

## **NAHRA Hunter Testing Category**

**Note:** The following excerpts have been taken from the 2009, North American Hunting Retriever Association, General Procedures, Regulations and Field Procedures and Judging Guidelines for NAHRA Hunting Retriever Field Tests. Please see the complete document for additional information.

### **Judging Guidelines – Hunter Category**

This level of testing was developed to bridge the gap between the Started and Intermediate categories. Because it is likely that this dog will soon accompany his owner on the hunt, it is also intended to produce a dog that can fulfill some of the basic needs of the hunter.

In many hunting situations, a dog that can remain quiet and steady, complete a basic double retrieve and trail and recover a crippled bird is a valuable conservation tool. Therefore, judges should focus their evaluation on this dog's ability to remain steady and under control sufficient to mark and complete an introductory doubles and not interfere with the hunt. The dog should show focus and memory sufficient to complete the retrieves in an efficient manner and deliver all birds to hand without delay.

It is the intent of the Hunter category to produce dogs with a strong obedience foundation in simulated hunting conditions and provide sound marking abilities in varying conditions. Judges should use varying cover types and terrain in constructing marks, not the complex concepts expected in Intermediate and Senior. These dogs will likely be tested for the first time without restraint so the obedience training they receive will play heavily into their ability to and focus and complete the retrieves.

This dog should enter and work any cover or obstacle presented. This dog should display a good nose in locating and recovering crippled game. They should perform all tasks with intent and purpose and show strong desire in doing it. These dogs, as determined by the judges, will be those that show great potential to move up in the program.

### **Scoring – Hunter Category**

The Hunter category has a possible 30 points in its 3 testing areas. The maximum score would be 30 points and a minimum of 24 points to qualify.

### **Points, Awards, Certificates and Titles – Hunter Category**

A dog receiving a Qualifying score in the Hunter testing category at a Licensed NAHRA Field Test will be credited with two and a half (2.5) points toward the title Hunting Retriever (HR). The title Hunting Retriever (HR) will be issued to the owner of a dog acquiring ten (10) points in the Hunter testing category at Licensed NAHRA Hunting Retriever Field Tests. In order to be recorded as a Hunting Retriever a dog must be an approved purebred breed registered with an approved breed registry. Upon completion of these requirements, a dog will be recorded as a

Hunting Retriever (HR) by the North American Hunting Retriever Association, Inc. and, where appropriate, may display the title Hunting Retriever or the initials HR before its name.

A dog that qualifies in four Licensed NAHRA Hunter Field Tests within a regionally determined qualifying year, will receive the Hunter Brass Band Award. A dog will be allowed to receive the Brass Band Award each and every year that it qualifies in four or more Licensed Field Tests at the respective level within a regionally determined qualifying year and will be eligible to participate in the NAHRA Regional Field Test program.

### **General Regulations – Hunter Category**

While on the test grounds, a handler may not possess any exposed training aid that might intimidate a dog (including, but not limited to whip, quirt, cane, prod or similar implements). No dog may wear a collar while under judgment. Dogs in the Hunter category may be brought to the line on lead but the handler must discard or conceal it before signaling ready. No dog may be permitted to make a retrieve wearing a collar, leash, line or similar device.

### **Field Test Regulations & Procedures– Hunter Category**

SECTION 1: The Hunter Level Field Test will consist of three (3) tests, which will include the following: a double marked land retrieve; a double marked water retrieve; and a trailing test.

(The purpose of the Hunter Field Test is to bridge the gap between the Started and Intermediate Retriever levels. This is the level of performance where teamwork becomes an increasingly important quality in the handler and their dog. At a level just below Intermediate, the expectation of this level is a retriever that can meet many of the basic needs of the hunter as well as stay within the NAHRA concept of a conservation tool.)

SECTION 2: A dog will be steady at the point of origin (see subparagraph c of this Section. For marks, the point of origin is the point at which the dog is located at the time the first bird becomes visible.)

