North American Versatile Hunting Dog Association™

NAVHDA

NORTH AMERICAN VERSATILE HUNTING DOG ASSOCIATION

AIMS

PROGRAMS

TEST RULES

NAVHDA™

AIMS PROGRAMS TEST RULES

A publication of the North American Versatile Hunting Dog Association

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Foreword

The specific and primary purposes for which this corporation is formed are:

1. To educate all interested persons in the techniques of training versatile hunting dogs, to conduct tests of versatile hunting dog breeds in North America and maintain records of such tests for all interested persons, and to promote selective breeding and population control of versatile hunting dog breeds.

2. To prevent cruelty to animals using properly trained hunting dogs.

3. No substantial part of the activities of this corporation shall consist of carrying on propaganda or otherwise attempting to influence legislation, and the corporation shall not intervene in any political campaign.

4. The corporation shall not discriminate based on race, color, creed, national origin, sex, religion, or any legally proscribed classification in its programs, activities, or employment practices.

The primary purpose of this booklet is to provide a reference guide for owners, handlers, and Judges of versatile hunting dogs in preparing for and participating in North American Versatile Hunting Dog Association tests. Of particular interest in this respect are the discussions of test standards which constitute the basis for evaluating dog performance. This booklet also provides guidelines for local Chapters of NAVHDA in developing plans and selecting locations appropriate for NAVHDA tests and other activities.

This booklet also covers the aims, philosophies, and programs of the North American Versatile Hunting Dog Association. It includes a brief introduction to the various versatile breeds and a summary of the history of the versatile hunting dog.

Finally, as a salute to the very best hunting companions, this booklet is dedicated to versatile hunting dogs everywhere. May they all enjoy many successful days afield with good masters.

~ The Editors

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Introduction

Who We Are

The North American Versatile Hunting Dog Association (NAVHDA) is a nonprofit corporation whose purpose is to foster, promote, and improve the versatile hunting dog breeds in North America, to conserve game by using well trained, reliable hunting dogs before and after the shot, and to aid in the prevention of cruelty to animals by discouraging nonselective and uncontrolled breeding, which produces unwanted and uncared for dogs.

Underlying these aims is the desire to serve the interests of game conservation and prevention of cruelty to animals by helping the hunter to train his or her dog to work before and after the shot, on land and in water.

NAVHDA is an excellent complement to the activities of sporting dog breed clubs and field trial organizations. It was created to supplement the activities of those clubs by providing a proven, standard method of evaluating the performance of all versatile hunting dogs, consistent with North American hunting practices, regardless of breed.

Experience as a hunter, while not essential, is highly desirable and will aid in understanding many of the rules and guidelines discussed here. When hunting experience is lacking, help in training from hunting members of a local NAVHDA chapter may be highly beneficial.

It is not the intent of NAVHDA to dilute or replace any other system of evaluating the performance of hunting dogs, nor does NAVHDA desire to interfere in any way with the prerogatives and activities of any breed club. Rather, NAVHDA is meant to supplement the activities of the several versatile breed clubs by providing a proven, standard method of evaluating the performance of all versatile hunting dogs, regardless of breed.

How We Are Organized

NAVHDA is organized on two levels.

The first level, NAVHDA International, operates under bylaws approved by its membership. These bylaws provide for officers elected by popular vote who, together with appointed directors, constitute an Executive Council charged with furnishing direction and guidance to NAVHDA programs.

The second level, NAVHDA's local Chapters, serves as the organization's grassroots network. These Chapters sponsor and conduct training and testing programs. Sanctioned Chapters operate throughout the United States and Canada.

The Versatile Breeds

There are several breeds of versatile dogs common in continental Europe, and with four exceptions, all were developed during the last decades of the 19th century. The four exceptions are much older breeds that provided a base for some of the others. These are the Weimaraner, the Vizsla, the Brittany, and its German cousin, the Small Munsterlander. The tracking hound, pointer and waterpudel were the basic breeding stocks most widely used to develop the short and wirehaired groups. The longhaired group evolved from the Small Munsterlander and flat-coated retriever.

Although sanctioned tests for versatile hunting dogs represent the backbone of the NAVHDA program, other complementary and supporting activities are conducted. These include training clinics, Aims and Rules Clinics, Judge and Apprentice programs, workshops, supporting committees, a monthly magazine, a robust Youth Program, strong links with partners in conservations and legislative alliances to protect the rights of hunters and preservation of game and their environments.

Currently NAVHDA recognizes and maintains studbooks for the following breeds:

BP	Blue Picardy Spaniel	IR	Irish Red & White Setter
BI	Bracco Italiano	IS	Irish Setter
BA	Braque D'Auvergne	LM	Large Munsterlander
BB	Braque Du Bourbonnais	PB	Perdiguero de Burgos
BF	Braque Français	PS	Picardy Spaniel
BG	Braque St. Germain	PT	Pointer
BS	Brittany	PO	Portuguese Pointer
CF	Cesky Fousek	PP	Pudelpointer
DP	Drentsche Patrijshond	SH	Slovakian Wirehaired Pointer
ES	English Setter	SM	Small Munsterlander
EB	Epagneul Breton	SP	Spinone
EP	Epagneul De Pont-Audemer	SB	Stabyhoun
ED	Epagneul De Saint-Usuge	ST	Stichelhaar
FS	French Spaniel	VI	Vizsla
GL	German Longhaired Pointer	WM	Weimaraner
GS	German Shorthaired Pointer	GR	Wirehaired Pointing Griffon
GW	German Wirehaired Pointer	WV	Wirehaired Vizsla
GO	Gordon Setter		

Evaluation and Test Records

Valid, meaningful tests for versatile hunting dogs must be conducted in an environment that reflects actual hunting conditions, and they must test the important qualities of a good versatile dog. Judges must be knowledgeable, consistent and objective, and all testing and evaluation should reflect the extent to which dogs are productive hunting companions. NAVHDA tests have been designed with these requirements in mind. In addition, our database provides an accurate, searchable, and complete performance evaluation on each dog tested.

In order to eliminate direct competition between dogs, entrants in a NAVHDA test are judged individually against a performance standard scored by three judges. The only exception to this is the Invitational Test, in which dogs are braced in the field so each dog can demonstrate its willingness to back and work effectively with another dog. Prizes are awarded based on numerical scores achieved in the test. Each dog that meets or exceeds minimum standards in all areas of work is placed in one of three categories: Prize I, II or III. If all dogs entered in a NAVHDA test meet those standards, all can receive a prize. The Invitational Test is a pass or fail test with those dogs who pass earning the title Versatile Champion.

NAVHDA maintains a record of test scores for all NAVHDA tested dogs. This information is valuable for selective breeding and to assist in puppy selection. Detailed reports on individual dogs, sires and dams are available to members or interested persons on the NAVHDA Website.

The NAVHDA Registry

The NAVHDA Registry is home to the largest searchable database of versatile hunting dogs in North America. Each dog registered with NAVHDA receives a certificate including a three-generation pedigree showing test results, available hip certification, and DNA information. Members can search for registered dogs' pedigrees as well as the test results for individual dogs, sires and dams, and their progeny. Test results are also available by protected kennel name or by breeder name.

NAVHDA recognizes the following Registries: American Kennel Club, Canadian Kennel Club, Field Dog Stud Book, and the Federation of Cynologique Internationale. Pedigrees from other countries and versatile breed club stud books are considered on a case-by-case basis.

NAVHDA promotes selective canine breeding and canine population control by making test results and various educational reports available to the public.

NAVHDA's pedigree is a NAVHDA performance and lineage document. The NAVHDA pedigree is the only document that provides the NAVHDA test results of the ancestors of a litter along with hip evaluations and DNA certification, when provided.

NAVHDA strongly promotes DNA testing and hip certification for all dogs.

A record of protected kennel names for NAVHDA members is also maintained by the Registrar.

Youth Programs

NAVHDA encourages family participation in our organization. To that end, these educational and testing opportunities for youth (under 19 years old) are offered.

Kristin Rieser Youth Aims & Rules Clinic Program: reimburses the fees for young members' participation in an Aims & Rules clinic, allowing youth members to expand their knowledge of dog training and the NAVHDA testing system.

NAVHDA Youth Testing Incentive Program: encourages young members to participate in NAVHDA testing through partial reimbursement of their test entry fees.

NAVHDA Youth Events Program: financially supports the efforts of NAVHDA members, Chapters, the Youth Development Committee, and the Executive Council in developing the next generation of dog enthusiasts, hunters, and NAVHDA members. Our goal is to foster a lifelong love of the outdoors, as well as the values NAVHDA represents.

1 The Versatile Hunting Dog

1.1 Definitions

Within the NAVHDA philosophy, the description *versatile hunting dog* is a generic term applied to a dog that is bred and trained to dependably hunt and point game, to retrieve on both land and water, and to track wounded game in both environments.

The versatile breeds we know today are products of Europe. No distinctive breed of versatile dog has been developed in North America. For this reason, breeds exhibiting versatile hunting characteristics are sometimes loosely referred to as the *Continental Breeds*.

1.2 Early History

In feudal times, hunting was the exclusive privilege of wealthy landowners. They held a monopoly on hunting for centuries and created a very cultivated sport, complete with strict dictates and customs. Their reputations and wealth demanded the very highest standards in everything associated with the hunt.

Each type of game called for different dogs developed for that particular game. Large kennels were maintained with large staffs to handle and train the dogs. Many specialized hunting breeds still used today owe their existence to these practices and times.

The Industrial Revolution changed all of this. New classes evolved in society. A greatly elevated standard of living created interest in many pursuits which before were restricted to the landed gentry. Hunting was one such pursuit.

Intense interest and the pressure of new wealth gave rise to new hunting laws which made the sport available to a much broader element of the populace. Most of these new hunters came from the middle classes - doctors, lawyers, judges, teachers, and all varieties of merchants and businessmen. They lived in cities and towns and had neither the space nor the time to maintain large kennels of specialized hunting dogs. The pointer, among others, had been recognized for over 400 years as a superb hunting dog, but during most of this period had been used as a pure field specialist. These dogs were superior field specialists, but they were difficult to train and handle for anything but field work.

