

# **FIELD TRIAL MANAGEMENT**



"Chelsea  
and  
Her Boys"

**"CHELSEA and Her Boys"**

**ENGLISH SPRINGER SPANIEL  
FIELD TRIAL ASSOCIATION, INC.**

## Conduct of Field Trials Procedural Guidelines

Acknowledgments:

Many hours of thought, much discussion, and meetings too numerous to mention, went into the writing of this booklet.

The original "Task Force" consisted of four very experienced Field Trial enthusiasts: Ed Roggenkamp, Chairman

Rich Casanda  
Bill Cosgrove  
Bob Sommer

This group laid the ground work, writing the original text. A job very well done, leaving nothing out, they put all the meat into the book.

The second "Task Force" was created only when the original group had become exhausted. Their ideas, all on paper, were ready for a fresh look. The second task force consisted of both experienced "Old Timers" and fresh new people in the trialing game. The second task force consisted of: Jim DeVoll, Sr., Chairman

David Adams  
Don Bramwell  
Pat Bramwell  
Tim DeGroff  
Jimmy DeVoll, II  
Gary Janulewicz, MD  
Eugene Johnson, MD

David Adams - Computer work-up

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Eagleview Kennels, P.O. Box 40, Crosslake, MN 56442

## Conduct of Field Trials Procedural Guidelines

### **Preface**

It is the consensus and affirmed belief of most knowledgeable field trialers that the basic procedures and format which have traditionally prevailed in the conduct of Springer Spaniel field trials is sound and does not need revision.

However, without a formalized, written outline of basic procedures and practices, which have traditionally directed the actions of our sport, the format could slowly and gradually be modified or changed by common practice.

Hence, the purpose of this booklet is to provide a formal, written, overview discussion and direction for key trial practices. By more fully defining these situations, hopefully, the field trial community can come to expect relatively uniform execution of trials which closely approximates the intent of our founders.

There are two types of regulations in effect today; one binding, one advisory. The first set includes the general rules of The American Kennel Club.

The second set of regulations is known as "Standard Procedures for Spaniel Field Trials." This is the advisory section, but it is equally controlling because unless there be such a standard there would be no guide for judges and contestants to follow.

The "Conduct of Field Trials Procedural Guidelines" falls under the advisory section, and sets a standard, we in spaniel field trials should strive for.

## **GUIDELINES FOR THE CONDUCT OF FIELD TRIALS**

The following guidelines for the conduct of English Springer Spaniel field trials are based upon established practice, decorum and tradition. Due to the nature of the sport, there is considerable interaction between operation of the trial, the judging of the trial and the circumstances which affect the quality and make-up of the trial. Therefore, the subject will be discussed both in general and specifically.

### **A Sport of Judging**

The first understanding that participants of the sport must acknowledge is that it is based on the judgments of individuals. In all cases we rely on the judges' knowledge, dedication, honesty and experience to select the winners in the sport. Therefore, it is most important that clubs provide circumstances and conditions which allow judges to best exercise their judgment as the dogs display their talents under fair and reasonably equal circumstances.

Because it is a sport of judgment, it is most important that the judges protect their integrity in every way possible, as will be outlined later in this booklet.

Anyone entering the sport must understand that all decisions are based upon judgment. This is a sport for ladies and gentlemen. The rules are clear. Participants are expected to abide by the rules in every way, which includes being careful to avoid any behavior which might give the appearance of impropriety. In the end, it is "A SPORT OF JUDGMENT". Participants who are unwilling to abide by the decisions of the judges should not participate in the sport.

Contestants should understand that judges can and will make mistakes. However, judges make every effort to do their best in making proper calls during the trial. Participants must be willing to accept instantaneous decisions made by the judges.

There are controversial situations which may arise, many of which could have been avoided with proper organization, planning and attention to detail by the club. The purpose of this treatise is to attempt to outline some of those circumstances in order to give guidance for the efforts of the people directing field trials in various capacities.

### **The Key to Success**

There are six key quality items which affect the successful running of a field trial. They include: grounds, birds, bird planting, safe gunning, organization, and amenities.

## A) Grounds

Providing adequate and proper cover for a field trial is the number one responsibility of the Field Trial Committee. No test for spaniels can be properly run on inadequate or inappropriate cover. Spaniels, due to their versatility, can properly handle a variety of cover. Since the versatility of a spaniel is one of its chief assets, over a period of a dog's competitive career, it should perform in a variety of different covers and conditions.

One type of cover is totally inappropriate for spaniel trials and that is cover that is so thick and so high that the judges are unable to see the dog work. When that happens, so many key judgment factors are invisible to the judge that he is unable to appropriately and adequately analyze the performance of the dog. Specifically, in very thick, chest-high cover, the actions of the dog are invisible at most times, which precludes the judge from seeing and analyzing the dog's ability to find birds, to track moving birds, assess the boldness of the flush, evaluate marking ability and confirm steadiness. Without judging these key factors, it is virtually impossible to appropriately evaluate the dog.

Clubs should also make an effort to avoid the use of cover which is so low, thin and uniform that it in no way resembles realistic game bird habitat. Springer Spaniels are defined as a dog wilting to face thick, heavy, rugged cover. Trials run in light cover do not fully test the hunting ability of a spaniel.

This does not preclude the use of broken cover that has interspersed patches of very thick or very tall cover. In fact, broken cover is encouraged, since in broken cover the dog's actions are often visible and the dog is forced to check back to the handler on occasion, the actions of the dog in doing same are apparent to the judge and the handler.

Clubs are, in fact, encouraged to use large pieces of cover with varying terrain. Judges are capable of evaluating dogs in different types of circumstances and during the period of the day it is likely each dog will have an opportunity to perform in a variety of the covers available.

Clubs are also encouraged to avoid the bull ring syndrome where one small, uniform piece of cover is used over and over, creating an artificial circumstance. By utilizing larger pieces of ground with varying cover, this can be avoided. Clubs are also encouraged to hunt through hedge rows. These conditions are very similar to what one encounters during a day's hunt. However, in no case should dogs be worked through fences or should guns attempt to climb fences. In no case should the dogs be worked through the hedge row if it causes an unsafe situation for the trial.

