

## July 2022 Judges Email Blast

We can all agree that with the explosion in new members and chapters we are going to need more judges, especially in the West. We understand that skyrocketing travel costs may be a barrier, for some, to enter the Apprentice program. The Judging & Testing Committee has recommended, and the Executive council has approved the following changes for those individuals in the Apprentice Judge program. These changes are also provided to incentivize those individuals who may be considering entering the Apprentice program.

- a. To enter the Apprentice program the prospective Apprentice must attend an Aims & Rules Clinic. Once the prospective Apprentice is approved to enter the Apprentice program, if desired, a refund for his or her clinic fee may be submitted. Approved Apprentice applicants as well as current Apprentices may submit a voucher for refund to the central office. Vouchers can be found on the NAVHDA website under Forms Express / Testing Forms / Judges:
- b. Current guidelines require apprentices to apprentice out of area twice. To reduce travel costs, the out of area requirement has been modified to require just one out of area test. Additionally, for Apprentices approved as NAVHDA judges at the 2023 annual meeting, and beyond, a \$500 refund, if requested, will be authorized to help defer travel costs incurred during apprenticeship. As in the Aims and Rules clinic fees, a voucher may be submitted to the central office.
- c. **Judges:**  
As noted in paragraph 1, NAVHDA continues to grow. Chapters, in some cases, are having difficulty obtaining judges for their tests. **When you get an invitation to judge PLEASE respond within two to three days.** If you cannot provide an answer in this time frame, it is expected you will notify the inviting chapter and let them know when you will be able to respond.  
Additionally, please communicate with your chapter leadership and encourage them to request judges as early as possible. Some judges are already receiving requests to judge in 2023.

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The Aggressive Dog Policy has been revised. Please read and know the policy stated below:

### Aggressive Dog Policy – Revised 6/28/2022 – Final

An aggressive dog is defined as, but is not limited to, a dog that has, without provocation, bitten, attempted to bite, attacked, or attempted to attack a person or another dog. Aggressiveness is not manifested by a dog that growls, pulls away or gets fearful and snippy due to not wanting to have teeth or coat checked. This dog is reactive, not aggressive.

Cases of aggression at any NAVHDA International or Chapter event, including but not limited to tests, local training days, Aims & Rules clinics, or social events, should be reported to the Director of Testing and the Director of Judge Development within 72 hours. Letters describing the aggressive incident should be submitted by the individual(s) who witnessed the event. The owner or handler should also submit a statement describing the incident. Pictures/videos may be submitted along with these statements.

The following action will be taken if, during a test, the judging team witnesses an actual display of aggression, which they reasonably believe meets the foregoing criteria: Judges will have the dog immediately removed from the test grounds. Further, the dog will not be allowed to return to the test later to finish the test, and no prize will be awarded. “Aggressive” should be noted in the

Comments section of the scorecard. Letters describing the aggressive incident shall be submitted by each member of the judging team witnessing the aggressive behavior. The owner/handler will also submit a letter regarding the incident within 72 hours. These letters are to be submitted to the Director of Testing and the Director of Judge Development.

All submitted materials will be reviewed by NAVHDA's Judging and Testing Committee, who will then make recommendations to the Executive Council as to whether the relevant dog should be designated as aggressive.

The Executive Council of NAVHDA will vote to accept, reject, or suggest any revisions to the wording of the Judging and Testing Committee's recommendation. Dogs determined to be aggressive will not be permitted to participate in any future NAVHDA events and will have "Aggressive" noted on the dog's pedigree.

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From the Field: Questions from handlers and Judges recently brought to the attention of the Judging & Testing Committee.

- a. **Question:** Upon completing a Retrieve of Shot Bird sequence, is a UPT, UT or INV handler allowed to place the shot and retrieved bird in his or her hunting vest, or game bag, and continue the test with the bird(s) stowed in such garment? In the simplest terms, the question describes a normal hunting scenario where the hunter has shot game, the dog has retrieved the shot game, and the hunter places the shot game in storage on his or her person and continues hunting.

**Answer:** Yes. All UPT, UT or INV handlers have the option to place shot birds in his or her vest or game bag. As judges you always have the right to inspect birds if you suspect mutilation of game. You also have the right to limit this behavior if it appears to be used somehow to influence the behavior of the dog.

- b. **Question:** When walking at heel what or how many corrections, (such as a tight lead or missed gate) are allowed before the dog is penalized? For example, if a gate is missed;  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the length of the dog is ahead of handler; there is a foot stomp or foot shuffling (i.e., the handler is obviously not moving at a normal pace); or the handler knees the dog's side to make a correction.