As hunting increased in popularity in the latter half of the 19th century, the need for a dog with more versatile characteristics became increasingly apparent. Using the existing breeds of hunting dogs, dedicated individuals set out to produce the various versatile breeds. Most of the breeds were produced at approximately the same time in history. There were some differences in physical characteristics, but the hunting characteristics were closely allied.

What were the breeders trying to develop? They wanted breeds that would handle a variety

of game, both feather and fur, before and after the shot. A dog had to possess a keen nose and strong pointing instinct, a lively temperament, eagerness to retrieve from both land and water, stamina, and a durable coat and hide that would not hamper work in cold water and heavy brush. The dogs also had to be intelligent, relatively easy to train, and have a character compatible with protecting and living in or at their masters' dwellings.

Many breeders kept good records of their programs, but others did not. Pedigrees, as we know them, were unheard of in those days. Practical breeding experience, patience, and finally, a better understanding of genetic laws, established pure breeds.

These pioneering efforts have paid off handsomely for the European hunter. Standards are high and the dogs perform superbly in their native lands. The reason for this is quite evident. In Europe, versatile breeds receive support from enthusiastic clubs dedicated to the improvement of the breeds. True versatile tests cover every aspect of the dog's ability, and only dogs with proven ability are used in breeding programs.

1.3 The Versatile Breeds in North America

No significant influx of versatile breeds occurred in North America until well into the 20th century. Some breeds did not arrive until after World War II. The situation facing these new arrivals was less than favorable. On a continent where hunters were traditionally wed to the concept of the "specialist," or one-purpose dog, there were few people with the knowledge, insight, and understanding necessary to place the versatile dog in proper perspective and thus make full use of the dog's inherent potential.

Prior to the formation of NAVHDA in 1969, there were few strong versatile gun dog clubs. Tests tailored for versatile breeds were rare. If the owner of a versatile dog wanted to evaluate the level of hunt training for the dog, the choice of venues was limited to specialist trials with rules that were often less than compatible for hunting with a versatile dog. There was no standard rule book for judging versatile hunting dogs, and little or no written materials available on training and handling these fine gun dogs.

The examples of dedication and hard work set by NAVHDA members during the formative years continue to be followed. As a result, since 1969, a substantial number of *proven* versatile gun dogs have been developed, and the number is growing at a healthy rate. However, much work remains to be done in the fields of public understanding and continued improvement of the versatile breeds in North America.

1.4 The Versatile Hunting Dog in Perspective

Fundamental to any program to improve the versatile breeds is the requirement to put into perspective the role played by the versatile dogs in the North American hunting scene.

The versatile dog was not developed to replace or improve upon any other hunting breed. Rather, it was developed to provide the foot hunter with a dog that will serve as a dependable hunting companion in the pursuit of a variety of game in a variety of environments.

Constructive dialogue between hunting dog enthusiasts, regardless of personal preferences, is healthy. However, we must not lose sight of the fact that versatile hunting dogs as a group are bred and trained for essentially different purposes than those comprising the several groups of "specialty" hunting dogs. It follows that systems of evaluating performance will differ between groups, with the proponents of each group using a system deemed best suited for determining the ability of dogs within that group to perform the tasks for which they were bred and trained.

Many NAVHDA members successfully compete in a variety of competitions or specialty trials for which their dogs are eligible. The opportunity to develop the versatile dog's abilities in a variety of venues helps to increase the handler's knowledge as well as to increase public awareness of the ability and adaptability of the continental breeds. However, comparisons between the performance of one school of hunting dogs against the rules and standards of another are generally not productive, and it is the NAVHDA position that such comparison should be discouraged.

1.5 Improving the Versatile Breeds

"Breed the best to the best" is a time-honored and proven axiom among animal breeders. In the case of the North American versatile hunting dog, comprehensive tests that truly consider versatility in the field and water are the foundation upon which we must build. Only dogs of proven ability should be used in breeding programs. To facilitate this principle, all sires and dams must have DNA submitted through NAVHDA prior to registering a litter.

The buyer's role is to cooperate by seeing to it that their dogs, from puppyhood to finished hunting dog, are exposed, prepared, trained, and tested for versatility as they develop. The optimal way to continue to improve the versatile breeds is to test every dog in every litter. It is only through this commitment of cooperation and shared responsibility that the versatile breeds can continue to improve.

Adhering to this standard will help expose unscrupulous and irresponsible breeders who place other considerations ahead of improving the breeds. As advocates of NAVHDA's purpose, our tests, with the permanent record they provide, are important tools for serious breeders and owners.

2 Introduction to NAVHDA Tests

2.1 Test Criteria

To be truly meaningful, tests for versatile hunting dogs must meet certain criteria. They must be conducted in an environment that reflects actual hunting conditions and situations. They must test all the characteristics required of a good versatile dog. It is extremely important that we maintain consistency in all tests and that our judging is also consistent. Judges must be knowledgeable and objective. Accurate and complete records of test performance must be kept on each dog tested. All testing and evaluations are to be conducted within the context of judging dogs as useful, productive hunting companions. NAVHDA tests have been designed with these requirements in mind. NAVHDA may choose at some point in the future to modify or change test standards. In addition, new levels of testing may be introduced.

2.2 General Comments to Handlers

NAVHDA tests are not training sessions and should never be viewed as such. A person who enters a NAVHDA test does so with the understanding that his or her dog will be judged by a group of trained and experienced Judges who will evaluate the dog's performance on that day and time, based on NAVHDA test standards, without bias or favoritism. NAVHDA Judges are volunteers who do not get compensated for their time. With that said, neither test scores nor judgement of physical attributes will be changed at any point after a test for any reason. The Judging Teams will give each handler ample opportunity after the reading of the scores to discuss his or her dog's performance. After questions have been asked and answered to the best of the Judges' ability, further discussion will not be entertained.

2.3 NAVHDA Code of Conduct

The North American Versatile Hunting Dog Association is committed to fostering a culture of exemplary sportsmanship and developing and maintaining a safe and healthy environment for activities aligned with its mission. These activities include but are not limited to training, testing, breeding, and judging versatile hunting dogs as well as interacting with chapters and their members. We firmly believe that the opportunity to participate in NAVHDA related events is a privilege, which is accompanied by the responsibility to act with dignity, integrity, and respect at all times.

All NAVHDA members, including handlers, owners, breeders, Judges, volunteers, and spectators, are expected to observe and support civility, ethical conduct, maturity, and integrity in their interactions with all participants. These same, high standards of behavior

apply not only to members' interactions with people but with all animals including dogs and game. Flagrant and substantiated violations of this Code of Conduct may result in termination of membership as described in Section 2.09 of the NAVHDA Bylaws.
Furthermore, it is expected that all persons involved in conducting, participating in, or observing a NAVHDA test will adhere to accepted principles of good sportsmanship. This includes individual conduct and behavior.

The administration of cruel and unnecessary punishment to a dog during or after the test will be grounds to disqualify the handler from further handling of the dog during that NAVHDA test. The dog may be permitted to complete the test with a different handler. The decision to remove a handler from a test for unsportsmanlike conduct, or cruelty to a dog, will be at the sole discretion of the Judging Team on site and cannot be appealed. No test refund will be granted.

Everyone at a test, including the Judging Team, is a volunteer. Good sportsmanship dictates that handlers should thank the Chapter and the Judges for their time. A handshake and a "thank you for judging my dog" goes a long way, and it is the right thing to do, regardless of one's scores.

2.4 Social Media

NAVHDA recognizes that the internet provides unique opportunities to participate in interactive discussions and to share information on topics using a wide variety of social media platforms, including but not limited to, Facebook, LinkedIn, X, Instagram, Pinterest, Tumblr, YouTube, blogs, podcasts, and wikis. However, the use of social media by paid employees or volunteer representatives of NAVHDA, including elected officials, directors, Judges, and other representatives of NAVHDA (collectively "Representatives"), can pose risks to NAVHDA's confidential and proprietary information, reputation, and brands, may expose the organization to discrimination and harassment claims, and can jeopardize NAVHDA's compliance with business rules and laws. The complete NAVHDA social media policy can be found on the Website under the *Judging* section. Judges and Apprentice Judges must read, understand and follow this policy.

2.5 Judges and Judging

Since the establishment of the Association, the most important factor in determining the success of NAVHDA tests is the quality of judging. Therefore, it is essential that judging always be uniform, objective, and in accordance with NAVHDA rules. Only the Judges have the ability, the power, and the opportunity to maintain standardized testing of versatile hunting dogs. Judging is a special privilege and responsibility. The conduct of Judges must show consideration for the handler and always exemplify exceptional field manners.

Additionally, the reputation and the public image of NAVHDA are, in large part, reflected by our judging and the performance of individual Judges. NAVHDA Judges serve without pay or honorariums but are reimbursed for all expenses.

The length of time available to a Judge to observe an individual dog during a test is relatively limited and only a thoroughly competent Judge can assimilate all the many facets of the dog's performance and express a fair and accurate opinion. For these reasons, NAVHDA exercises great care in the training and selection of its Judges. They are selected from among experienced hunters who possess character and integrity and have also trained and handled versatile hunting dogs.

Apprentice Requirements:
A person desiring to become an approved NAVHDA Apprentice Judge must:

Be at least 18 years old

Meet the requirements for becoming an Apprentice Judge in accordance with the current policy

Make application to the Director of Judge Development to become an approved Apprentice

Hunting experience, the number of dogs trained and handled, Chapter level participation and being a volunteer, along with recommendations from NAVHDA Chapter Executives or Judges, are some of the factors considered to be accepted as a NAVHDA Apprentice Judge. Apprentice Judge applicants must also have attended an Aims and Rules clinic and have qualified (passed or prized) a dog in the Invitational or Utility Test within 3 years of the date of application. Once accepted the Apprentice is evaluated on understanding of NAVHDA rules and procedures each time he or she apprentices. Details on the requirements to become a NAVHDA Judge can be found on the NAVHDA Website in the *Judging* section.

Judges are individuals who demonstrate a high level of personal commitment and engagement with NAVHDA. Judges are often the public face of NAVHDA and therefore their personal conduct, sportsmanship, professionalism and integrity are regarded as essential characteristics. The specific criteria and professional standards mandated for Judges can be found on the Website under the *Judging* section.