Clubs are encouraged to constantly seek new grounds. Old grounds often change over time as the cover grows or the circumstances of the property change. Clubs should be very careful not to fall into the habit of utilizing only familiar grounds when other more suitable grounds are available.

Finally, the location of the trial and the cover should be isolated, which will allow for shooting in all directions. Visibility of the grounds from major highways is not appropriate for the sport. Ours is a sport that is best enjoyed by a small and dedicated group of enthusiasts, which allows for the proper safety precautions.

## B) Birds

Clubs should endeavor to buy birds from reputable breeders that consistently produce birds that are healthy and strong fliers. High quality breeders must be able to provide birds in adequate numbers. Clubs are encouraged to share information concerning game bird suppliers in order to help each other determine which suppliers are capable of providing the most consistently high-quality birds for trials. Saving a few cents per bird can be very short-sighted if it results in a large number of birds being picked up without flying. When a high number of pick-ups are the result, the cost to the club will escalate drastically and the overall quality of the trial will be adversely affected. Smaller birds are preferable to the large meat birds hunt clubs use.

## C) Bird Planting

No other single job can have a more detrimental impact on the overall trial than inexperienced and improper bird planting. A knowledgeable, capable bird planter can save a club hundreds of dollars and positively influence the quality of the competition. Clubs are encouraged to share the names of individuals who will plant trials for a fee and can do so in a quality manner. Inter-clubs are encouraged to conduct seminars on the art of bird planting and the practices which affect the success of planting.

Most of all, planting should be consistent from dog to dog within a series. If planters are changed, the change should occur at the conclusion of the series. If birds are not flying, planters should change their method of planting. Recognizing the difficulty of finding experienced planters in sufficient numbers and the stress that planting vests can cause to birds, clubs are encouraged to use all terrain vehicles (ATVs) or other vehicles which are properly outfitted with bird boxes that do not drop feathers or bird scent on the ground. The boxed area on the ATV should be fitted with a complete floor and tray to catch all refuse. Such boxes can also be fitted with roofs so that during inclement weather the birds are kept dry. This can greatly increase the chances of a successful trial even in a pouring rain. Use of an ATV has an

added advantage in that bird crates can be placed further away from the ends of the courses, which is a significant advantage in the conduct of the trial.

In cases where the planters walk the course using bird vests, planters should be carefully instructed not to lay the vests on the ground, thereby creating hot spots which confuse the dogs or drag the vests through the cover, creating false trails.

Planters should plant at a steady pace in front of the field but out of gun range. The planter should stay a constant number of stakes (four or five) in front of the trial so that the dogs at the end of the course are not searching for birds that were planted 10 or 30 minutes ahead of the trial.

Extreme care should be taken to provide adequate safety measures for the planters including orange hats, orange vests and safety glasses. Planters should never jeopardize their own safety for the sake of planting close to the dogs.

Planters should be instructed in how to alternate birds from the end of one course to the start of the next course so that the ending dog does not get the last bird on the old course and the first bird on the next course.

In all cases birds should be planted as lightly as possible. The ability of a spaniel to track moving birds is a critical talent and a valuable asset to the breed. It also helps the judges in selecting the best dog. Therefore, planters are encouraged to plant the trial in a manner which encourages moving birds.

In all cases bird planters should avoid practices such as emptying their vests, dragging birds out of vests, dropping feathers or lying on the ground - all of which create hot spots in the field which can confuse the dogs and cause unrealistic scenting situations. The objective is to provide near natural bird-finding situations and obviously, such artificial hot spots do not exist when working wild birds.

In no case should an individual plant a stake in which he is entered and still participating. Individuals should also try to avoid planting birds in a stake in which he was entered in and has subsequently been dropped or gone out.

Prior to the start of the trial, the field trial chairman should communicate with the bird planters concerning the placement of birds on the field, the planting distances from the flag and the position in varying wind conditions in order to provide a consistent test of bird-finding ability. The field trial committee should observe planting throughout the day to insure that planting practices are consistent especially when there is a tendency to plant birds closer to the stake line as planters tire.

Planters should avoid the syndrome of planting a bird at every flag. This produces a very artificial situation and encourages routine practices on the part of the handlers. The stakes can be used as a reference point but the exact locations of the birds should be varied widely within this reference framework.

During any series birds should not be planted so wide as to create an Unrealistic, artificial pattern. The dogs should find the birds while running a reasonable pattern in line with the judge's expectations - not the bird planters' expectations.

If radios are used, the planters should have one to communicate with the Field Marshall.

#### D) Gunning

Gunning is a vital part of the spaniel field trial format but it brings with it an extremely heavy responsibility. The selection, management and discipline of the gunning team is a major responsibility of the field trial committee. Gunning assignments are of such a critical nature due to both safety and impact on the success of the trial that they cannot be relegated to inexperienced gunners.

The gun captain should constantly monitor the gunning of the trial, if he cannot, a co-captain should be employed to ensure that the gunning is monitored.

The following recommendations for gunners are most important:

- a) No gunner can be allowed to shoot in a trial after any alcohol consumption. As little as one sip of beer during the running hours of the trial disqualifies the gunner for participation in the trial.
- b) Gunners cannot and should not in any way affect the outcome of the trial with their gunning. That applies to long falls, short falls or missed birds. Any gunner suspected of such practices should be disciplined by the gun captain.
- c) A gunning assignment is not a place to show off. This sport is paid for by the participants/owners of the dogs; they and the judges want the birds shot cleanly, at reasonable distance from the dog in order to provide a reasonable test of retrieving. What is important is that the birds are shot fairly, consistently and at proper distances.

