

NAVHDA Monthly Judge & Apprentice Update

June 2019

Natural Ability: I am choosing to print three excerpts from an email I received from a NAVHDA Senior Judge.

“Two different people asked my why, in the NA field work does a pup have to chase a bird to get a good score. Both people said a judge told them their scores were lowered because their dogs did not chase a bird.”

“Last weekend I judged a test and two other women told me they were told by NAVHDA Judges that they should NOT work on steadiness with their pups before the NA Test because Judges want to see the pups chase birds.”

“As NAVHDA Judges it is our responsibility to communicate instructions to each NA participant correctly and eliminate the misunderstanding that judges need to see dogs chase birds.”

In the Judges Handbook revised 12/16 under Natural Ability Test: Pointing it states, “During the first unimpeded bird contact (point), the handler should be instructed to try and flush the bird. This allows the judging team to observe the dog’s behavior during and after the flush of the bird. Chasing a flushed bird will not affect the pointing score if an intense, convincing, unmistakable productive point was established prior to the chase. We are not judging steadiness. On subsequently pointed birds the judging team may choose to instruct the handler to try and hold or collar their dog to prevent a chase.”

The Handbook statement does not say judges need to see a chase! A NAVHDA judging team should be able to evaluate the overall search and desire of a NA pup even if it is steady. Judges certainly evaluate search and desire at the UPT/UT/IT levels, hopefully without a chase. Many young dogs approaching their 16 month birthday have hunted wild birds and in training have received some steadiness work on birds. The idea behind an attempt at an unimpeded flush is to observe the dog’s behavior. Is the dog steady, or almost? Does the dog run away from the moving bird, cower, or chase? If the dog catches and returns the bird to the handler a positive note should be made under cooperation. Together the judging team should decide how, after the first pointed bird, the handler is instructed to handle their dog on subsequently pointed birds.

Leashes

Once again I am quoting from the Judges Handbook 12/16, Sportsmanship on page 7.

“This includes but is not limited to personal behavior or allowing the use of training aids during the testing events including multiple collars, food rewards, **slip leads**, neoprene vests and simulations of e-collars.”

Judges Handbook 12/16 Utility Test: Walking at Heel page 21

“The handler should not be allowed to carry or wear a training device to intimidate the dog. This would include a flushing whip on the belt or carrying a hat in their hand. The only things carried are the shotgun provided and the dog’s lead, if used.”

The rules do not specify you must use a Jaeger leash, a leather leash, or a homemade rope leash with a snap buckle. The rules indicate NO slip leads whether it is a Delmar Smith Wonder Lead or a homemade rope slip lead. The homemade lead may not be stiff similar to the Wonder lead. It must be loose to allow for a visible bend in the loose lead.

The rules do not prohibit a homemade rope leash with a metal/snap buckle. Nowhere in the Aims or Judges Handbook or Judges Workshop Notes can I find a statement that a handler cannot remove the leash from their dog and then fasten the leash around his or her waist after. I have received two complaints that handlers were instructed to either remove the leash from their waist or to remove the Jaeger lead from over their shoulder and place it inside their hunting vest.

Please keep in mind that these monthly updates are to try and improve the consistency of NAVHDA judging across the country.

ALCOHOL

I would like to remind all Judges and Apprentices that **NO** alcohol is to be consumed until ALL NAVHDA judging duties and responsibilities are completed for the day. To me this includes at a minimum four activities: 1) judging all dogs during the day, 2) the consensus meeting at the end of the judging day to review scores and complete the scorecards, 3) the reading of the scores publicly and answering all handler questions and 4) the completion of the apprentice and chapter evaluation paperwork.

Remember as a NAVHDA Judge or Apprentice your behavior at a NAVHDA event is always being observed by many people.

A Note from Our Sponsor: Ugly Dog Hunting

Terry Wilson asked that Senior Judges please announce that the Garmin discount coupons are redeemable **ONLY** at Garmin. Hopefully this announcement will help to eliminate phone calls to Ugly Dog Hunting trying to redeem Garmin discount coupons with Ugly Dog Hunting.

Thank you.

Chip Bonde

Director of Judge Development