it has not gone too far the judge should ask the handler to call it up.

Dogs in line should be sent in order, even where this results in a dog being given consecutive retrieves. A new dog coming into line would not be sent for the next retrieve (unless there were no other dogs remaining in line, for example, after an eyewipe)

An example of this is where dog No. 1 has had its first retrieve of the round and dog No. 2 is eliminated before picking a retrieve, say it runs in or makes a noise, and is replaced by dog No. 5. Here it is correct to send dog No.1 for the next retrieve and not dog No.5.

Please note that a dog may also have consecutive retrieves when it is the only dog in line when game has been shot and also when it is the last dog standing and requires more retrieves in order to finish the trial.

When refilling the line, in the interest of simplicity, the line should be filled numerically from right to left. In the event that 3 or 4 dogs go out in a Four Judge Trial the line should be filled numerically from the right. The only exception to this is, when only one dog remains in the line on the left side, then the lowest numbered dog coming into the line would come in to back up that dog.

- (5) When a Judge tries his dogs, for example No. 1 & No. 2, behind other dogs, if No. 1 dog is successful, then the next retrieve under that Judge should be offered to No. 2 dog. If the two dogs fail on game, the Judge should not call fresh dogs into the line to try for the retrieve until all the other dogs already in the line have been tried. In the concluding stages of a Trial, Judges may use their own discretion as the situation arises.***

In a round where each dog has two retrieves this situation causes confusion and is dealt with in a number of ways. This regulation sets out the correct procedure. If dogs 1 and 2 are offered a chance of an eye wipe over the dogs under other Judges, say 3 and 4, and dog 1 succeeds, that is their retrieve in numerical order. For the numerical order to be maintained, the next retrieve on the right must go to number 2. If this is not done then 2 will have had two potential opportunities behind 1. If 1 fails and 2 wipes their eye that counts as their first retrieve. 1 will go out, having been eye wiped and a new dog will come in. It is 2's retrieve next.

If on the other hand it is a Three Judge system, and both 1 and 2 fail, new dogs should not be brought into the line to try for the game. The other dogs in line must have their chance first.

The situation would be different if the 'odds and evens' system of judging had been adopted. In this case Judges should only try the dogs on their own side, not bring across dogs from the other side (even if they were in line when the game was shot). This is because where the odds and evens system is adopted it is usually due to there being some distance between the two sides and it would cause an unnecessary delay to bring the other judges and dogs across. This would continue until at least the end of the second round when the Judges would normally put their books together to discuss the dogs work, whether any are to be dropped and confirm whether the trial will revert to the order to the draw. Judges however should be flexible and use their own judgement and discretion to assess each situation on its own merits, provided they can be justified within the terms of the J Regulations. This will aid them to make appropriate decisions in order to keep the trial flowing smoothly as well as fair.

The order of sending after an eyewipe using the 'odds and evens' system should be as in the following example: If dogs 5 and 7 are offered a chance of an eye wipe over dogs 1 and 3, and dog 5 succeeds, that is their retrieve in numerical order. For the numerical order to be maintained, the next retrieve must go to number 7. If this is not done then 7 will have had two potential opportunities behind their 'running partner' 5. If 5 fails and 7 wipes their eye that counts as 7's first retrieve. 5 will go out, having been eyewiped by their 'partner', and 9 will come in. It is 7's retrieve next. (Both dogs 5 & 7 would have needed to 'be in line' with their leads off as a new dog coming into line would not have the first retrieve).

It is unusual for more than 4 dogs to be tried on one retrieve, but not impossible. Where, for example, the first dog and the third dog provide slack and un-business like work, the second dog chases and the fourth dog goes out of control the Judges in those circumstances will decide that no dog has made an honest effort to find the game and may bring in new dogs and continue to try for the game until it is picked, or they are satisfied that a good effort has been made to pick it and look for it themselves. If they pick it, all the dogs tried are out. If they do not, the first four are all gone for major or eliminating faults.

Where the first two dogs make an excellent job of looking for the game, early in the Stake, Judges may prefer not to send more than two dogs, particularly when time and light are at a premium in the shorter days of winter, but instead look for the bird themselves and then have a picker up search for it.

'Dogs in line' refer to dogs that are off the lead and under the judges.

- (6) In walked-up Trials if one part of the line is starved of game and the dogs have been down under that Judge or Judges for quite some time then another Judge or Judges, who may have been getting quite a lot of game shot by their guns, could offer one or more of his guns to the Judge or Judges who are short of game. The handlers should be made aware of these arrangements. It is quite unfair in the body of the Trial for a Judge to offer dead game to a co-Judge whilst asking their own dogs to try for the runners.***

Judges have been known to offer some of the game shot by their guns to the other end if they are short. This is a recipe for disaster and is patently unfair. To offer some game, the offerer has to decide which, and this usually means that if he thinks it is dead he gives it away, and if he thinks it's a runner he sends his own dogs. He is trying to do the humane thing by getting a dog onto the runner as soon as possible. However, his unfortunate dogs are, therefore, in the unenviable position of watching game being shot, marking it and getting no retrieve until a bird is wing tipped into the next field and that is theirs. The next retrieve they will get will be another runner. Meanwhile the dogs at the other end are getting all the dead game. Moreover, this almost invariably leads to two dogs being sent at once. The Judge at one end thinks it's a runner and the one at the other a dead bird, so both send their dogs!