In a further effort to achieve fairness and objectivity, NAVHDA requires that each sanctioned test be judged by three Judges. At least one of the three Judges must be from outside the sponsoring Chapter or club. NAVHDA realizes that careless or biased judging would not only be unfair to the dogs but would also undermine our mission to foster,

improve, promote, and protect the versatile hunting dog breeds.

A Judge may be assigned to accompany, direct, and advise each handler throughout the test. This Judge will provide instructions at the beginning of the test and remain with the handler as much as possible while the dog is working. The Judge may offer some advice during the test. However, it is entirely up to the handler to decide whether or not to act on the advice.

At least one of the three Judges is required to be a Senior Judge. The Senior Judge is an individual who has been approved after completing the Senior Judge training program. Designation of Senior Judges is made by the NAVHDA Executive Council and is based on the number of dogs judged, the years of experience judging, the individual's Chapter participation and understanding of NAVHDA test setup and execution. Additional criteria considered are the individual's organizational skills, time management, and ability in coaching apprentices. NAVHDA Senior Judge scores count no more or less than their fellow Judges. However, the Senior Judge takes on the leadership responsibility for the judging group over the course of a test. Senior Judges work collaboratively with their fellow Judges and local Chapter volunteers to run a smooth and efficient test. The Senior Judge will normally begin the test by describing the course of events and answering questions from handlers. He or she is also responsible for ensuring the test is conducted in accordance with NAVHDA rules and guidelines. Whenever possible the Senior Judge should have the opportunity to inspect the test grounds, the birds, and general organization to ensure all specified test criteria are met. In completing this responsibility, the Senior Judge has the

A Prospective Judge must:

Successfully complete the Apprentice Judge Program.

Successfully train and pass a dog he or she owns in a NAVHDA Utility Test with a minimum Prize III score, or train and handle a dog he or she owns in the Invitational Test within a three-year window of submitting his or her application for approval.

Apply to the Director of Judge Development in accordance with current policy.

Be recommended by the Judging and Testing Committee and approved by the Executive Council.

A Judge is required to:

Handle and pass a dog he or she has trained in a sanctioned NAVHDA Natural Ability, Gun Dog, Utility or Invitational Test within a four-year period beginning in the year of his or her appointment as a NAVHDA Judge.

Handle and pass a dog he or she has trained in a sanctioned NAVHDA Utility or Invitational Test within an eight-year period beginning in the year of his or her original appointment as a NAVHDA Judge.

Attend a NAVHDA Judges Workshop once per year.

The Judging and Testing Committees review all NAVHDA Judges annually, and qualified persons are reappointed by the Executive Council for the following year.

authority to adjust the grounds, the test set up, and/or the test schedule as necessary.

If a judge has accepted a test assignment and is unable to fulfill that commitment for any reason, the judge must contact the Director of Judge Development, the Director of Testing, and the host chapter to inform them that they are unable to judge and why. Additionally, the judge must work with the chapter to find a replacement judge.

In the case of a last-minute illness or emergency, permission from the Director of Judge Development or the Director of Testing may be given to allow the test to be conducted with two Judges. This permission is normally given only when all possible means of finding a replacement have been exhausted. In extreme cases, where adverse conditions exist which cannot be corrected, the Judging Team may cancel the test.

Judges and Apprentice Judges are not allowed to test dogs on the day they are judging. A Judge may not judge a dog that he or she or any member of his or her family owns or in which they have any ownership interest. In addition, a Judge may not judge a dog handled by any member of his or her family ("member of the family" is defined as, but is not limited to, spouse, domestic partner, member of the same household, sibling, parent, grandparent, or child, whether natural or adopted, but shall not extend to other blood or legal relationships).

Spouses and domestic partners may not judge together on the same Judging Team. However, Apprentice Judges who are spouses, domestic partners, or family members may apprentice together with the prior written consent of the Apprentice Judge Program Manager.

Apprentice Judges work in the field under the tutelage and supervision of the test's Judges and specifically the Senior Judge. The scores of Apprentice Judges are not considered in determining the official scores of dogs being tested. They are, however, used to evaluate the Apprentice Judge's understanding of NAVHDA rules and guidelines and the accuracy of his or her observations of the dog's performance. This system is used to increase the Apprentice's experience and knowledge. At the end of the test all Judges contribute to an evaluation of the Apprentice Judge's performance which is submitted in writing to the Director of Judge Development. All rules and restrictions that apply to NAVHDA Judges also apply to Apprentice Judges.

2.6 Judge Performance Standards

Performance standards have been established to ensure NAVHDA Judges are able to maintain a consistent level of judging throughout all tests. Expectations related to Judges' performance, including their leadership ability, knowledge of rules, exemplary conduct, loyalty to the NAVHDA guidelines and principles, continued education, and annual performance assessment, are described in the Judge Performance Standards. Judge compliance with these standards is mandatory. Details on these Performance Standards may be found on the Website under the *Judging* section.

2.7 Types of Tests

NAVHDA conducts four levels of tests. The Natural Ability (NA) Test is designed to evaluate young dogs on their inherited natural abilities and their possible future value as competent versatile gun dogs (see NA Chapter 4). The Gun Dog Test (GDT) is designed to evaluate a dog's ability as a useful versatile gun dog (see GDT Chapter 6). The Utility Test (UT) is a more advanced test designated for more experienced dogs and evaluates their ability to perform as reliable versatile gun dogs in a variety of hunting situations, both on land and in the water (see UT Chapter 7). The Invitational Test (IT) is the flagship of NAVHDA tests. Only those exceptional dogs that have demonstrated superior skill and obedience in Utility Tests are eligible to participate (see IT Chapter 8).

2.8 Eligibility

All dogs must be registered with NAVHDA to participate in a NAVHDA test, and all owners and handlers (if different from the owner) must be members of NAVHDA International. NAVHDA tests are open to eligible dogs when the tests appear on the *NAVHDA Test Calendar* posted on the Website.

Dogs are eligible to run in a Natural Ability Test until, and including, the day they turn 16 months of age. Dogs over 16 months may be run for evaluation only if space is available, and no prize classification will be awarded.

There are no age restrictions on dogs entered in the Gun Dog Test, Utility Test or Invitational Test. Only invited dogs are eligible to participate in the Invitational Test. No restrictions are placed on the number of times a dog may be tested, provided eligibility requirements are met. Dogs that pass the Invitational Test and receive the Versatile Champion title are not permitted to run at the Invitational again, however, Versatile Champions are permitted to test at the GDT or UT level.

Dogs running in the Invitational Test must have their DNA information on file or applied for, through NAVHDA, prior to the closing date of the test entry. The primary owner of each entry must be a NAVHDA International member.

Females "in season" may be run in all NAVHDA tests. For the NA, GDT, and UT, these dogs will run last at each phase of testing. Females "in season" running the Invitational will run on the last day of testing.

More details and links to register for a test are found on the Website under *Testing*.

2.9 Scoring System

Throughout this booklet, the word "test" is used instead of the word "trial." The reason for this is that under the NAVHDA system, each dog's performance is measured against a definitive standard rather than against the performance of other dogs being tested. All NAVHDA tests are scored on a point-index system. Each task that the dog must perform and each category on which it is scored during the test is allotted a fixed index number which indicates its relative importance. The dog's performance in each part of the test is given a performance score based on a scale of 0 (Failure) to 4 (Excellent).

The fixed index number is multiplied by the performance score to arrive at the score attained in that part of the test. For example, the fixed index number assigned to the search phase is 5. Assume that the Judges' consensus for this phase of the test awards the dog a performance score of 3 on the zero to 4 scale. The dog's total score for the search phase is 15. 3 (Performance Score) x 5 (Index) = 15.

The sum of the scores and achieving the minimal acceptable score required in each part of the test determines whether the dog is awarded a classification of Prize I, Prize II, Prize III, or No Prize. Every dog entered in a test is permitted to complete the entire test, even though it might have failed at some point during the test. Under no circumstances will a dog be awarded a prize different than that justified on the score card. This scoring system is illustrated in detail for each test in the corresponding chapter in this manual.

A Judge may record the test results on NAVHDA pedigrees presented at the conclusion of a test. The detailed score of each dog tested is made a matter of permanent record. These records are available on the NAVHDA Website. Detailed test information is available by breed, sire, dam, and progeny. NAVHDA encourages breeders and buyers to use this service when considering breeding or purchasing a dog.

2.10 Prize Classifications and Awards

In NAVHDA, the words "prize" or "pass" do not relate to placement as in a race or competition. Dogs compete against an established standard rather than each other. Prizes are awarded based on numerical scores achieved in the test. Each dog that meets or exceeds minimum standards is placed in one of three categories, i.e., Prize I, II, or III, with Prize I being the highest. Several dogs being tested at the same time might be awarded the same prize classification. Each dog qualifying for a prize is eligible for a simple, standardized plaque engraved with essential information, such as name, date, specific test, etc. A pin commemorating the test and prize is also available. The only thing that distinguishes a Prize I plaque from a Prize III plaque is the score and prize classification inscribed thereon. The pins are a different color for each level of testing and the prize achieved. Any other award or trophy, including cash awards, is specifically forbidden. The handler will also receive a parchment style printout of the test and score information. Dogs achieving a

passing score in the NAVHDA Invitational Test are awarded the title of "Versatile Champion."

It is very important to understand that there is **NO** appeal process for handlers that dispute the scores on any test. Nor is there an appeal process for how physical attributes, gun shyness, or temperament were judged. Scores will only be changed if there is a mathematical error. By entering a NAVHDA test, handlers should be fully aware that they will be judged by people who in many cases do not know them or their dog. The dog is judged on its performance on that day at that time, based on NAVHDA standards and testing criteria.

2.11 Publication of Test Results

Somewhat unique in dog tests or trials is the NAVHDA practice of announcing scores. It is our belief that an owner, who shows the necessary interest and is willing to spend the time and money involved in testing a dog, has the right to know how the dog was scored in each facet of the test and why. Therefore, NAVHDA stipulates that at the end of each testing day, the Judging Team will publicly read the detailed scores of each dog tested. Additionally, after the scores have been read, the Judging Team will be available to discuss the scores awarded and answer questions to assist the owner in further development of the dog. The owner will also be sent a copy of the official score sheet from NAVHDA.

