

Best Practices for Field Trial and Hunting Test Event Clubs

Edited with comments from March 2024 Delegate Meeting

Different breeds will have different needs. Once finalized, this document will be organized so that general information will be identified, as well as breed-specific areas e.g., Gun Dogs, Hounds, Beagles, etc.

Mission Statement:

The AKC Field Trial and Hunting Test Committee is actively involved in sharing BEST PRACTICES and suggestions which we feel are useful to our clubs and their participants, and in finding ways to make our clubs attuned to the needs of our participants and their dogs to preserve the working skills of those breeds. Although we encompass the talents of many and varied breeds, our best practices suggestions are meant to be fine-tuned to meet the individual needs of the Sporting, Hound and Beagle breeds.

The content of this document is intended to help put on successful events; it is not to be construed as a rules/regulations book. This document is a living document. It will be reviewed periodically and updated as needed.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

SECTION [ONE](#): RULES AND REGULATIONS
SECTION [TWO](#): SAFETY
SECTION [THREE](#): GUN SAFETY
SECTION [FOUR](#): HOSPITALITY – MEALS, SNACKS, ETC.
SECTION [FIVE](#): RECEPTION/SOCIABILITY
SECTION [SIX](#): INCREASING EVENT PARTICIPATION
SECTION [SEVEN](#): GROWING CLUB MEMBERSHIP
SECTION [EIGHT](#): LEGISLATIVE
SECTION [NINE](#): INSURANCE
SECTION [TEN](#): SUPPLIES AND GROUNDS
SECTION [ELEVEN](#): RESOURCES
SECTION [TWELVE](#): FINANCES
SECTION [THIRTEEN](#): MISCONDUCT

SECTION 1

RULES AND REGULATIONS

- Know when and where ATVs are allowed versus horses.
- Here are links to the Rules and Regulations books on the AKC website:
Basset Hound Field Trial Rules: <https://images.akc.org/pdf/rulebooks/RFT403.pdf>
Beagle Field Trial Rules:
https://images.akc.org/pdf/rulebooks/AKC1306_RF2404_0518_WEB.pdf
Dachshund Field Trial Rules: <https://images.akc.org/pdf/rulebooks/RFT408.pdf>
Coonhound Field Trial and Nite Hunt Regulations:
<https://images.akc.org/pdf/rulebooks/RE9ACH.pdf>
Retriever Field Trial Rules: <https://images.akc.org/pdf/RFTRET.pdf>
Retriever Hunting Test Regulations:
https://images.akc.org/pdf/rulebooks/AKC1295_RHTRET_0518_WEB.pdf
Pointing Breeds Field Trial Rules: <https://images.akc.org/pdf/rulebooks/RFTPNT.pdf>
Pointing Breeds Hunting Test Regulations: <https://images.akc.org/pdf/rulebooks/RHTPNT.pdf>
Pointing Breed Procedure Manual: <https://images.akc.org/pdf/rulebooks/RHPPNT.pdf>
Spaniel Field Trial Rules: <https://images.akc.org/pdf/rulebooks/RFTSPN.pdf>
Spaniel Hunting Test Rules: <https://images.akc.org/pdf/rulebooks/RHTSPN.pdf>

SECTION 2

SAFETY

- AKC requires that a Safety Officer be appointed to develop a valid disaster plan for every event. Do not assume that there is a plan in place if another club is co-hosting. Copies of the disaster and safety plan should go to all Committee Chairs and should be posted at the event. Here is the link to the requirements and fillable form: <http://images.akc.org/pdf/JEDTR1.pdf>
- A first aid kit must be available at all events. Items in the kit should include human, canine and equine, if applicable. If possible, plan for injuries, as well as things like insect bites/stings, snakes, etc.
- See if an AED can be made available. If not, make sure someone onsite knows CPR.
- See if an EMT can be onsite.
- Dialing 911 may not be the most expeditious way to summon medical help. Before the event, determine if a call directly to the local fire/ambulance/EMT number will improve response time.
- Know the exact location of the grounds.
- The Chair should go over the course with the judges. Things to consider – time constraints (sunrise, sunset, number of braces, weather, grounds idiosyncrasies, handlers with special needs, etc.)
- Determine if it is appropriate to advertise the event to the general public.
- In light of the current environment in the country, make sure that a disaster plan includes evacuation from buildings and open grounds. Make sure the committee knows how to evacuate.
- The AKC website has links about what to do if there is an active shooter. Committee members should review. <https://www.akc.org/sports/active-shooter-mass-attack-resources/>
- The use of walkie-talkies is encouraged for field events; cell phones may not get reception in rural areas.
- Be aware of extreme weather conditions (heat or cold) that could affect the well-being of the dogs.
- Have directions to the nearest veterinary clinic available.
- Have every exhibitor provide a contact in case of emergency.