- d) The use of reloads for licensed field trials is strongly discouraged. Only shells furnished by the sponsoring club should be used, if offered.
- e) In the past, circumstances where a gun malfunctioned or a gunner was hurt, such as a sprained ankle or a wrenched knee, have disrupted the trial for a significant period of time. A back-up gunner should be walking in the gallery at all times ready to substitute immediately, should there be a disruption. This back up gunner should not be shooting from the gallery.

Complaints concerning the gunning should be communicated to the field trial chairman who will then relay the information to the gun captain. Entrants should not directly confront gunners concerning their performance in the trial.

#### **E) Organization**

Considering the large size of many of today's trials, it is critical that the trials be run on a well-planned and carefully monitored time schedule. In most cases this means strong organization, careful adherence to advertised timing and minimum delays. The key, of course, is adequate staffing experience and reliable workers. A formal assignment sheet is recommended which can be distributed to all of the trial workers. Backup assignments are encouraged. Examples of assignment sheets and check lists are included in the appendix of this booklet. Clubs lacking adequate membership should endeavor to share the workload with another nearby club in order to share work assignments on alternate weekends. Clubs might also consider sharing grounds, thereby distributing the effort of finding or grooming property. Such an arrangement is acceptable within the bounds of current field trial rules.

#### **F) The Field Trial Committee**

The Field Trial Committee has the ultimate responsibility for making all the decisions which result in a quality trial and provide a fair test for the dogs. Field Trial Committees should normally be comprised of no more than five experienced field trial people. These are decision-makers who will be called upon for judgment should a significant dispute arise.

Although this sport could not survive without the hundreds of dedicated spaniel enthusiasts across the country, being named to the Field Trial Committee cannot be utilized as a ceremonial reward for hard workers. People who lack the experience to make an informed decision based on the official rules should not be named to field trial committees. If a club has a shortage of experienced members, it should endeavor to enroll some experienced trialers in order to populate their field trial committee. Other club members should

make an effort to gain the level of experience necessary in order to serve on the field trial committee.

During the field trial it is the job of the field trial chairman to direct and monitor activities on a constant basis to see that the standards of the trial are being adhered to and that the trial is progressing in a timely and efficient manner. The field trial chairman should not gun the trial since this is a conflict of responsibilities. The field trial chairman should be on the field or in an area directing key field trial activities at all times. In addition to the field trial chairman, the field trial committee should be available at all times to help the field trial chairman should any unforeseen circumstances or situations arise.

Prior to the start of the trial it is the responsibility of the field trial chairman and/or the committee to meet with the judges to explain the layout of the grounds; point out any hazards, tree lines, fences or natural barriers which can affect the operation of the trial and to request the judges input on what wind and course circumstances would best allow them to judge the field trial depending on size and make-up of the entry. Although the field trial committee is not required to abide by the judge's recommendations, certainly it is most appropriate for the field trial committee and the judges to attempt to work as a team to develop courses and wind conditions which provide an efficient and effective test for the dogs.

#### **The Blue Book**

Field Trial Chairman & Judges should read the Blue Book, "Conduct and Judging of Field Trials" and the official AKC rule book, "Registration and Field Trial Rules," the day prior to a trial (regardless of how many trials they have run or judged).

#### **G) Training Devices**

In establishing the format for conduct of springer spaniel field trials, the founders of the sport understood that some dogs have such a head-strong nature that they are frequently unwilling to take direction kindly from the handler. Such dogs can often be intimidated into performing obediently. However, the founders of the sport felt that dogs that could only be controlled through intimidation were not the best breeding stock for the long-term good of the breed. Hence, historically, a rule has been in place that no training devices are allowed on the field of competition. If the dog is properly trained and if the dog is willing to take direction from the handler without intimidation, no training devices should be necessary. As a case in point, dogs cannot even wear a collar during competition. This subject has been open to wide interpretation in the past. Certainly no handler of an English Springer Spaniel should carry an electric training device onto the field at any time, and

any handler who at any time during the course of the trial, utilizes such a device on the trial grounds, is subject to immediate dismissal from that trial in progress.

There is concern that the many radio devices currently in use in the field trial sport may appear very similar to an electronic training device transmitter. Therefore handlers must turn off and conceal radios in the presence of the dog immediately before and during the time when the dog is under judgment.

People in the gallery must be considerate of the handlers and recognize that noise from radio transmitters can be very disruptive to the trial, the dog and the brace mate. All radios in the gallery must be off except for the Field Marshall.

Spaniel trials are conducted on an honor system. The rule that no training devices are allowed on the field trial grounds has been in effect for many years. Trainers should not attempt to circumvent this rule by hiding such devices from the judges or the field trial committee.

#### **H) Honor System**

Trialing is a sport for ladies and gentlemen. It is a sport with a long and proud heritage based upon the highest standards of civility and decorum. Shouting at judges, which unfortunately is so common in organized sports today, is absolutely out of place in a field trial setting. Participants who feel that they have been improperly judged can tactfully voice their concern to the chairman of the field trial committee with a minimum of harshness. There is no time or circumstance during the running of a field trial when arduous or loud disagreements between the judges and the participants are appropriate.

The use of abusive language or obscenities at any time while on the field is inappropriate and is grounds for dismissal at the judges or the field trial chairman's discretion. This is covered in the AKC rule book, "Dealing with Misconduct."

#### **D) Judges Responsibility**

The knowledge, experience, ability, integrity and honesty of the judges is the basis for this sport, hence, anyone who accepts a judging responsibility must be willing to live by a code of conduct that is above reproach. It is also the judge's role to protect the honor and the integrity of this sport. To do so the judge must not only be fully knowledgeable about the rules but totally willing to live by the rules and judge according to the stricture of the sport. Although a judge has the authority and the responsibility to separate the dogs and give awards through judgment, the judge does not have the authority to modify the

rules according to the judges own opinions or beliefs. In the end, any judge who modifies the rules of the sport due to his own beliefs hurts the sport significantly since it is the consistency of the rules that allow for training the dogs according to a standard. The rules provide a firm foundation to the handlers in that the dogs are trained based on these expectations.