2.12 Safety

While live ammunition is being used, all persons must wear one or a combination of the following blaze orange garments: hat, vest, shirt, or jacket always in accordance with State/Provincial regulations.

Ultimately, the Judging Team is responsible for ensuring everyone's safety. In case of noncompliance or risks to safety, they have the authority to suspend all test activities until safety is restored. Field marshals will also ensure that the gallery remains at a safe distance in a position away from the line of fire.

Up to two spectators may follow the dog in the field at all NAVHDA tests, as long as the Judging Team and handler agree. Spectators are never permitted to coach the handler in any way. If the Judging Team believes the spectators are posing a safety risk, or their presence is negatively affecting the dog's performance, they have the authority to have them leave the field.

Loose and unattended dogs are prohibited. When not under judgment, all dogs must always be under control either in a kennel or on lead.

All handlers are expected to be aware of their dog's physical condition and act appropriately. Judges have the right and responsibility to ensure the safety and fair treatment of all dogs during a test. If the Judges determine that a dog is deemed ill, injured, overheated or overstressed, to the point that continuing in the test may harm the dog, the dog will not be allowed to continue the test. Additionally, the score card will reflect whether the handler removed the dog or whether the Judges made the decision that the dog could not or should not continue the test. Judges will also ensure there are means (tubs, creek, pond, etc.) to cool off dogs, readily available for the field phase of all tests.

2.13 Handling of firearms

Hinged frame (break-open) shotguns of conventional gauge will be used in NAVHDA tests. All guns will be carried in the open position until just before the shot. Autoloaders and pump action guns are strictly forbidden, whether loaded with blank ammunition or not.

When blank ammunition is called for, it must be 12-gauge, professional factory manufactured, smokeless powder blank ammunition, or field trial poppers. Factory "primed poppers", which consist of only an empty hull and a primer, are not permitted.

Handlers are required to carry a shotgun during the GDT, UT, and Invitational Test. Handlers are not allowed to carry shotguns during the NA test. At no time should a handler or gunner place a shotgun on the ground. Handlers must hold the shotgun for all field retrieve sequences. If necessary, to water the dog in the field, a Judge may be asked to hold the gun only while the handler waters their dog. For water retrieves, handlers must hold the gun until the dog is sent for the retrieve. Once the dog has been sent, the handler may hand the gun to a judge. Handlers are not permitted at any time to have live ammunition on their person while testing. Handlers may be allowed to carry their own unloaded break-open shotguns in NAVHDA tests. Some Chapters have policies mandating the use of guns provided by the Chapter. If a Chapter has that policy, handlers must abide by it.

2.14 Gunners

Gunners should be properly sanctioned by the Chapter for safety and accuracy. Except for Natural ability, gunners must be at least 18 years of age, possess a valid hunting license, have the physical ability to keep up with the dog and handler, should have trained and handled a dog at the Utility level, and be a NAVHDA member in good standing. A gunner for the Natural Ability Test may be under the age of 18 if accompanied by an adult and should have completed the state, local, or provincial hunter safety course, and should possess a valid hunting license. The gunner may be a family member, but if at any time the Judging Team believes any gunner is interfering or affecting the dog's performance in any way, they have the authority to request a change of gunner. The Senior Judge will brief each gunner prior to the test to review the safety rules and requirements. If at any time a

gunner exhibits unsafe behavior; they will be asked to leave the field immediately.

For the GDT and UT, the gunners will carry their guns in the open position until just before the shot. They will position themselves one to either side and just behind the handler with a reasonable distance between gunners. When the dog points, the gunners will move up on a general line: -*gunner-handler-gunner*- and ready their guns for firing. No shots will be fired parallel to or behind the line: -*gunner-handler-gunner*. In other words, the gunner on the right confines his or her shots to the Right Safe Sector and the one on the left to the Left Safe Sector. Shots at birds that flush and fly behind the above-mentioned line or unsafe area will not be attempted. Gunners must also be alert to the dangerous combination of a low flying bird and a dog that has broken and is chasing. In the Utility Test, if the bird cannot be shot, Judges may instruct a gunner to fire in the air to simulate shooting the bird. In the GDT and UT, only pointed birds will be shot; gunners are not permitted to shoot wild flushed birds or bumped birds. Bumped or wild flushed birds may be shot at the Invitational Test at the Judges' discretion.

2.15 Handling of Game Birds

The testing of versatile hunting dogs requires the use of pen raised game birds throughout all levels of NAVHDA's testing program. Local Chapters are held to the highest standards in the ethical treatment and care of all game. All game birds are expected to replicate, as nearly as possible, those in the wild and always receive proper care to ensure they are fresh and healthy.

For the Gun Dog and Utility Tests, if quail are used, one or more pheasants or Chukar must also be used for each dog. It is acceptable to use all Chukars or all pheasants in either test.

When returning from the field, gunners are expected to see that retrieved birds are properly cared for and not left in view of the gallery. Birds should be cleaned and processed for consumption whenever possible. Chapters are evaluated on the quality of game birds they supply for their tests, both dead and alive. Dead birds required for the GDT, UT and Invitational Test should be dispatched early on the morning of each test day and kept cool and dry throughout the day. Dead birds cannot be used for more than one day of testing and at no time will previously frozen birds be used. In parts of the test where a duck is used for a retrieve, the ducks should be marked or numbered so that the dog will be handling the same duck in each retrieving test.

2.16 Training Aids

The use of training aids at any NAVHDA test is strictly prohibited for all dogs entered in the test. Additionally, training aids may not be used during a test to "rehearse" or practice

for test evaluations. Training aids include, but are not limited to, pinch collars, choke collars, slip leads, slip collars, "wonder" leads, dog vests of any type, multiple collars, tight collars, oversize collars and dog goggles. Electronic devices of any kind are not allowed on the dog or handler, including electronic whistles.

The use of any type of treat or food to reward or influence a dog while under judgment is prohibited in all NAVHDA tests. Violation of this prohibition will reduce the dog's desire score and may result in disqualification of the handler for the remainder of the test.

A bell may be worn on the collar. However, if the judging team determines the bell to be interfering or influencing the dog's performance, then the handler will be asked to remove it from the dog. Dogs are permitted to wear one primary collar only but may be permitted to also wear a flea collar.

If a dog has sustained an injury but the handler elects to run the dog in a test and the injury requires a protective bandage or appliance, a veterinarian's certification regarding the injury and use of the bandage or appliance is required. The final determination to accept a dog in a test with such a bandage or appliance will be at the discretion of the Judging Team.

2.17 Aggressive Dogs

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.

Although the current number of cases is extremely low, NAVHDA wants to ensure that awareness and processes are in place to manage this unwanted type of behavior. Therefore, handlers, trainers, and Chapters are encouraged to include socialization exercises in their training programs as a means of prevention. This reduces the risk of developing any unwanted behavior as well as identifying any potential issues, which are easier to correct early on in the life of a dog.

Cases of aggression at any NAVHDA International or Chapter event, include but are not limited to tests, local training days, Aims & Rules clinics, or social events, and 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.

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 be required to 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.

3 Common Areas of Evaluation

3.1 Application

The areas of evaluation discussed in this chapter are common to all NAVHDA tests and are discussed here as a group. These areas are not discussed again in Chapter 4, *The Natural Ability Test*; Chapter 6, *The Gun Dog Test*; Chapter 7, *The Utility Test;* and Chapter 8, *The Invitational Test*, as that would be repetitive.

Application of these standards during a specific test varies only in terms of degree. For example, it is not expected that a young dog in a Natural Ability Test will display the same finesse and workmanship expected of an older, more experienced dog in a Utility Test. The basic principles, however, apply generally across the board. Where significant exceptions are made, they are noted.

These common areas of evaluation and their related performance standards should be approached with the knowledge that each area relates in some way to each of the others. For this reason, no one area can be considered in isolation while evaluating a dog's performance. For instance, what use is a good nose if the dog is totally independent and uncooperative? What sort of search can one expect of a dog lacking in desire?

3.2 Use of Nose

The quality of a dog's nose, more than any other single factor, determines its usefulness as a versatile hunting dog and for this reason is assigned a higher fixed index number (6) than any other factor in the NAVHDA evaluation system. However, quality of nose is not sufficient by itself. As the dog develops, it must learn to use its nose if maximum effectiveness is to be achieved. In general terms, the use of nose is evaluated based on three factors which are discussed below. These are: Productivity; Distance from detected game; and Accuracy of location.

Productivity: A dog that finds game rapidly and repeatedly, under various conditions, has a good nose. Conversely, a dog that must search for a long time to find game where the game is present may have a poor nose. Short checks of scent spots where game has been without pointing indicates a good nose as well as the ability to discriminate between scents. Consistent nonproductive points, i.e., assuming the pointing stance without producing game, is an indication that the dog may have only a fair nose and may be grounds for lowering the nose score. Judges should be careful to note "hot spots" (places where several birds may have previously been planted) and should try to determine if birds are running or leaving the area where planted. A dog that will quickly locate a shot bird in high cover, particularly where the fall was obscured from the dog's vision, certainly has a good nose.

Distance: A dog will sometimes scent game at a great distance and, while checking the scent, will move up on the game as if being pulled to the spot by an invisible string attached to the nose. The relative distance from the time the scent is first detected to the time where the game is found can indicate the quality of the nose.
Accuracy: The dog's nose has two nares (or nostrils) and research has shown that each nare samples air from a different "reach" (1cm). This contributes to a dog's ability to determine direction when scent is detected. When a dog indicates scent, as in a track in the field, the accuracy in the location of the source is a key indication of the quality of the dog's nose. Because of this, the alert observer can see the dog immediately acknowledge the scent and direction of the track.

Other Considerations: A dog is said to "bump" a bird when it runs into it and causes the bird to flush without giving any indication of awareness of the bird's presence. This is more apt to happen when the dog is running with the wind and under these conditions it is not considered a fault. To bump a bird while working into the wind without showing any awareness that game is present is a strong indication of a poor nose. Weather, the condition of ground and cover, the kind of game, even air pollution near industrial areas are all factors to be considered while judging a dog. These elements have an important influence on a dog's scenting ability. The pointing instinct must not be equated with the quality of the nose. An intense point is not a manifestation of nose. The distance between the point and the game, and the accuracy of location, as noted above, are indicators of the quality of the nose.