**Answer:** This is a practical test of the handler's ability to approach a body of water intending to jump shoot ducks. The highest score should be given to the dog and handler that can accomplish the task with minimal or no commands. Excessive pulling on the lead, foot stomping, an abnormal pace or missed gates may be penalized depending on the frequency and severity.

*Note the comment on the walk at heel from the Judges Handbook: "The intent of this test is not to be judged as an elimination test. Is the dog being obedient to the handler? The dog that leads the handler down the path is not at heel no matter what the slack in the lead may be.*

*Notice the wording in the rules book, "EXCESSIVE pulling of the lead by the dog or handler will lower the score." A point deduction for each tightening of the lead is not what this says. The Judges must decide the degree of the infraction."*

- c. **Question:** During steadiness by blind, how much barking and how much bouncing of the front feet are we allowing before penalizing the dog?

**Answer:** The Aims & Rules states that the highest ratings will be awarded when both dog and handler are silent, and the dog remains by the blind until commanded to retrieve. Judges must decide what is excessive and score accordingly. If barking or bouncing is excessive enough in the judges' opinion to flair approaching ducks in a hunting situation, then that should be reflected in the score.

- d. **Question:** On the retrieve by drag if the dog damages the duck to the point where it may be unfit for the table but brings it correctly back to the handler should we call it mutilation and “0” out the dog in retrieve by drag, but say nothing in the comments? Or should the dog receive a “0” in cooperation and score the retrieving work separately?

**Answer:** A dog that mutilates game to the point of rendering it unfit for the table will receive an overall non-qualifying score of “0” in cooperation. In the comments section of the scorecard judges should write “mutilated game”. **Since cooperation is part of the retrieve by drag score, the drag score will also have to be reduced.**

- e. **Question:** Should the judging team debrief and complete the evaluations of apprentices together (i.e. at the same time) at the end of the day?

**Answer:** No, never. Apprentice debriefs should always be done with the judging team and one Apprentice at a time.

- f. **Question:** In past years all three judges helped in releasing the pheasant and watching the track the bird made. Once this track was satisfactory, the handler was called and shown the track start and direction.

In recent years, this procedure has been altered by some judging teams. The altered procedure has the handling judge staying with the handler and giving a crash course on how to release the dog and get a good start on the track. When called, this judge and the handler proceed to the start of the track. Upon arrival one of the two judges who released the pheasant provides details on the start and direction of the track. This procedure leaves the handling judge at a disadvantage in not knowing where the track went, determining when or if the dog crosses the track, and, when, if necessary, to move a handler up.

To maintain consistency, it is recommended that all judging teams' approach the pheasant track in the manner first described above (i.e., all judges are present at release of the pheasant). With this procedure in place, it is recommended that an announcement at the beginning of the track sequence in the test be made to the effect that: “If you are not sure how to release your dog on the track ask the field marshal or a chapter designated individual for instruction.” Judges should not conduct a crash course on releasing the pheasant while the bird is being released.

**Answer:** The Judging & Testing Committee unanimously agreed all three judges should be present when the pheasant is released to observe the path of the bird. Conversations with NA handlers regarding how to release a dog on the track may be held after opening remarks, at lunch or another

convenient time. It should also be noted that at some point prior to pheasant tracking all handlers should be asked if they would like their dog to see “a bird” prior to the track. (**Note:** *Most dogs are not aided by smelling the bird before the start of the track. This added visual stimulus often causes unneeded excitement and detracts from the concentration necessary to complete the track. Each handler should be asked if he or she wishes the dog to see a bird prior to the track. Conversely, when instructions on how to release the dog on the track are given, the option of showing the dog the bird may be offered. If the handler opts to have the dog shown the bird, this should be a Field Marshall responsibility.*)

- g. **Question:** The judge’s handbook states that moving the dog up one time after the pheasant track starts is ok and the dog can still receive 4?

**Answer:** The Judges Handbook does not say this. The handbook states: “If a dog must be called for a restart for any reason other than gross handler error or problems not of the dog’s making (e.g., tracks are laid too close to each other), usually the highest score that can be earned is a 3. Normally only one restart is allowed. A restart is defined as placing hands on the dog or moving the handler forward from the release point. If the handler is moved up a second or third time, adjust the tracking score accordingly”. Again, judges must evaluate the total performance on the track and render a score accordingly.

