

# January, 2023 Judges Email Blast

## Judges Workshops

As a reminder, all Judges are required to attend ONE Judges Workshop annually. If you did not attend the workshop facilitated at the Annual Meeting in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, there will be two virtual workshop opportunities in March. Everyone has received two emails to pre-register. Workshops will last no more than 90 minutes.

## Change in UT Walking at Heel Test Criteria

At the 2023 Annual Meeting in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, the Executive Council (EC), in consultation with the Judging & Testing Committee (JT) decided that we will no longer be using any type of stakes or gates for Utility Test (UT) heeling.

The rationale for this change was based on the fact that heeling stakes or gates do not simulate an actual hunting situation. In addition, heeling stakes are inconsistent from chapter to chapter and are not used at any other level of NAVHDA testing.

This change is effective now for the upcoming 2023 testing season. Please communicate this to your fellow chapter members. The new UT Walking at Heel criteria is below.

## New UT Walking at Heel Criteria

This is a test of practical obedience. It is useful when hunting and also in situations not related to hunting. It must be remembered that in many “one dog” families, the versatile hunting dog is also a household companion. Any good hunting dog should be able to follow its master at heel, on or off lead.

For the test, the dog is to be walked at heel from a designated starting point, on or off lead, for approximately 50 yards to a position by a blind set up on the shore. Heeling begins when the dog has crossed the designated starting point or the first verbal or non-verbal command is given. Heeling ends when the dog and handler reach the blind. The heeling course should contain a bend preferably around some natural object. In the UT test, the use of a chain, choke collar or any type of slip lead is not allowed and is therefore not allowed during the walk at heel.

Excessive pulling of the lead by dog or handler will lower the score. Voice or other commands given by the handler as he or she proceeds along the path may lower the score. The handler will carry an unloaded break open shotgun. The dog that walks beside the handler, off lead or on a loose lead, and requires no commands receives the highest score.