3.3 Search

The search of the Natural Ability dog is expected to differ from that of the experienced Utility dog in efficiency. An efficient search will have four basic elements. These are: Enthusiasm, Independence, Coverage, and Productivity. Age is not a factor in evaluating a dog's search in a NAVHDA test.

Enthusiasm: A dog should show enthusiasm, with sufficient independence to move away from the handler, and a willingness to investigate likely cover. The dog may be forgiven for a slow start if bird contact generates an improved performance.

Independence: The dog should conduct its search at a practical distance from the gun. Terrain, cover, and other variables make it impossible to measure practical range in yards. Rather, it must be measured in terms of covering the maximum amount of likely game cover without loss of control or sacrificing the all-important cooperation that must exist between the hunter and the dog. Suffice it to say, that the uncontrolled dog running the far horizons is of little use to the on-foot hunter, as is the dog that remains so close to the gun that it depends on the handler to lead it to birds.

Coverage: From start to finish, the search should indicate but one purpose, to produce game for the gun. Good coverage will leave the impression that in the terrain that has been searched no game has been missed. No time should be wasted in searching obviously barren ground or by returning to cover that has already been thoroughly searched.

Productivity: An eager, cooperative dog will readily adapt to the terrain and cover over which it is being hunted, regardless of its "home ground" experience, and it will not hesitate to search rough cover if the situation demands it. Productivity is manifested by the dog searching likely cover and successfully producing birds.

Other Considerations: Throughout the search, the dog should display eagerness and interest. The dog that must be encouraged to search raises doubts about desire. On the other hand, an uncontrolled dog running the far horizons paying little or no attention to the location of the handler is of little use to the on-foot hunter and may affect the dog's cooperation score. Stamina is not judged in a Natural Ability test. However, a lack of enthusiasm and independence due to conditioning may result in a lower Natural Ability desire score. Apparent use of the eyes rather than the nose to search for game is a serious fault; however, use of the eyes to maintain cooperative contact with the handler is a natural result of the dog's desire to please.

In the Natural Ability test, a prescribed course for the dog and handler is not necessary. To cover the search field and properly evaluate the NA dog, the handler may choose to follow the dog rather than adhering to a particular direction. However, the dog is expected to cooperate with the handler, and the search should show the dog's awareness of the handler's movements.

A dog that consistently and successfully works body scent must not be faulted because the head is carried somewhat higher or lower than some preconceived notion of an optimum "style". The dog's search should use the wind effectively. The general pattern of the search should be in a forward direction; however, "back casting" should not be faulted unless done too often. Tireless efforts are to be rewarded more highly than eye-catching style combined with unproductive casts. As previously noted, during the search or any other part of the test, the dog is not allowed to wear an electronic beeper collar or any other type of electronic device or imitation thereof.

3.4 Pointing

The instinct to point must be clearly evident in the dog and must meet four criteria. These criteria are: Intensity, Convincing posture, Unmistakable as a point to the observer, and Productivity.

Intensity: The pointing stance must be intense. This means that the forward half of the dog's body is motionless, tense and looks as if the dog is ready to pounce, i.e., muscles bunched, eyes focused, ears forward. A dog may crouch; the chest may touch the ground if intensity is maintained. Laying down while pointing is not acceptable.

Convincing: When a dog is on point, there should be no doubt that it has located game, and its nose is pointing to it. The posture leaves no doubt. This is not a style question; it is a clear picture of a body preparing to pounce.

Unmistakable: When the dog is pointing, there should be no question that it has pinpointed a bird or game animal. If there is any question, the pointing score may be lowered.

Productivity: In the end, there must be a bird produced after the point. Note, a point on a rabbit or other game may be scored if there are also points on birds to score.

If the point meets these four criteria, the length of time the dog points is not a factor in determining the pointing score.

Other Considerations: Pointing and searching are the two major aspects of the dog's work "before the shot." When game is located the dog must establish point naturally. The handler is strictly prohibited from giving any commands or gestures which may induce the dog to point. A whoa command is not a point. Higher points are not awarded for a certain style of pointing if the above criteria are met. The dog must demonstrate an instinct to point scent as opposed to merely pointing on sight. The pointing instinct must not be equated with the quality of the nose.

The dog is rewarded for relocation on a moving bird. "Blinking," i.e. deliberately avoiding birds or pointing and then leaving the game for any reason, is to be severely penalized. Cat walking, creeping, or dancing around birds should also be penalized.

3.5 Desire to Work

The desire to work is the hallmark of a good versatile hunting dog, and this desire is expressed in every phase of work on land and water from beginning to end. The dog must demonstrate that it wants to find game and is willing to work hard to that end. Desire, or lack thereof, provides a clear index of the dog's character and usefulness. A dog with proper desire will manifest it as an attitude, a force, a strong intention and aim to achieve the task despite difficulties or obstacles. Strong desire is manifested by a clear and strong sense of purpose. Aimless running must not be confused with desire, nor should speed alone be equated with desire. Dogs that go to heel after running for a short time and must be coaxed repeatedly to continue their work must be scored very low.

A dog that voluntarily leaves live game in any NAVHDA test will receive a 0 in desire. However, if a dog is carrying a bird, such as in a retrieve, and is distracted or drawn off by a live bird and drops or leaves the bird being carried, this is a cooperation issue, not a desire issue and therefore may result in a 0 in cooperation. The obedience score may also be lowered.

3.6 Cooperation

Cooperation can be defined as an inherent willingness on the part of the dog to apply its own initiative and special talents while working with the handler in pursuit of a common goal: producing game. When both handler and dog know their tasks, cooperation is an invisible bond demonstrated with mutual knowledge and trust. Do not confuse cooperation with obedience. We are not testing for obedience in NA. A dog that is overly dependent and does not move away from the handler is not cooperative. Similarly, the dog running the far horizons and not responding to the handler's movements is not cooperative, nor is the dog who must be called or hacked repeatedly. The fault in these examples lies in either cooperation or desire or both. The cooperative dog is self-assured and responsive. A dog may be running at a good distance from the handler, but when the handler turns, the dog should turn to remain to the handler's front. The intelligent, cooperative dog seems to sense the handler's wishes and movements. Even while on a solid point, the versatile dog may slowly turn its head to make sure the handler is moving up. A cooperative young dog will maintain contact with the handler. For example, when a young dog chases a bird and then returns on its own, it demonstrates cooperation.

An older dog with more field experience on game should display a higher degree of cooperation than a young dog. For this reason, NAVHDA assigns an index number of 3 for cooperation in the Utility Test and an index number of 2 in the Natural Ability Test.

If a dog in an advanced test is carrying a bird, such as in a retrieve, and is distracted or drawn off by a live bird and drops or leaves the bird being carried, this is a cooperation issue, not a desire issue and therefore may result in a 0 in cooperation. The obedience score may also be lowered.

In the Gun Dog, Utility, and Invitational tests a dog that leaves, mutilates, or buries dead game will receive a non-qualifying 0 in overall cooperation and cannot receive a prize.

The overzealous Natural Ability dog that may mutilate or otherwise consume a caught bird may receive a lowered cooperation score but should not receive a 0.

3.7 Physical Attributes

A dog with a sound body and protective coat will tend to have a long and useful life and may ultimately perform better in the field. Versatile dogs should be sound representatives of their breeds and meet standards consistent with being viable, healthy hunting companions.

NAVHDA recognizes that establishing and monitoring physical standards for a given breed are the sole prerogative and responsibility of the breed club concerned. Therefore, evaluation of coat and conformation by NAVHDA Judges should be regarded as a courtesy service to assist owners and breeders by pointing out any apparent defects that might hinder a dog or its progeny from attaining maximum efficiency in the field.

The physical attributes, specifically coat, eyes, and teeth are evaluated immediately after the dog completes the water portion of the test while the coat is wet. Additionally, Judges will observe the dog in the field for obvious physical defects that may handicap their hunting abilities. If the Judges identify any problems in a dog's physical attributes or temperament, they will call it to the attention of the handler immediately. It should be noted that physical conformation will usually change as the dog ages and therefore evaluation of physical attributes in the Utility Test may be more meaningful than in the Natural Ability Test.

The evaluations of the dog's physical attributes are not considered in awarding prizes. Prize classifications are based solely on performance. If a dog is evaluated as sensitive or shy in temperament, a second comment is required to describe what has been observed (e.g. "the dog is sensitive or shy to people, surroundings, birds, gunshots, etc."). Judgments of physical attributes and sensitivity are final and may not be appealed.

3.8 Retrieving

Although retrieving is not assessed in the Natural Ability Test, it is a very important aspect of the Gun Dog, Utility, and Invitational Tests. Being a reliable retriever is a key trait of the versatile hunting dog. Retrieving a bird or duck from either field or water, upon command, is an essential part of these tests.

Ideally, the dog should go straight to the bird, pick it up, and retrieve it directly to the handler. The dog is expected to carry the bird with a firm, gentle, and balanced grip. The handler must hold the gun through all field retrieves and until the dog is sent on all water retrieves. The gun must never be placed on the ground.

The retrieve sequence is broken down into three components:

Desire to leave the handler and go to the bird.

Cooperation to pick up the bird and return it to the handler.

Obedience to retrieve to hand or a short distance from the handler.

Since releasing a bird during a retrieve could invite the escape of a cripple, the dog should not drop the bird while en route to the handler, unless it is obvious that the hold is so insecure as to seriously impede the retrieve. In this case, the dog is permitted to put the game down to secure a better hold, provided it does so quickly, without loss of control, without taking its mouth off the bird, and then immediately completes the retrieve as described for the specific test level. Putting the game down to play, roll or tussle with it must not be confused with an intelligent effort to improve a tenuous hold.

NAVHDA defines mutilation as damaging or burying game thus rendering it unfit for the table. Willful mutilation, abandoning dead game, or refusing to pick up the bird will result in a non-qualifying 0 in cooperation and requires a note on the front side of the scorecard under Comments.