- h. **Question:** Scenario: The dog points, then takes out the bird; the bird flies 25-30 yards, the dog follows and catches the bird, then retrieves to hand. This issue has been previously discussed in a Judges workshop. Notes from the 2019 Judges workshop state: *Score the retrieve whether it was shot or not. Note on the back of your scorecard if shot or not. If, at the end of the run, there are no shot birds, be sure to plant a bird to be shot. You may have to hold the dog based on its steadiness performance. Retrieve of at least one shot bird is necessary to fulfill the requirements of the test.*

**Answer:** The verbiage noted above from the 2019 Judges Workshop is correct and answers the question described in the scenario.

- i. **Question:** After establishing a point that initially meets the ICUP criteria then creeps, cat walks, dances, or circles wanting to look at the bird **prior to being aware of human presence**, is it appropriate to reduce the pointing score?

**Answer:** Yes, the pointing score should reflect the severity of the infraction.

- j. **Question:** Similar to the foregoing situation, If the dog establishes a convincing point and, **prior to being aware of human presence**, sees the bird standing in short cover and walking around, then breaks and flushes the bird but stops as the bird takes flight and remains in place, should a shot be fired? If the dog stays steady until the handler gets to the dog and releases it, how should pointing be judged?

**Answer:** The pointing score should be reduced as should the steady to flush score. Since the dog stopped, it may be given credit for steady to wing.

Regarding firing a shot in this or similar scenario's, the Judges Email Blast from June of 2021 states the following: *“At the Judges Workshop (January 2021) we also discussed whether there should be a shot in the air for a wild flush, bumped bird or stop to flush situation. The Judging & Testing Committee discussed this at length and decided that at this time there would be no rule change and a shot is not required on a wild flush, bumped bird or stop to flush. The EC has also concurred. We looked at this from purely a safety factor. Some chapters have very experienced, well-seasoned gunners, and some do not. We determined that this may put too much pressure on a gunner which could result in a safety issue. There are, however, certain circumstances that the judging team may request a gunner to shoot a bird in a wild flush, bumped or stop to flush situation so they can judge retrieve of shot bird. These instances are rare and at the discretion of the judging team and should only be administered with a great deal of caution and safety.”*

- k. **Question:** If a UPT, UT, or INV dog establishes a convincing point and prior to the dog being aware of human presence, the bird flushes **on its own** and the dog chases the bird, the dog should be penalized in steadiness to wing. The dog should not be penalized in steady to flush (since the bird flushed on its own) or pointing if the point was convincing and intense. (**Note: We always state that pointing judgement ends when the dog is aware of human presence, but I also think we need to state that pointing judgement can also end when the bird flushes...either on its own or if the dog takes the bird out.**)

**Answer:** Yes, this is exactly correct.

- l. **Question:** Several NA handlers have asked to carry a gun in the field stating that it doesn't say you can't.

**Answer:** No, NA handlers are not required to swing on the bird and no birds are shot for NA dogs. Therefore, this could be considered a training aid and NA handlers are not permitted to carry any type of firearm.

- m. **Question:** Commanding a dog to lay down at the Invitational honor by the blind sequence. Aims doesn't mention it, Invy FAQ's state this is not permissible.

**Answer:** At the honor by the blind at the Invitational dogs are permitted to stand or sit, they are NOT permitted to lay down.

- m. **Question:** Many times, in the past month I have seen an "in heat" female at a Test. At each of these tests a male dog needed to be brought back for "use of bird at water" or to "re-run a track". Typically, this occurs after all other dogs have run. At each test the "in heat" female was last in the running order. To my knowledge there is not a rule or protocol written covering this scenario. Should all dogs complete their task prior to the "in heat" female? This could give the female the benefit of bird scent on the water. Adversely the "in heat" scent could distract the male from the task at hand.

**Answer:** Females in heat should always be run last.

- n. **Question:** What is the protocol if there is a "Mixed Test" of NA, UPT or UT and (1) or more females at each level are "in heat"? Should Test Secretaries not be allowed to mix "in heat" test levels for a Test?

**Answer:** Test secretaries rarely if ever know when a dog in heat will be entered in a test. Additionally, many handlers do not know whether their dog is in heat or may not know when the heat cycle began or ended. Judges need to deal with these situations adhering to procedures that, in their judgement, will least affect the [dog's](#) performance in the test. Generally, the guideline that a female in heat will be run last should be followed.