A field trial is always judged on the summation of all completed series. Judges should place equal weight on all land series of the trial and should not succumb to the tendency to put unequal weight on the final series since this was the last performance seen.

Judges have the authority to stop the trial, any time, if they see an unsafe or improper condition developing. At such a point judges should notify the field trial chairman that until the unsafe or improper condition is remedied, the trial cannot proceed.

#### **D) 1 Frequency of Judging**

Since it is a sport of judgment based upon the opinions of a judge, no one individual should strive to unduly influence the outcome of the sport. Hence, it is suggested that no individual should judge more than three trials per year. However, if an individual does choose to judge more than three trials per year, those trials should be widely separated geographically so participants in the sport have an opportunity to have their dogs evaluated by several different judges. Example: no individual should judge more than two trials in the same interclub within a calendar year.

Judges for the National should judge very sparingly during the year of their National assignment.

Judges should make every effort to protect their integrity and display a high level of decorum and impartiality during the trial period. They should not be influenced by long term friendships or personal favors in their judgment of the trial.

#### **D) 2 New Judge Eligibility Requirements**

Before being eligible to judge AKC Member or Licensed Field Trials for English Springer Spaniels, prospective Judges must complete the following requirements in this order:

- #1 Attend a Parent Club approved JUDGES SEMINAR.
- #2 \*Pass two (2) APPRENTICESHIPS. (An Apprentice Evaluation Form **MUST** be filled out and approved/passed by each teaching judge. If the

Apprentice is not approved/passed by either of the Judges, the Apprenticeship for that trial will NOT count.)

#3 Pass a Parent Club prepared written test.

A Canadian Judge may judge in the USA after judging 3 Canadian All-Age Pheasant trials and passing the written test.

## RULES

*The Apprentice Judging Program is an excellent way to develop prospective judges, BUT, regardless of this added educational process, the ultimate decision to find and choose qualified apprentices AND judges is still up to each local Field Trial Committee.*

WHO: Service at a trial as an Apprentice Judge must be solely at the invitation of the club Field Trial Committee, not on request or application from a particular individual. An invitation should be considered an honor, however, a dog is not eligible to be entered in any stake if an Apprentice Judge of that stake, or any member of his/her family has owned, sold, held under lease, boarded, trained, or handled the dog within one year prior to the date of the field trial. (AKC rules Chapter 14, Section 3) Field Trial Committees should not consider a person for Apprenticeship until he/she has carefully and thoroughly read the AKC "FIELD TRIAL RULES and Standard Procedure for SPANIELS", "The Conduct and Judging of Spaniel Field Trials" (Blue Book), the AKC "Dealing with Misconduct" book, and attended the required Parent Club approved Judging Seminar.

Recommended qualifications are as follows: has trained several dogs, competes in Open All-Age as well as Amateur All-Age stakes if eligible, has earned numerous placements, has championed a dog or two, plays an active role in a field trial club, participates in putting on field trials, enters National field events, trains regularly with people experienced in the sport, is well respected in his/her local area, has judged several puppy stakes, and has consistently displayed good sportsmanship throughout his/her field trial career. *The ESSFTA knows that it is not always possible for a person to meet all of the above considerations, but certainly the person who the Field Trial Committee invites as an Apprentice will eventually Judge All-Age trials and should meet a majority of these criteria. The Field Trial Judge Eligibility Requirements should provide a good first step for a Field Trial Committee's selection, but these committees should never forget the value and importance of experience.*

WHERE: The Field Trial Committee who is extending the invitation governs this, but it is suggested that the Apprentice Judge accept an

assignment outside of his/her own area, whenever possible, as this would avoid local diversions.

DUTIES: The general thought is to give the Apprentice Judge an opportunity to see a Field Trial up close, and to listen to the dialogue between the two Judges, observing how they work together to arrive at their decisions. The Apprentice Judge is to be a SILENT listener so as not to distract the Judges at any time from their job of concentrating on the dogs, taking notes, etc. The Apprentice Judge must sit in on all discussions regarding callbacks and the final discussion where placements are decided.

AT THE

TRIAL: The Apprentice Judge should walk close enough to the teaching Judge to allow for quiet discussion when requested by the Judge--quiet enough that the handler cannot hear comments. Without conversation from the teaching Judge, the Apprentice Judge could just as well be in the gallery. Staying with the same Judge throughout the trial will allow the Apprentice Judge to see all the dogs' series. It is quite possible for the teaching Judge to pay 100% attention to each dog's performance while explaining his/her views to the Apprentice Judge. Under no circumstances should the trial be delayed. Questions from the Apprentice Judge should be written if necessary, and presented to the Judge at an opportune time; making a turn, waiting for the dog on the other course, etc.

Above all, the Apprentice Judge must be advised that complete confidentiality is essential, during and after the trial.

\*The Apprentice Judge must complete a total of two (2) All Age Trials, (each trial consisting of one Open and one Amateur Stake) under four (4) different Judges with one judge at each stake being designated as the Teaching Judge. The Interclub Chair and the Judges, prior to the trial, must approve all Apprentice Judges. The Apprentice Judge must be shown on the AKC Premium list to give an entrant ample time to determine a dog's eligibility for the stake in which the person is apprenticing. Upon completing each stake, the teaching judge must complete and return the Apprentice Evaluation Form to the club secretary who in turn will send the form to the appropriate person designated by the Parent Club Vice President, Field as soon as possible. Leadership and all bookkeeping necessary for the New Field Trial Judge Eligibility Requirements will be the responsibility of the person so designated by the Parent Club Vice President, Field.

## WRITTEN TEST

Once a prospective Judge completes the Judges Seminar and two (2) Apprenticeships, in that order, he/she will be required to pass a test that has been

developed from the AKC "FIELD TRIAL RULES and Standard Procedure for SPANIELS", "The Conduct and Judging of Spaniel Field Trials" (Blue Book) and the AKC "Dealing with Misconduct" book. The test will be prepared and printed by the ESSFTA and will be sent to the prospective Judge at the appropriate time. Upon completion of the test, the test will be graded by the test provider, and upon passing the test, the prospective Judge will be notified as to whether he/she has successfully completed the Judging Requirements, and is eligible to officially judge English Springer Spaniel AKC member or licensed All-Age stakes. Leadership and all book keeping necessary for these new judge eligibility requirements will be the responsibility of the Interclub Chair.