4 The Natural Ability Test

4.1 Purpose

The Natural Ability Test measures seven hereditary characteristics: use of nose, search, willingness to swim, pointing, tracking, desire to work and cooperation. These are fundamental to the makeup of a good, reliable versatile hunting dog. The importance of this test cannot be overemphasized. The natural, inherited abilities of a hunting dog usually manifest themselves at an early age, and it is desirable to take advantage of this fact by testing dogs while they are still young. By doing so, the owner, breeder or trainer gets an impartial evaluation that may help form future training and hunting plans.

Organization and Scope
The Natural Ability Test is organized into four phases:

1) Field Phase – The dog is hunted in cover where the presence of game has been assured by the releasing of game birds.

2) Tracking Phase – The dog is given an opportunity to track a flightless running pheasant or chukar.

3) Water Phase – The dog is tested for willingness to swim.

4) Judgement of Physical Attributes

No game is shot and no retrieves required during the Natural Ability Test. There is no sequence for conducting the four general phases. It is desirable, though not necessary, to test the young dog on Tracking after it completes the Field because usually by then the dog has settled down and is better able to concentrate. Also, it is desirable to evaluate the coat immediately after the dog completes the Water, when the dog is wet.

Although the Natural Ability Test is of extreme importance, it should not be regarded as an infallible gauge of a dog's future worth. Obviously deficient dogs aside, there is the case of the "late bloomer" or a dog that does not display its potential as early as some others. There is also the precocious youngster that does well in the beginning but later reveals some inherited character fault or physical disability that makes it a less than desirable gun dog. It is for these reasons that NAVHDA strongly urges dogs to be tested at various stages of development.

4.2 Preparing for the Test

Owners should not fall into the trap of telling themselves that because the Natural Ability Test emphasizes inherited abilities, preparation of the dog is not necessary because it will stand or fall on "doing what comes naturally." Such a mistake would be grossly unfair to the dog. It would indeed be a most unusual specimen that could make the transition from whelping box to an acceptable performance in the Natural Ability Test without proper exposure. As a very minimum, it is desirable that the dog should already have been exposed to water and to game in the field. Conversely, over-training a dog with the mistaken idea that the Judges are looking for a finished versatile hunting dog in this test is also an injustice to the dog. Remember we are dealing with young dogs in a formative stage and, by and large, they are not yet equipped to handle the pressures of intensive training without possible suppression of desirable characteristics.

4.3 Field Phase

The dog is hunted for a minimum of 20 minutes in cover, ideally 40-50 acres of open ground with mixed vegetation, where game birds have been released. The locations of released birds are based on clear instructions from Judges. Should weather conditions dictate a need to cool the dog in a water tank or pond, additional time may be added to ensure the dog has a full 20-minute hunt. A prolonged break, longer than 8-10 minutes, is not permitted. At least 5 birds should be planted in the field for the first dog. Additional birds are planted for each new dog depending on the number of birds that were removed from the field during the previous dog's test. No game is shot, and retrieves are not required for the Natural Ability Test. Handlers in a Natural Ability Test are not allowed to carry any type of firearm or replica.

Each dog is hunted for a minimum of 20 minutes in the Field Phase and judged on:

-Use of nose
-Search
-Pointing
-Desire
-Cooperation
-Reaction to gun fire

At two random points along the course, preferably prior to the first bird contact, a Judge will signal the gunner to fire one round of blank ammunition from a shotgun to observe the dog's reaction to gunfire. The dog will then be marked as "Not Gun Shy," "Gun Sensitive," or "Gun Shy" as determined by the Judging Team. A gun sensitive dog is one who, although obviously disturbed by the shots, is willing to continue the search without undue delay or loss of interest. This is a clue to the owner to use caution and judgment in further introducing the dog to gunfire and may also impact future breeding plans. A dog is considered to be gun shy if it leaves the area in fright or returns to the handler and then refuses to hunt. Leaping into the air to locate the source of the shot or checking with the handler for the same purpose are not judged as faults if the dog immediately continues the

search. Dogs judged as being gun shy may not qualify for a prize classification but are permitted to complete the remaining test segments.

On the dog's first point, the handler should be instructed to flush the bird. However, if the dog breaks and chases the bird, there is no penalty for breaking. On subsequently pointed birds the Judging Team may choose to instruct the handler to try and hold or collar his or her dog to prevent a chase. If the handler is unsuccessful in collaring the dog, the pointing score will not be affected. The dog may not be leashed.

4.4 Tracking Phase

Each dog is judged on the following items during the Tracking Phase:

-Use of nose
-Tracking
-Desire to work
-Cooperation

The dog is given an opportunity to track a flightless running pheasant. If pheasants are not available, a chukar may be used. Tracking birds should be strong, healthy, properly fed, and watered. However, the bird should NOT be wet down prior to being released on the track. The ability to concentrate on a track is an important trait of the versatile hunting dog. It is this ability that permits the prompt recovery of cripples that are still capable of running long distances. This exercise is primarily a test of the dog's ability to use its nose and to concentrate on the track. Desire and cooperation are also factors which are noted by the Judges during the course of the test. A flightless pheasant or chukar is released in an area reserved for the tracking. The area should be sufficiently wide to avoid the tracks being too close to one another (about 50 yards apart). Tracks must be laid down-wind or cross-wind, never into the wind. Ideally, the cover should be about 8-10 inches high. This should not hinder the running bird and will retain the scent, while at the same time giving the Judges an opportunity to see the path taken by the bird and to closely observe the dog as it works the track. The track should end in cover that takes advantage of the bird's instinct to hide. Tracking sites must remain free of any activities on test day to avoid contaminating the tracking field with additional scent.

At the discretion of the handler, the dog may or may not be shown the game bird before the bird is released. Prior to the tracking portion of the test the handlers will be briefed on the test. At this time, if a handler has questions regarding whether to show the bird to the dog, they should ask the Judging Team. Whether or not the dog is shown the bird makes no difference in the scoring. When ready for the track to be carried out, the dog and handler are directed to position themselves where neither can see the bird being released. This may be natural cover or a portable blind.

The tracking of the game bird is done in the following manner. The ten primary feathers on one wing of the bird are removed (pulled out, not cut), thereby rendering the bird flightless. A few soft feathers are pulled from the bird and used to mark the spot where the

bird is released. Once released, the Judges observe the track until the bird has gone a sufficient distance and is out of sight. It is important to calm the dog for this phase. The Judges will show the handler where the bird was released and indicate the general direction it went. The dog is brought to the release spot, and the handler sets the dog on the track. The handler will be allowed to assist the dog for a short distance (3 to 5 steps) at the beginning of the track. The handler should ensure the dog is concentrating on the track before release. After releasing the dog, the handler will stand quietly, face forward, and allow the dog to track on its own, without any further coaching. A Judge may help a handler start the dog properly.

The distance the dog works the track is not as important as the concentration and intensity displayed by the dog when following the track. A dog that follows a track a short distance over ground with little or no vegetation and deliberately works its way forward should be scored higher than the dog that speeds longer distances with little accuracy, especially under favorable conditions of wind, moisture, vegetation, etc. The young dog must display eagerness and perseverance on a track. This is because its future use as a retriever of crippled game is dependent on this characteristic.

Some dogs will track well with their nose close to the ground, while others may carry their head higher. Some dogs follow the track closely while others track several yards downwind of the track. Some dogs track slowly and deliberately while some run full out. The score is dependent upon the quality of the dog's performance following the track, not the method used. Backtracking can only be scored as acknowledging scent. The dog may be given credit if it follows a previously laid track. The amount of credit may be affected by how much the previous track has been used. In this test, the dog is not required to retrieve the bird, simply to follow the track. Additionally, with the dog clearly on the bird's track, penetrating cover is a good indication of desire. Conversely, if the dog does not penetrate cover, the desire score may in some instances be lowered. Restarts may lower the dog's score. 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, 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, the scoring will be adjusted accordingly. The dog will not be rewarded or penalized for finding the bird, the dog will be judged solely on its ability to track and not the end result.

The Judges have the prerogative of recalling any dog for retesting. In this case, the dog is recalled after all other dogs have been tested. If a recall to retest is necessary, the Judges will inform the handler as soon as possible after the decision to retest has been made.

4.5 Water Phase

Each dog is judged on the following items during the Water Phase:

-Water entry
-Desire to work
-Cooperation

The ideal water test site would have a firm bottom with little or no emergent vegetation and a uniform slope with swimming depth water at about three to five yards. The Chapter will supply a minimum of eight to ten different canvas and rubber bumpers. Dokken's or flagged bumpers are not permitted. Handlers are not permitted to bring or use their own bumpers or any other object. Rocks may be available on the shoreline, and if there are other natural objects near the shoreline like sticks, handlers may also use those to entice their dog to swim. There must also be dead birds available for those dogs that do not swim. The dead birds should be kept far away from the water site but easily obtainable when needed. A "pick up dog" should also be near to quickly retrieve any bumpers left in the water. The "pick up dog" should be a skilled retriever to expedite the test with minimal distractions.
A truly versatile hunting dog must possess the desire and confidence to swim. After receiving instructions from the Judge, when handler and dog are ready to be tested, the handler may select a bumper from the provided supply. The handler will be instructed to throw the bumper into water of sufficient depth for the dog to swim. The dog is expected to make a direct, forward moving entry into the water and swim at least twice. For a complete and fair evaluation, the Judges may ask for the dog to be sent into the water more than twice.

The dog's swimming speed and style of entry are of little importance. A dog that leaps into the water will not be scored any higher than the dog that enters without hesitation in a more deliberate manner. Dogs that retrieve the thrown object will not receive higher scores. The retrieve is immaterial; the importance here is whether the dog has the desire and self-confidence to swim at least twice. Use of additional enticement items or too many bumpers may reduce the water, desire, and cooperation scores.

Dogs requiring a dead bird to swim will be moved to the end of the line and called back after all other dogs are tested. When a dead bird is used, the maximum attainable score will be a 2. For a 2, the dog needs two direct entries and must not hesitate at the water, needs to go directly forward and swim out to the bird. A retrieve is not required. If a dead bird is used, Judges are required to make a note in the Comments section of the scorecard, and it will be reflected in the dog's permanent record.

4.6 Judgment of Physical Attributes

This phase of the test is described in Section 3.7 and takes place immediately after the Water Phase.