SECTION 3 GUN SAFETY

- Post that live ammo will be used on the grounds.
- Make sure exhibitors and gallery are wearing the appropriate color. Different types of breed trials may require different colors e.g. orange for Pointing breeds, camo/dark colors for Retrievers, etc. State hunting regulations should be consulted to determine the clothing and color required when live ammunition is used.
- “Fake” guns are always safer in braces where a real gun is not required.
- Demonstrate to exhibitors and attendees the inherent dangers of both popper and blank guns.
- At the beginning of each brace, judges should check shotguns, blank guns and tracking collars.
- Make certain that shotguns are not loaded until needed.
- Have a pre-trial safety talk with the gunners. Secretary should ascertain that all gunners are current on the AKC Gunner Video. Here is a link to the video:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z7MsulFtp8c>
- Prepare and conduct a safety talk for all exhibitors that is brief yet thorough enough to convey all important safety info.
- Some states may require anyone carrying a gun to have a license, even on a preserve. Check state regulations with plenty of lead time to get people licensed.

SECTION 4 HOSPITALITY – MEALS, SNACKS, ETC.

- A Hospitality Chair or Manager is very helpful.
- What is needed in terms of paper products, food, cookware? Take inventory at the end of each event.
- Produce a checklist of everything needed to serve.
- Try to be mindful of special diets, if possible, e.g. vegan, gluten free, etc.
- Make sure judges and volunteers are fed. They may be on a different schedule than the exhibitors.
- Sometimes food, water, coffee, etc. will need to be brought to workers in the field if they cannot get back to camp to eat.
- A campfire can be a welcome addition in cold weather. An easy way to have a safe fire is to use a metal barrel.

SECTION 5 RECEPTION/SOCIABILITY

- A club member or members should be designated to be the greeter or “welcome” to club events. That person could be responsible for making sure that participants sign in or let the Chair or Secretary know that they have arrived. That person or persons could also answer questions that may come up. Act as a concierge. Newcomers need to feel welcome.
- Another best practices idea for Field Trials and Hunt Tests might be to investigate having a "stakes manager" at larger events. The Chair and Secretary are always busy with other things, but a stakes manager could handle other details such as line marshaling, changes in running order, delays, announcements, feeding workers, etc.
- Discussion on suggestions to welcoming in new members, attendees, observers to the events. Such as having some extra vests to walk the folks around.
- Post a sign about what attendees might see at the event. Include who to contact with questions.
- Follow up with any new exhibitors or people who came to watch and learn.
- After-event BBQs and bonfires are always popular.
- Post directional signs to the event – the public may not be able to find the venue.
- There may need to be a sign prohibiting photography.
- Make sure there are enough helpers so that no one is overwhelmed.