- a. A dog may be brought to the point of origin on lead but must be off lead before signaling ready. (How the dog is brought to the line is at the discretion of the handler. Judges may not require otherwise.)
- b. Moderate commands will be allowed to steady a dog at the point of origin.
- c. A dog will not be touched or patted at the point of origin.
- d. A controlled break will not fail a dog, but it must be considered a fault. (As soon as the dog leaves the point of origin and manifests the intent to make the retrieve without being so ordered, it must be stopped. If a dog is immediately brought under control, it will be considered a minor infraction. Repeated evidence of this fault may be considered serious and, in the opinion of the judges, an eliminating factor.)

SECTION 3: A dog will deliver all birds to hand. (The dog will return to the handler without delay.)

SECTION 4: A dog may be handled on marked retrieves with voice/whistle/hand signals, if, in the opinion of the handler, the dog cannot find or has missed the mark. (The dog is being tested for its marking ability and memory, not handling; however, a crisp cast is preferable to a long hunt. Repeated evidence of lack of memory, marking ability or lack of control may be grounds for elimination.)

SECTION 5: A dog may be cast from the point of origin only once. (If the attempt is unsuccessful, the judges must fail the dog unless, in the judge's opinion, the dog exhibits confusion at the point of origin, the judges may allow a recast. After a second unsuccessful attempt, the judges must fail the dog. See Chapter II, Section 17 for "no-goes.")

SECTION 6: The handler may be required to handle (but not carry) an empty shotgun with both hands on the firearm and in the firing position.

SECTION 7: Tests for this event will be held in appropriate cover on land and water.

- a. Maximum test distance on land for double marked retrieves will not exceed 75 yards.
- b. Maximum test distance on water double marked retrieves will not exceed 50 yards.
- c. Minimum degree of separation for double marks will be no less than 45 degrees.

(At this level, it is our intent to test the dog's ability to perform introductory multiple marks. Concepts that require a higher level of training such as "in line" or "wipe out" birds are prohibited. The intent of subparagraph c is to keep the presentation of marks at the introductory level and prevent the use of complex concepts reducing the number of skill concepts required to meet the standard.)

SECTION 8: Tests for this event will consist of double marked retrieves on both land and water.

- a. Both birds must be down before the dog is released to retrieve.
- b. Triple marks will not be used.
- c. Dogs will not be required to honor another dog.
- d. Simultaneous falls of birds will not be used.
- e. Judges cannot determine the order and sequence ("selection") of the retrieves.
- f. Dogs will not be placed at a point of origin at a distance from the handler.
- g. The trailing test will not be used off of marks.

SECTION 9: No diversions of any kind will be utilized. (Again, it is the intent of this level to test the introductory multiple marking skills of retrievers. More diverse hunting situations will be added at the higher levels of testing. The amount of control that a handler possesses at this level is a step below the Intermediate.)

SECTION 10: Walkups to simulate jump shooting will not be used at this level. (Because the dogs may be brought to line on lead, this test is not appropriate.)

SECTION 11: Blind retrieves will not be used in this event. (This is the largest difference between the Hunter and the Intermediate levels. The standard at the Hunter Level is by design lower than the expectation of the Intermediate dog. The intent is to reduce the total number of skills a dog must master before reaching the Intermediate Level.)

SECTION 12: No upland hunting test will be used at this level.

SECTION 13: A trailing test will be used.

- a. The dog will be required to trail, locate a bird and deliver it to hand.
- b. The dog will be scored on its natural ability and the use of its nose to locate and follow the trail.
- c. It does not matter in what manner the dog follows the trail. The dog may stay precisely on the trail with nose down, or close quarter back and forth across the trail with head up, or run a few yards downwind of the trail with his head held high. It is the intent of this test to have a dog indicate scent, follow the trail and locate the bird in a natural hunting manner.
- d. A dog may be urged to hunt by moderate voice or whistle commands.
- e. Judges may restrict entry of the handlers into the area of the trail.
- f. Hand signals are inappropriate and may not be used other than to put the dog onto the beginning of the trail.
- g. Dogs must be required to trail a minimum distance of 30 yards and will not exceed 50 yards. (Judges are urged to create a trail that simulates a realistic scenario and not to simply go through the motions with a straight-line drag.)