4.7 Scoring System and Judge's Scorecard

Scoring System for Natural Ability Test

Judged	Index Number	Max Points Attainable	Prize I	Prize II	Prize III
Use of Nose	6	24	24(4)	18(3)	18(3)
Search	5	20	20(4)	15(3)	10(2)
Water	5	20	15(3)	15(3)	10(2)
Pointing	4	16	12(3)	12(3)	8(2)
Tracking	2	8	6(3)	4(2)	2(1)
Desire to Work	4	16	16(4)	12(3)	8(2)
Cooperation	2	8	6(3)	4(2)	2(1)
Total		112	99	80	58

Minimum score for each prize classification is indicated in parentheses.

NAVHDA

NAVHDA NATURAL ABILITY TEST

CALL NAME:

CHAPTER:

DATE OF TEST:

NAME OF DOG:

AGE ON TEST DATE:

BREED: **SEX:**

OWNER: **MEMB#:**

HANDLER: **MEMB#:**

REGISTRATION #:

GUN SHY TEST:

☐ Not Gun Shy ☐ Gun Sensitive ☐ Gun Shy

WATER	TRACK	FIELD	TEST	SCORE		POINTS
			Use of Nose 4 3 3		6	
			Search 4 3 2		5	
			Water 3 3 2		5	
			Pointing 3 3 2		4	
			Tracking 3 2 1		2	
			Desire to Work 4 3 2		4	
			Cooperation 3 2 1		2	

PHYSICAL ATTRIBUTES:

1._____Eyes: ectropic *(out)*, entropic *(in)*, other defects_____

2._____Testes

3._____Bite and Teeth_____

Butt Overshot Undershot Extra Missing

_____

List ID Number(s) of Involved Teeth

COAT:

Density	**Harshness**
Dense	Harsh
Medium Dense	Medium Harsh
Open	Soft

TEMPERAMENT:

NORMAL SENSITIVE "Recovers Fast" SHY "Recovers Slow"

COMMENTS:

PRIZE CLASSIFICATION _____ TOTAL _____

JUDGE'S NAME _____
(Print Name)

SIGNATURE _____

JUDGE # _____

☐ **Check here if this is an Apprentice Card**

☐ **Check here if this is the Senior Judge's Card**

Primary Secondary Where Applicable A=Judge's Score B=Consensus (if different from A) A/B

5 The NAVHDA Advanced Tests

To encourage members to train and develop their dogs into reliable hunting partners, NAVHDA developed the Gun Dog Test (GDT), the Utility Test (UT) and the Invitational Test (IT). While judging criteria is aligned in these tests, a higher degree of obedience is expected as the dog and handler progress through each testing level. All tests are described in detail in their respective chapters; however, the table below gives a quick comparison of the different tasks the dogs must accomplish for each. Most, if not all, of our dogs enjoy the continued work after puppyhood. They relish the time their owners spend with them working to hone the abilities they were born with and have so ably demonstrated in the Natural Ability Test. There is no question that a dog who has had additional training, especially in obedience and the other areas necessary to successfully complete an advanced test, will be a happier, healthier, and more pleasant companion. Additionally, the results of a Natural Ability Test, a Gun Dog Test, and a Utility Test combined, give a strong indication of a dog's breeding potential.

All dogs participating in the Invitational Test must have received a Utility Prize I in the preceding calendar year. This test is designed to evaluate these exceptional hunting dogs in a broader variety of scenarios than are tested in the Gun Dog Test and Utility Test.

	Gun Dog Test	Utility Test	Invitational Test
Field	-Search 25 minutes -Steadiness to flush and wing -Retrieve within reach of the handler -Drag 50 yards	-Search 30 minutes -Steadiness to flush, wing, shot and fall -Retrieve to hand, hold until commanded to release -Drag 100-200 yards + bend	-Search 60 minutes in a Brace -Backing -Steadiness to flush, wing, shot and fall -Retrieve to hand, hold until commanded to release
Water	-Walking at heel 25 yards - Steadiness at the blind - Duck retrieve	-Walking at heel 50 yards -Steadiness/Remaining at blind -Duck retrieve -Search for a live duck	-Double mark retrieve -100-yard blind retrieve -All walking at heel off lead - Honoring

6 The Gun Dog Test

6.1 Purpose and Scope

The Gun Dog Test (GDT) is intended to evaluate the dog's progress toward being a successful member of the hunting team. It also provides a test of some of the basic building blocks required for completing the other advanced NAVHDA tests.

The handler and dog gain experience and appreciation of the hunting team concept through their training because the GDT evaluates the dog and handler in a variety of hunting situations. In the GDT, the handler and dog work as a team with the focus of having a successful hunt and enabling game to be brought to the table.

Because of the level of training required to be successful in this test, some of the breeding potential of the dog can also be assessed. The dog's level of obedience and training should demonstrate that it is a serviceable hunting companion. However, for many, this test may show the dog to be a competent hunting dog for most situations and thus further training to meet or succeed in the Utility Test, while encouraged, may be deemed unnecessary. In addition, training for the Gun Dog Test will give the handler perspective on additional training that may be necessary to proceed to and successfully complete the other advanced tests.

The Gun Dog Test is divided in two groups:

Water Group
-Walking at Heel
-Steadiness by Blind
-Retrieve of Duck

Field Group
-Search
-Pointing
-Steadiness on game
-Retrieve of Shot Bird
-Retrieve by Drag

There is no set sequence for conducting any events in a NAVHDA test, the decision on this matter is the responsibility of the Judging Team.

The following are judged throughout:
-Use of nose
-Desire to work
-Cooperation
-Obedience
-Physical attributes

Sequence at the Blind

The Walking at Heel, Steadiness by Blind and Retrieve of Duck tests are set up so they may be completed in sequence. The sequence requires:

- A pond or body of water large enough to allow a retrieve of approximately 40-50 yards and sufficiently deep to require the dog to swim for most of the retrieve. The blind must be positioned so that the dog has an unrestricted view of the area where the duck will be thrown and land. The local Chapter may have to cut some grass or brush to ready the area.

- Six to ten decoys should be set in front of the blind with short lines leaving a clear channel for the dog to swim through without becoming entangled in decoy anchor cords. Decoys are only meant as a visual distraction.
- Erect a 3-sided blind at least 36 inches high about 2 feet back from the edge of the water.
- A heeling course starting about 25 yards from the blind with a designated starting point that may be a natural object, a line in the dirt, etc. The course should be obvious, but no "physical line" to mark the course may be used. The course should contain a bend, preferably around some natural object. (Note: Care must be taken that crated birds are not resting within the scent range of the heeling course as this could create unfair problems in heeling and in later parts of the test.)
- A duck thrower (or winger) should be positioned out of sight either behind natural cover, a blind, or other camouflage.

The duck should be thrown in open water, not into cover, and high for visibility, preferably with the sky for background. The background should not be a rising or setting sun. The gallery should be positioned so as not to compete for the dog's attention. No distraction shots are used.

6.2 Walking at Heel

The dogs are evaluated on obedience.

Walking at Heel is a demonstration of basic obedience that is useful around the house and in a variety of hunting situations. Any good versatile hunting dog should be able to walk with its owner at heel, on or off lead. This test evaluates the handler and dog's ability to quietly approach a pond to jump shoot ducks.

Prior to starting the Walking at Heel, a Judge will meet the handler and give instructions, usually for the entire Water Sequence. Judgement of Walking at Heel begins when the first verbal or non-verbal command is given following the instructions. Heeling ends when the dog and handler reach the blind.

The dog is to be walked at heel, on or off lead, while the handler carries a break open shotgun. Two of the Judges are placed at different points on the heeling course while the third one follows a short distance behind the handler and the dog. The highest score should be given to the dog and handler that can accomplish the task with minimal or no commands. The dog that walks beside the handler with a loose lead or off lead requiring no commands receives the highest score. The dog that leads the handler down the path is not at heel no matter what the slack in the lead may be. Excessive pulling of the lead by dog or handler, foot stomping, shuffling, or an abnormal pace may be penalized depending on the frequency and severity. Similarly, voice or other commands given by the handler while proceeding along the path may lower the score. However, occasional tightening of the lead may still be Prize I work. This is not to be judged as an elimination test but rather to establish if the dog is being obedient to the handler.

6.3 Steadiness by Blind

The dogs are evaluated on cooperation and obedience.

This is a test of the dog's steadiness in the presence of game and gunfire. Upon arrival from Walking at Heel, the handler will position the dog on one side of the blind, remove the lead if one is used, step into the blind and load the gun with a blank shell. When ready for the duck to be thrown, the handler will give the Judge a pre-arranged signal to proceed. Before calling for the duck to be thrown, the Judge should ensure that the dog is looking

in the direction in which it will land and that there are no obstacles interfering with the dog's ability to mark the splash. When the duck is in the air, the handler must shoulder the gun, aim at the duck, and fire a blank. After the duck has hit the water, the handler sends the dog to retrieve with a single command. Judges will not signal the handler to send the dog. The dog is expected to stay by the blind until sent for the retrieve but may still receive a maximum score if it leaves at the shot. To achieve a minimally passing score, the dog must remain steady at least until the duck is thrown. A dog requiring many reprimands, or one that leaves the blind, or whines and barks will be penalized.

6.4 Retrieve of Duck

The dogs are evaluated on use of nose, desire, cooperation and obedience.

The dog is expected to mark the fall of the duck and complete the retrieve with desire and enthusiasm. The place of entry may be a short distance on either side of the blind. Style of entry into the water, i.e. a leap or slow steady forward movement, is immaterial. The dog should move forward directly into the water and toward the duck. Running the bank prior to entering the water for the retrieve may reduce the retrieve score. The dog should swim around or through the decoys without paying undue attention to them, pick up the duck without hesitation, and return it to the handler without delay using either a land or water route. Shaking upon emerging from the water should not be penalized unless the game is dropped in the process. The handler must stand back from the water's edge so that the dog must carry the duck out of the water. The handler may ask a Judge to hold his or her gun after sending the dog for the retrieve. The handler may choose to "handle" the dog that has gone off course with voice, whistle, or hand signals. Use of hand signals to direct the dog to the duck may reduce the retrieve score. If the dog ignores any commands given, the score in obedience will be lowered.