### **I) 3 Handling of Judges by the Field Trial Committee**

It should be understood that any judge who accepts the invitation to judge a trial does so at his or her own personal sacrifice. This means traveling many miles, often missing work or giving up vacation days. Judges should be afforded a comfortable level of amenities including repayment for transportation, rooms and meals. These should all be provided at a comfortable level in keeping with norms of the area. No club should ask or expect a judge to pay his/her own travel expenses.

Since the judge is often in an unfamiliar area, it is important that someone from the club give the judge a general outline of activities and someone (not necessarily a participant) should accompany the judges to evening meals. Clubs should contact judges early to obtain commitments ahead of time. A year, plus, is not too much lead time. The clubs should then re-contact the judges once or twice in the interim to ensure that the judges are still available to honor their commitments. A few weeks before the trial the judges should be advised the specific location of the trial and mailed a package consisting of the premium list, a map to the trial grounds and a general outline of activities.

Some clubs appoint a judges steward to make sure that the judges are comfortable and have their needs attended to. It is important to understand that the judge is concentrating completely on the judgment of the dogs and should not have to worry about a ride to the grounds, accommodations, meals, etc. During the running of the trial, it is common courtesy to ask the judges about their preferences for soft drinks - morning coffee, lunch, etc.

Judges must make definite commitments to the trial. They should arrive early, certainly the night before the trial, in order to avoid missing or delaying the trial due to an inconvenience - a flat tire or a delayed plane. Judges must also make enough time commitment to the club so they are not rushing to catch early Sunday afternoon planes. It is unfair to the competitors to have a judge rush through a trial simply because he or she is trying to catch an early plane.

### **I) 4 Dogs Under Judgment**

During a field trial dogs are considered to be under judgment only when it is "off the lead and in action" as part of the field trial situation, either questing for game, retrieving or under control of the handlers.

### **I) 5 Conveying Judges Opinions to Handlers Early**

How a judge interacts with competitors is up to the individual judge, however, it is strongly suggested that when a dog commits a serious transgression which materially affects the judges rating of that dog the transgression should be communicated to the handler immediately. It has been found over time, that handlers who are made aware of the judges concern immediately are not as deeply disappointed later in the trial when they are either not called back for a series or do not place. It is easy for the handler - in the excitement of the moment - to forget a serious transgression which was noted in the judge's book.

Although at the time it might be easier for the judge to omit comment, in the long run, both the handler and the judge will be less likely to endure frustration or disappointment if transgressions are communicated immediately. If a competitor is unsure as to why he is not called back to the third series, he/she could have the Marshall check with the judge to see if a clerical error has occurred.

Judges are encouraged to directly answer questions of handlers after the trial concerning why their dog did not place today. Participants can quietly request a judge's explanation, opinion and rationale at the end of a trial. A participant should never telephone a judge after the day of a trial to question the judge's decision.

### **I) 6 Judges Agreement**

The Blue Book states that judges are encouraged to meet before the trial to agree on specific situations for judging the trial in order that both judges treat participants in a similar manner.

Therefore, field trial committees should provide arrangements for this pre-trial meeting either on the night before the trial or at breakfast on the day of the trial to ensure that both judges are together and have a chance to work out these agreements.

During the running of a trial, judges should communicate with each other when situations arise that the other judge could not see. The judge that has the best view of the situation should communicate that information to the other judge. An example would be the situation where a long retrieve falls on the

other judge's course and the bird runs. The dog goes to a retrieve area and works out a long retrieve unseen by the judge on the far course. It is acceptable for the judge who was able to view this action to communicate the actions to the other judge.

#### **J) Trial Disruption**

On very rare occasions an incident will occur which requires the convening of the field trial committee to make a decision. In no case should such an incident interfere with the prompt and timely completion of the trial. An isolated incident should not unduly inconvenience the dozens of other handlers who have their dogs entered in the trial. It is the responsibility of the field trial committee to decide such matters in a way which does not disrupt the trial.

#### **K) Marshalling Responsibilities**

The Field Marshall of the trial has significant responsibilities which include the following items:

- 1) Control the gallery so they do not in any way interfere with the running of the trial. Hence, they should not in any way distract the dogs or the handlers;
- 2) Control the situation to get dogs to the line in order and on time. In the case of dogs being late to the line, the Marshall has the authority to substitute the next dog in order, on the spot;
- 3) Communicate the pace of the trial to handlers, by radio or by sending messages back to the parking area concerning which dogs are currently in action.
- 4) Dogs late to the line should be placed by the Marshall at the end of the running order.

#### **L) Running Order**

Any dog that is not braced during the first series of a trial should be moved up in the running order for the second series in order to ensure that it will be braced during the trial. The rules specifically say that a dog must be braced to receive a placement and hence, it is the responsibility of the field trial committee to ensure that such a bracing takes place.

It is understood that large trials with more than 40 entries have serious time constraints. To save time, many clubs have gone to the practice of giving

callbacks in the field. This speeds the trial but has a few drawbacks. One disadvantage is that it does not allow the field trial committee to reevaluate the situation and re-order dogs when one handler has several dogs running in close proximity.

It is suggested that the judges and the field trial chairman work together so that the committee has adequate time to prepare and organize a proper list for the second series callbacks. With cooperation from the judges, the callbacks can be processed early enough in the trial to allow for the necessary amount of reordering prior to the second series.

Clubs are encouraged to post the callbacks on a board mounted in an obvious position near the start of the field trial course. This is especially important for the running of the second series, when adjustments in running order must be made to accommodate dogs which were not braced or to space out handlers with several entries. This is also important in the third series where a formal running order should be posted in order to have dogs on the line at the time they are called.