SECTION 6

INCREASING EVENT PARTICIPATION

- Invite dogs that are qualified to the event.
- Retriever and Beagle Trials are walking events; Pointing Breed Trials can be horseback or walking. Walking Trials may be easier for the public to see.
- Personal engagement is key: starting the conversation one-on-one; inviting a puppy owner, new member, even a longtime member to volunteer for a bite-sized task and mentoring them through all the elements of the event. Buddying up with a new participant at a fun/practice day or event may help improve confidence about field events.
- Event-hosting clubs may want to reach out to Parent Clubs Junior liaisons with information and an invitation to participate.
- Ask people to help – from your club and others. Most people, if asked, will volunteer.
- Set up a buddy or mentor program for first-time or hesitant volunteers.
- Trade club-member judges with other clubs.
- Expand fun days to include other local clubs.
- Some clubs do double/double hunt tests and then encourage puppies to run Sunday afternoon for fun or run a Walking Puppy Stake. (Note: running a walking stake after a double/double may require an extra day.)
- Invite new people to a Hunt Test and do a walk-through to show them how it works.
- Have rulebooks available for people to take.
- Upon completion of a new title, provide a New Title ribbon/rosette, pin or other commemorative item for those completing a title at the event to acknowledge their success.
- Give Junior Handlers some type of ribbon for participating, whether or not they qualified.
- Have a whiteboard at headquarters with qualifying dogs and their owners noted.
- Handlers/exhibitors with disabilities can be accommodated. <https://www.akc.org/expert-advice/sports/disability-accommodation-akc-dog-sports-apply/>. These requests are administered by the Sports & Events Department.
- ADA Compliance Checklist <https://images.akc.org/pdf/2018/ADA-compliance-checklist-032018.pdf>
- Retriever Clubs may elect to hold an Owner-Handler Qualifying Stake at an AKC Hunt Test to offer an additional venue for participants.

SECTION 7

GROWING CLUB MEMBERSHIP

- Hold a non-sanctioned event that introduces the public to Field Events, for example, Field Fun Days or Charity Events.
- Encourage clubs to have a booth at other AKC events or at events like Pheasants Forever or Ducks Unlimited.
- Showcase what the dogs love to do. Allow people to see what their dogs could do.
- Give a token for completion of a title that is only available to members – special ribbon, pin, etc.
- Hold Peewee events. Old ribbons and rosettes can be re-purposed for this.
- Look at larger, “fancier” rosettes. The Fast CAT® rosettes are quite dramatic, and exhibitors love them.
- Produce a flyer with information regarding the club. Make that flyer available at all events and on your website. A QR code can be created for easy download by participants.
- Keep your club website active and current.
- Hand out club membership applications.
- Attend a Sports Show, Pheasants Forever, etc. on behalf of your club.

SECTION 8

LEGISLATIVE

- Clubs need a Legislative Liaison to track changes in laws in the area in which an event will be held. The Legislative Liaison needs to report issues to the membership and to AKC Government Relations.

- Consider inviting local legislators and dignitaries to build rapport.

SECTION 9

INSURANCE

- Some states/grounds require additional coverage at specific events. Some require an additionally named insured.
- Check the language needed in the certificate. Many states and municipalities have very specific language that must be used.
- Most brokers will increase coverage for a few days, if needed, for little to no charge.

SECTION 10

SUPPLIES AND GROUNDS

- How many ribbons or rosettes are needed?
- Take inventory at the end of every event.
- Pens, stationery, clipboards for judges.
- Grounds may need to be secured months in advance. Some grounds will need additional state or regional permits. Plan ahead!
- Know where alternative grounds are in the area in case your proposed grounds become unusable.
- If you use birds, develop a relationship with a bird supplier.
- Determine proper field etiquette regarding disposal of game.
- Have a good sense of how owners of private property adjacent to your event view the event and be prepared in advance to resolve any problems that may arise.
- Invite neighboring landowners to the event.

SECTION 11

RESOURCES

- Develop a list of:
 - Trainers
 - Training fields
 - Where people can go to practice
 - State Wildlife Management Areas
 - Game preserves
 - Provide to judges and exhibitors a current list of acceptable tracking collars. Make this available at a location where everyone may view it.
- Check with other breed clubs for potential volunteers.

SECTION 12

FINANCES

- Take advantage of AKC sponsorships and partnerships e.g., Purina and Tractor Supply.
- Be aware that costs will increase over time – birds, bird food, ammunition, etc. Entry fees may need to increase accordingly. For example, if birds use per dog increased by \$6, entries could be increased by \$6.

SECTION 13

MISCONDUCT

- The Event-Giving Committee at every event must be familiar with rules about holding a misconduct hearing and handling protests. They should be well versed in how to hold an Event Committee Hearing and how to follow the procedures correctly by adhering to checklist to the letter.
- It is the responsibility of the Event-Giving Committee to hold a Bench Committee Hearing when appropriate. If a complaint is filed, the club must address it.
- Here is a link to AKC resources for dealing with misconduct: <https://www.akc.org/expert-advice/advice/identifying-and-addressing-misconduct/>