The proper thing to do is for the offerer to lend the other Judge or Judges one or more guns until the Trial evens up again. The Judges who have been lent the extra fire power can then move their dogs into the best position to use the guns they now have to retrieve for. This may even be the centre of the line where all or most of the guns are lent where there is a serious imbalance. This also makes it less likely that two dogs will be sent at once.

(7) A first dog failure, is when the first dog to be tried on a retrieve, fails. However, if there is any significant delay in sending a dog, then it should not be penalised as a first dog failure when the game is not subsequently picked by another dog, tried by the Judges, or by the Judges searching the area which the handler has been directed to search.

There are two elements which make a first dog failure. The first is that the game is not picked by another dog, or by the Judges. If it is, of course, the dog sent first has had his eye wiped and is gone anyway.

The second, and more important, element is timing.

For a dog to be classed as a first dog failure the game must not subsequently be picked by another dog sent by the Judges or by the Judges themselves, and the dog must have been sent for the retrieve without any significant delay.

The term itself almost perfectly defines the answer.

The practice of deliberately delaying the sending of dogs to artificially create 'second dog down' situations is directly contrary to Regulation J(A)3.c., is a dishonest practice and consequently a breach of the high standards of behaviour required from Field Trial Judges. It should never take place. Apart from the obvious, it also robs the dog of the best opportunity to show what it can do on a running bird, the retrieve of which might well win the Stake.

A delay is a delay, and preferably there should be none. The dog should be got away as quickly as possible. However, for any delay which occurs to trigger a 'second dog down' situation that delay must have significantly prejudiced the opportunity for the dog to pick the game.

Sometimes, of course, it may become apparent that other circumstances have effectively conspired to make unreasonable demands on a dog and on those occasions Judges should take account of such factors.

For example, the terrain on which the trial is run may be the cause of a significant delay. The dog may have to swim across a river or make its way through a particularly thick area of cover in order to reach the fall area.

There is also a third element in that was the game pickable?

See also Reg J (A)4.h above '*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*'

8. Run-off

When the Judges decide to run-off the top few dogs to confirm their final placings, they will usually position themselves together in the centre of the line or, at least, in a position where they can see all the dogs working. At this stage in the Trial, a dog may be stretched to such a degree that it may fail and be eye-wiped. In this situation the dog which has had its eye-wiped would be penalised, but could still feature in the awards.

There are two main issues here. Firstly, when the Judges call dogs into line for a run-off they should decide among themselves who among them is to send the dogs. A panel Judges may well want to appoint their B or non-panel Judges to do this to gain experience. Whichever Judge is to send should confirm to the handlers that he is sending and the order which he has agreed with his co-Judges will be the order of sending. This will usually be numerical order, except that in some instances there may be a dog or dogs which still need to complete a previous round, and they will be sent first before the run-off proper begins. The remaining Judges should place themselves at various locations in the line where they will have a good view of proceedings, making sure they do not obstruct the opportunity for the dogs to mark. In the run-off it should be unnecessary for the Judges to confer after each retrieve, and to keep the line moving. The sending Judge should not need to make notes as there are others to do that job. The line should move on after each retrieve and the Judges confer at the end of the round. This gives the dogs the best chance to shine.

Secondly, as dogs may be stretched in the run-off, they may fail first dog down or have their eyes wiped. As this is the run-off they need not be excluded from the awards in these circumstances. It is completely wrong to give an award to a dog which was not in the run-off while denying an award to a dog which was, but failed. If a dog cannot make it into the run-off it has already been beaten by all the dogs in the run-off, even though these dogs may subsequently fail.

9. Multiple handling

If two or more dogs are handled by the same person:

- a. *In a walked up Trial the accepted practice is for the handler to have his lowest numbered dog in line with his other dog or dogs on the lead held by a deputy out of the line, but in reasonably close proximity at the discretion of the Judges. On leaving the line the handler should exchange the dog with the deputy for his next lowest numbered dog and return to the line when instructed to do so by the Judges or dog steward.*
- b. *In a driven Trial a handler who has more than one dog may be expected to have all his dogs in line at a drive. A deputy should be in reasonably close proximity at the discretion of the Judges and the handler, ready to put the other dog or dogs on the lead should the handler be asked to send one of the dogs for a retrieve during the drive. At the end of the drive all dogs, other than the dog which the Judges wish to try next in its turn, should be taken out of line and should be held by the deputy on the lead until required in line. When directed to do so by the Judges, the handler should exchange the dog in line with the deputy for his next lowest numbered dog and return to the line when instructed to do so by the Judges or dog steward.*
- c. *These procedures apply not only in the body of the Stake, but also in the run-off.*

A dog 'in line' is a dog off the lead and under the Judge(s). 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); the judge is responsible for all the dogs in the trial being run in the correct numerical order. J(B)7d(2).

Some other issues which often arise are:

Unforeseen Circumstances

When a Judge is unable to complete a Trial, the first principle in such circumstances is to finish the trial. The Kennel Club should be contacted by the host Society, via telephone or email, to advise the circumstances as soon as possible. A full report must be submitted either at that time or in the immediate future. The matter will be referred to the Field Trial Committee who will ratify the results, if appropriate.