#### **M) Puppy Stakes**

Puppy trials are a vital part of our sport. They are the future of the sport for the dogs and in many cases for the handlers. Clubs should make every effort to conduct puppy stakes in a manner which adequately tests the dogs and provides a fair and consistent format. Clubs must make a special effort to provide strong birds, adequate cover, experienced planters, consistent planting procedures, best gunners, and enough time to properly conduct the trial without infringing upon the all-age stakes.

Many clubs run a puppy stake and the all-age stake simultaneously. This can create a difficulty if some handlers are trying to run a dog in both the puppy stake and an all-age stake at the same time. Care must be taken to preserve the integrity of the puppy stake without disturbing the all-age stake. Rearrangements in the running order may have to be made.

Recognizing that the puppy stake is potentially the lifeblood of the sport and a solid training ground for club members, it is often appropriate to run the puppy stake as a trial within a trial, including a separate chairman and judges with a carefully designed running order that minimizes the conflicts with the all-age stakes. An effort should be made to give each puppy at least three contacts.

The puppy stake should be run in cover and wind conditions which allow the dog to find and flush birds aggressively and properly demonstrate the nose of these young dogs. If the puppy stake is run on separate grounds, a separate map

to those grounds should be mailed to the puppy stake entrants along with their running order.

Clubs should carefully adhere to the scheduling of the puppy stake since many new participants in our sport start out with a puppy. They often drive hundreds of miles to run their puppy and it is only fair that they would be given as much information about the time and location of the stake as possible. Hopefully, they will not be expected to wait half a day for the puppy stake to start. The puppy stake should never be run on a different day and time than that advertised in the premium list. Judges listed in the premium list should stand by their commitment. Last minute changing of judges is to be discouraged.

If a time is posted in the premium list it should be adhered to: Example - Puppy Stake: to be run after the second series of the open.

#### N) **Handling of Birds**

Perhaps no subject is more important to address than birds. In many cases the most satisfactory birds for field trial are the least desirable for the table. Birds that are very fat, are often not as well-muscled, nor are the hard fliers, which are the best for field trials. A thorough discussion of this with bird breeders may actually result in savings for the club since the club may be able to buy birds which are less desirable for the table but most desirable for field trial activities.

#### **Handling of Live Birds.**

Having strong, aggressive flying birds, is good for the trial game and fairest to the birds. The stronger the bird, the better it's chance of behaving like a wild, natural bird and either running away or flying off strongly. The best practices which provide strong birds include providing adequate supplies of food and water and catching the birds near the trial time. Clubs must ensure that birds are kept dry and covered during wet weather. When the bird crates are covered, care should be taken to ensure adequate and proper ventilation. Often, in an effort to be fully organized, the birds are all caught up early. This is a poor practice if it means the birds are in close confinement for a long period of time. The best possible practice is to catch the birds the evening before or the morning of the trial provided the birds have a few hours of rest before being planted. Multiple crating, such as transferring birds from the crates of the grower to a secondary set of crates, often unduly stresses or injures the birds. This is another plus for the use of an ATV - in that birds are only touched twice. The birds should be handled the least amount possible and in all cases: minimize stress.

If banding or streamers are required, this should be accomplished at the time the birds are caught.

#### **Handling of Dead Birds**

Dead birds should be handled in a respectful manner and the shot birds should be stored in a discreet and organized manner and the meat utilized properly. Many clubs have found that the best way to do this is to build hanging racks where all dead birds are properly hung. This hanging area should be situated out of view. Hanging racks ensure that the birds are in the best condition for cleaning. Dead bird piles are inappropriate and an out-of-date practice which does not show the sport in the best light. Judges and bird shaggers should attempt to dispatch wounded birds in a humane manner, utilizing a dispatching tool which is available to all clubs.

#### **The Pick-Up Dog**

Clubs are encouraged to utilize the services of a pick-up dog. During the course of a trial, birds will be shot where the judge elects not to send the dog for the retrieve. In other cases, birds will be scratched down far distant from the field of competition. In these cases, the handler of the pick-up dog should go to the area of the fall after the trial has progressed further down the course and utilize the pick-up dog to search out and retrieve the wounded bird. This dog should be on lead at all times in order that it not get loose and disrupt the trial. It is recommended that pick-up dogs be mature, older dogs with strong retrieving skills and maximum obedience training.

#### **Bird Shaggers**

Carrying the bird basket is a grueling and thankless job. But it offers an unparalleled view of the trial.

However, bird shaggers must make a special effort to be unobtrusive and as invisible as possible. The following list outlines the actions of the bird shagger:

- a) Bird shaggers should speak only when spoken to by the judge or handlers.
- b) Bird shaggers should walk behind the judge and ask the judge prior to the start of the course where the judge wants the shagger to walk.
- c) Bird shaggers should not follow the judge or handler when going off on a runner. In this case the shagger remains stationary.
- d) If a retrieve falls near the shagger, an effort should be made to keep the scent of the birds in the basket from confusing the dog on a retrieve.

- e) On a down wind beat, the shagger must stay a minimum of 20 yards behind the judge and handler.
- f) The bag for live traps must not be dragged through the cover.

**O) Galleries - People & Vehicles**

Obviously, many people enjoy walking in the gallery and watching the progress of the field trial up close. However, in a sport where live ammunition is used, the presence of people can affect the shooting, the dogs and safety.

The gallery must always follow the directions of the Field Marshall. Any individual who repeatedly disregards the instructions of the Marshall should be asked to leave the gallery and remain in the parking area. No dogs are allowed to follow in the gallery unless they are under complete control, which normally means "on a lead." Dogs that are not entered in this field trial are specifically prohibited from being on the field trial grounds regardless of whether they are on a lead or not.

**P) Vehicles on the Field Trial Grounds**

In designing the layout of the field trial grounds consideration should be given to make sure that the parking area is not in conflict with the course. If the gunners have to pass up any shot because the birds are flying toward the parking area, it is especially unfair to the handlers who happen to draw that portion of the course. No gun should ever be fired in the direction of the parking area since people are constantly walking around in the area unprotected.

There are situations where individuals with multiple dogs, or older handlers, need to drive their vehicles near to the area of competition on the field trial grounds. However, in no case should these vehicles interfere with the trial. Individuals whose vehicles repeatedly interfere with the progress of the trial should be counseled by the field trial chairman.

It is suggested that clubs place a "No Vehicles Beyond This Point" sign on the course where appropriate.

Clubs are encouraged to utilize shuttle vehicles when the fields are far distant from the parking. Use of a farm wagon or truck to ferry handlers will minimize the number of individuals who attempt to take their vehicles onto the field of competition.

Trainers with several entries and people unable to walk, when permitted to drive vehicles on the field, must be considerate of others and should do nothing that would conflict with the operation of the trial or create a situation that is unfair to the other competitors.

**Q) Responsibility to Be on the Line on Time**

As the size of the entries has increased, the urgency to utilize time efficiently in order to provide a fair test for all dogs has increased. Participants are urged to be considerate of others, by having their dogs ready to run when called. It is the responsibility of the handler, to watch the progress of the trial in order to be ready when called by the Marshall. Should one handler be chronically late to the line, especially if it appears that the handler is late in order to garner a preferential position in the running order, that handler and dog may be penalized. The Marshall has the authority to send that handler to the end of the running order for the remainder of the trial, if it is obvious that the handler is not making an effort to be on line, on time.

In the interest of sportsmanship, dogs should not be run out of order. A great deal of the sport is based on the luck of the draw. Whether one runs down-wind course, up-wind course, heavy cover, light cover and the condition of the birds is to a great extent a matter of luck. Therefore, it is most fair to all if handlers are called in the order as drawn and run in the conditions as found. Hence, it is the responsibility of the handler to be on line, on time. Professional trainers who have several dogs entered are urged to use helpers to shuttle dogs to the line in order to be "ON LINE ON TIME"

**R) Wind Direction**

In all cases clubs should endeavor to set up courses which provide consistent wind conditions for all dogs. A cross-wind course utilizes time efficiently, provides a more strenuous dog test and, since birds tend to fly up and down wind, often creates the safest conditions for gunning. It allows the judges to learn more about the dogs as they evaluate pattern and the dog's ability to scent birds in a crosswind. This also demonstrates the dog's obedience on the center line.

However, some fields cannot be utilized in such a manner and in those cases the judges will have to work within the existing wind conditions. The key is to use the field in a highly efficient and logical setup.

Ideally, once a course is staked, all the dogs could be run on that exact course layout and clubs should endeavor not to change the course layout for the first and second series. However, if conditions change so dramatically that the initial course layout is improper, the course can be adjusted between the first and

second series but with special consideration to making sure that dogs that were on the downwind side of the course in the first series alternate to an upwind side of the course for the second series.

When staking the course for a third series, an effort should be made to provide a consistent format for all the dogs. It is considered unfair to run half the dogs into the wind and half the dogs downwind.

#### S) Water Tests

Each inter-club should endeavor to schedule at least two water tests each year and these should be scheduled by the inter-club chairman. Two water tests will allow those qualified dogs to complete their championships during the year.

Clubs that do not have a time constraint should make every effort to offer a water test.

#### T) Trial Amenities

The entrants/participants in a trial spend a considerable amount of time and effort driving to the trial and paying entry fees. A certain level of courtesies and amenities are in keeping with trial expectations. The following items are the minimum level expected of the field trial committee:

- 1) Motel - A good hotel or motel (more than one) which is nearby, clean, reasonably priced and has a dog run area nearby. Normally the headquarters motel should be within 20 miles of the field trial grounds. A list of local restaurants that are open early is a nice addition to the cover letter from the Field Trial Chair.
- 2) Signs - A map with good directions. Signs to the field trial grounds should be visible but unobtrusive. It is recommended that clubs not aggressively advertise their trials but instead put up recognizable signs that can be easily identified by participants in a trial without unnecessarily attracting wide public scrutiny.
- 3) Toilets - Field trials attract a wide variety of participants, male and female, young and old. Toilets should be provided which are clean, handy and private. There is no compromise or excuse for not providing one clean portable toilet. This is an important part of providing the level of amenities necessary for a trial.
- 4) Pre-trial Materials - At least a week prior to the trial the following materials should be mailed to participants: a good map showing the location of the trial and a running order. Maps and running orders should

also be available at the headquarters motel. If for any reason the puppy stake is to be run at a different location than the main trial location, all participants, especially puppy participants, should be sent a separate puppy trial map. If the trial is moved due to a last minute emergency, maps should be sent to all participants. Signs should be posted, a large map should be left at the original trial grounds, and an individual should be stationed at the original trial grounds to direct late participants to the new trial grounds. Let participants know if food is or is not available on the trial grounds.

- 5) Schedule -Finally, it is the responsibility of the field trial committee to start the trial at the posted time, to stay on schedule and to run the trial in accordance with the schedule advertised in the premium list.

#### U) Running the Trial On Time & Being Considerate of Participants' Time

Many field trial participants drive hundreds of miles to enter trials. Many of them have very heavy business and personal schedules; therefore, being considerate of participants' time is very important. The following items are listed for the consideration of the field trial committee to improve the courtesy and time consideration afforded to entrants:

- 1) Some small trials, due to lack of time pressure, can drag out until a small trial fills an entire day. This should not happen. The trial should be run in a manner that does not adversely effect quality.

An example would be to have the awards and ribbons ready so that the placements can be given in a timely manner, especially on Sunday afternoons.

- 2) Placements should be given as soon as available from the judges. The field trial committee should not wait until all their paperwork and tidying up duties are complete before passing out the placements. This will allow participants to head home as soon as possible. Of course, the ultimate courtesy is to start the trial on time and run it on time.
- 3) A major part of having the trial run smoothly is proper planning and follow-up.
- 4) If bird planters are efficient at the turns, the judges move quickly, and the guns are lined up, then turns can be completed in a minimum amount of time. On the other hand, if every turn requires a complete replenishment of planting supplies, dropping of dead birds, and a considerable amount of discussion time, the trial can be delayed considerably by turns.

#### V) Entry Fees

Entry fees for field trial should be remitted to the club along with entries. It is unreasonable to expect clubs to make commitments for grounds, birds, and judges, based on entries that do not include full and complete payment. Clubs should refund total entry fees to owners in the case of bitches in heat. Entry fees should also be refunded when the owner/handler presents a veterinarian's validation of a specific health problem in a male or female dog which precludes running in a trial.

Clubs should make an effort to return entry fees for appropriate personal or work related cancellations.

Entries should be received by mail or fax by the field trial secretary prior to the closing date of the trial. Telephone entries are strongly discouraged.

If clubs find that an owner has entered dogs in two separate trials for the same date the inter-club chairman should be notified of such facts. Owners of dogs should not expect clubs to provide birds, grounds and judges, for trials in which they have no intention of competing.

Springer Spaniel field trial clubs are expected to be non-profit organizations, which exist for the sport of training and running spaniel field trials. Therefore, entry fees should be set at a level which will break even. A level that is most fair to the entrants. Clubs can use other activities such as raffles, selling food, selling pins, water tests or fun trials, to make money, and field trial entrants should not be expected to subsidize social activities or training costs of the club.

#### **W) Responsibilities of the Inter-Club Chairman**

Responsibilities of the inter-club chairman include:

1. Scheduling of trial dates within the inter-club and schedule inter-club meetings.
2. Monitoring the quality of trials held within the inter-club and communicating the evaluations to the field trial chairmen and presidents of the clubs.
3. Scheduling water tests within the inter-club.
4. Scheduling seminars for field trial chairmen, gunners, and judges within the inter-club and making certain the appropriate individuals are available to teach and to attend these seminars.

5. Attend the start-up trials of any new club within the inter-club to determine if their activities meet with the standards of the parent club and to support this club in any way possible.
6. Dispersal of necessary ESSFTA materials to Club Presidents with necessary follow-up.

### **FIELD TRIAL CHECK LIST**

#### **A. Field Trial Chairman**

Assign duties as listed below:

1. Head committees
2. Encourage participation.
3. Purchase judges plane tickets.
4. Control the trial.
5. Make decisions at the trial.
6. Speak at banquet.

#### **B. Field Trial Secretary**

1. Contact AKC for approval (four months prior).
2. Order bird bands.
3. Do other necessary AKC paper work. (Judges Affidavit as well.)
4. Contact State for permit.
5. Prepare, maintain, update and mail premium list.
6. Purchase trophies and ribbons.
7. Prepare and mail running order and map to trial grounds.
8. Cover letter to all participants covering motel(s) available, food, etc.
9. Collect entry fees.
10. Mail paperwork to AKC after trial.
11. Mail marked catalog to all that request it (Nat'l Open & Am. Secretaries, etc.).
12. Refund entry fees, if needed.

#### **C. Gun Captain**

1. Secure qualified gunners for all three stakes.
2. Secure sufficient ammunition.
3. Have gunners assigned to their shooting time 24 hours before trial, *i.e.*, first shift to be at trial grounds 30 minutes before start up
4. Prior to trial brief all gunners on conduct and safety.
5. Make sure your gunners have food/drinks throughout the day.
6. Check gunning team and remind them of the new *Hunter Orange* requirement.

**D. Game Steward**

1. Locate and purchase the necessary birds.
2. Find alternate sources for birds, if necessary.
3. Gather crates.
4. Capture and band birds - bring to trial grounds.
5. Handle pickups and extra birds.
6. Assure enough crated birds are at each end of course.
7. Assure empty crates are at the end of each course for pickups & dead birds.
8. Assign and coordinate with Bird Planters.
9. Give planters *Hunter Orange* to wear.

**E. Bird Planter**

1. Line up bird planters.
2. Assign planting responsibilities.
3. Make sure bird baskets/sacks are at grounds.
4. Oversee all planting.
5. Coordinate with Game Steward.
6. Make sure your planters have food/drinks throughout the day.

**F. Bird Shagging**

1. Pickup dead birds and pickups at end of course.
2. Find bird cleaners and/or bird disposal, hanging racks.
3. Arrange for additional shaggers before the trial.

**G. Steward of the Beat**

1. Familiarize self with the grounds prior to trial.
2. Lay out the course one hour before trial, to insure proper wind conditions.
3. Bring flags to trial grounds.
4. Inform field trial committee about course layout.

**H. Amenities**

1. Secure 2-way radios.
2. Public relations with potential members.
3. Help when/where needed at the trial.
4. Arrange for Port-A-Potty.
5. Make sure signs are put up and taken down.
6. Arrange for headquarters motel.

**I. Field Marshall**

1. Start the trial each day.
2. Control gallery.
3. Announce dogs.
4. Keep flow of dogs constant.

5. Communicate with bird planters.
6. Communicate with base.
7. Make sure everyone in field is wearing orange.

**J. Judges Steward**

1. Find transportation to/from trial and airport.
2. Buy judges gifts.
3. See that judges are "comfortable"- bag of snacks, Chap Stick, Kleenex, Roloids, etc.

**K. Training Session**

1. Arrange for birds to be there.
2. Have flags on grounds.
3. Have gunners available.
4. Responsible for collecting payment of birds used by trainers.

**L. Catalog**

1. Solicit ads.
2. Make catalog layout.
3. Coordinate with Secretary for entry submission.
4. Deal with the printer.
5. Have catalogs printed.
6. Collect/mail bills for catalog ads.
7. Catalog MUST pay for itself.

**M. Cocktail Party/Banquet/Cook Shack**

1. Make all arrangements.

**N. Raffle**

1. Have raffle tickets available.
2. Decide what is going to be done (auction/calcutta).
3. Have "change" available.
4. Make money through raffle/fund raisers and not by raising entry fees.