To receive a 4, the dog must retrieve the game within reach of the handler. One encouragement at pick-up, e.g. "good dog," and one additional quiet command or encouragement on the return that results in an efficient retrieve is permitted. It is permissible for the dog to drop the bird within reach of the handler, but depending on all

other facets of the retrieve, this may result in a lowered score. Dropping game at any point of the retrieve that is not within reach of the handler should result in a lowered retrieve score. To receive a minimally passing score, the dog must bring the duck out of the water onto shore, and it must be accessible to the handler.

6.5 Field Search

The dogs are evaluated on use of nose, desire, cooperation and obedience.

Each dog will be hunted for 25 minutes over typical hunting terrain where strong flying game birds have been released under the direction of the Judging Team. Ideally, part of the course on which the test is conducted should be a woodlot, shelter belt, or some other dense cover. When entering heavier cover, the dog should range in such a way as to maintain contact with the handler while searching the cover thoroughly. Whether the dog shortens its range of its own accord based on experience or shortens its range on command is not relevant. The efficiency of the search determines how the dog is scored. During the search, the handler will carry an unloaded, break-open shotgun. Judges may direct the handler on a natural hunting route which will utilize available cover and terrain. By directing the handler, the search of the dog who is working with the handler can be better evaluated. The dog's search should show some maturity and purpose at this stage of development. As always, desire is critical for a productive hunting dog. Desire is shown by the dog conducting its search in an enthusiastic manner, checking likely cover and using wind to its advantage. Age is not a factor in evaluating a dog in the GDT.

An efficient search will have the four basic elements: Enthusiasm, Independence, Coverage, and Productivity. **Please refer to Section 3.3 Search, for a detailed description of these elements.**

6.6 Pointing

The dogs are evaluated on use of nose, desire and cooperation.

Judgment of pointing begins when a point is established and ends when the dog is aware of the handler's, a gunner's, or a Judge's presence. The pointing stance must be intense, convincing and unmistakable as a point and, in the end, the point must be productive.
Please refer to Section 3.4 Pointing.

6.7 Steadiness on Game

The dogs are evaluated on cooperation and obedience.

The highest score in steadiness requires that there be quiet, confident teamwork between the dog and handler through steady to wing. At this level of testing the dog is permitted to break on the shot. Breaking prior to the shot will result in a lowered steadiness score for that individual bird contact and may result in a lowered overall steadiness score. Before advancing toward a pointed bird, the handler should position gunners in a manner that will ensure a safe and clean shot on the bird. A quiet caution from the handler, e.g., "whoa," may be given without lowering the score. Any further verbal or non-verbal commands may result in a lowered steadiness score for that bird contact and may result in a lowered overall steadiness score. A command is defined as anything that a handler does, verbal or non-verbal, to influence the behavior of the dog. Once the gunners are in place, the handler must close the gun and flush the bird. When the bird takes flight, the handler must shoulder the gun and swing on the bird. Failure to do this may result in a lowered steadiness score. If the handler is unable to locate the bird, the judges will give the handler directions to either relocate the dog or heel the dog away.

Steady to Flush
Judging Steady to Flush begins when the dog is aware of the presence of either the handler, gunner or Judge. Think of Steady to Flush as behavior during the flushing period. The judgement ends when the bird leaves the ground.

Steady to Wing
Judging Steady to Wing begins when the bird leaves the ground and ends when the gun should be fired.

While at this level of testing dogs are permitted to break on the shot, only pointed birds will be shot. Therefore, great care must be taken to shoot safely. No shot is to be fired on unsafe, bumped, or wild flushed birds.

6.8 Retrieve of Shot Bird

The dogs are evaluated on use of nose, desire, cooperation and obedience.

A good versatile dog happily and promptly retrieves shot game. Once directed by the handler or at the shot, the dog should go directly to the bird, pick it up, and return to the handler. To receive a 4, the dog must retrieve the game within reach of the handler. One encouragement at pick-up, e.g. “good dog,” and one additional quiet command or encouragement on the return that results in an efficient retrieve is permitted. It is permissible for the dog to drop the bird within reach of the handler, but depending on all other facets of the retrieve, this may result in a lowered score. Dropping game at any point

of the retrieve that is not within reach of the handler should result in a lowered retrieve score.

If there is no opportunity for a retrieve during the search, the dog, at the Judges' discretion, may be held while a bird is shot for judgment of retrieve before leaving the field. Nose will be judged in the event the dog fails to mark the bird, or if a bird is running after being shot.

6.9 Retrieve by Drag

The dogs are evaluated on desire, cooperation and obedience.

The versatile dog should be a reliable retriever of game under all hunting conditions, even when out of sight of the handler. The drag is purely a mechanical means to get the dog from point A to point B, i.e. from the start of the drag to where the dragged, dead game is left out of sight of the handler. This is most easily done when the track ends in the woods or brush. After the initial command to retrieve there should be no commands or encouragement. A cold game bird (Chukar, pheasant, or duck) will be provided for the drag. Ideally, the same duck used in the "Retrieve of Duck" sequence should be used. If fur is preferred, the handler must provide a cold, furred game animal that is in good condition. The drag track is not a test of nose because of the obvious path left by the dragged game and the foot track of the Judge dragging the game. This test is strictly a retrieving test and demonstrates only the dog's desire, cooperation, and obedience.

To lay the track, a few soft feathers (or fur) are pulled from the bird and put in a small pile to mark the spot where the drag begins. The game will be dragged by a Judge approximately 50 yards and left in a location that is out of sight of the handler. The game should not be left in a hole or depression. The placement of the game should ensure the dog will be feeling "all on its own" and out of visual contact with the handler. This is important since some dogs, when they feel they are out of sight, abandon the search or mishandle or bury the game. After leaving the game to be retrieved, the Judge should then continue walking in the same direction to a point of concealment 15 to 20 yards (depending on the density of the cover or terrain) from the game on the downwind side. The concealed position should allow the Judge to observe the dog's actions when it arrives at the game. If an Apprentice is participating in the drag, he or she will drag the game and follow immediately behind the Judge. When the Judge is concealed, a signal will be given to start the test.

The handler should bring the dog up on a lead and the Judge will point out the feathers (or fur) at the start of the drag and give the handler a general direction in which the game was dragged, but the Judge will not explain to the handler where it is. The handler will then send the dog. If required, the handler may take a few steps with the dog to ensure the track is well taken. Once released, the handler must stand still, remain motionless and silent.

The way the dog works the drag matters little. This can vary widely with the weather, the dog's experience, and temperament. If there is a side wind the dog may run the drag on the down-wind side. Some dogs work with their head high, others with their noses very close to the ground. The dog should go to the game, pick it up and directly return to the handler. If a dog returns without the game, the handler may restart the dog one time with the best score possible being a 3. If the dog comes back without the game and goes back to the drag track without a command, it should not be considered a restart but may affect the score.

To receive a 4, the dog must retrieve the game within reach of the handler. One additional quiet command or encouragement on the return that results in an efficient retrieve is permitted. It is permissible for the dog to drop the bird within reach of the handler, but depending on all other facets of the retrieve, this may result in a lowered score. Dropping game at any point of the retrieve that is not within reach of the handler should result in a lowered retrieve score. If the game is found and then left, mutilated, or buried, the drag score will be 0 as will the overall cooperation score, no matter how precisely the track is followed.

6.10 Judged Throughout

Physical Attributes
Evaluation of physical attributes will take place immediately after the water retrieve, when the dog's coat is wet. **This phase of the test is described in Chapter 3.7.**

Use of Nose
During the Gun Dog Test, the dog must demonstrate not only a good nose, but also the ability to use it to find game, to intelligently use the wind, and to positively identify bird locations and differentiate them from old scent.

Desire to Work
The desire to work must be evident throughout the Gun Dog Test. Desire to work is not to be equated with speed or aimless running. It is instead a mental toughness demonstrated by persistence, determination, and a will to get all jobs done.

Cooperation
By the time a dog has reached the Gun Dog Test, it is expected to have done some hunting and had considerable training. By now, it should have reached a high degree of willingness to work with the handler. The cooperative dog is purposeful and self-assured. It should always demonstrate that it is hunting with and for the handler. The intelligent, cooperative dog does not need a lot of commands in the field. It should anticipate its handler's wishes and movements. It should come around with minimal commands when its handler changes direction and should maintain contact without being overly dependent.

Obedience
A good versatile hunting dog must always be controllable. Obedience on the part of the dog is important to the safety of the dog, to the relationship between hunter and landowner, and to the relationship between the hunter and other members of the hunting party.

6.11 Scoring System and Judge's Scorecard

Scoring System for Gun Dog Test

Judged	Index Number	Max Points Attainable	Prize I	Prize II	Prize III
Water					
Walking at Heel	2	8	6(3)	4(2)	2(1)
Steadiness by Blind	2	8	6(3)	4(2)	2(1)
Retrieve of Duck	3	12	9(3)	6(2)	3(1)
Field					
Search	5	20	15(3)	15(3)	10(2)
Pointing	4	16	16(4)	12(3)	8(2)
Steadiness on Game	3	12	9(3)	6(2)	3(1)
Retrieve of Shot Bird	3	12	9(3)	6(2)	3(1)
Retrieve by Drag	3	12	9(3)	6(2)	3(1)
Judged Throughout					
Use of Nose	6	24	24(4)	18(3)	18(3)
Desire to Work	5	20	20(4)	15(3)	10(2)
Cooperation	3	12	9(3)	6(2)	3(1)
Obedience	3	12	9(3)	6(2)	6(2)
Total		168	141	104	71

Minimum score for each prize classification is indicated in parentheses.

NAVHDA

NAVHDA GUN DOG TEST

NOSE	DESIRE	COOP	OBED	TEST	SCORE		POINTS
				Walking at Heel 3 2 1		2	
				Steadiness by Blind 3 2 1		2	
				Retrieve of Duck 3 2 1		3	
				Search 3 3 2		5	
				Pointing 4 3 2		4	
				Steadiness to Flush			
				Steadiness to Wing			
				Steadiness Total 3 2 1		3	
				Retrieve of Shot Bird 3 2 1		3	
				Retrieve by Drag 3 2 1		3	
				Use of Nose 4 3 3		6	
				Desire to Work 4 3 2		5	
				Cooperation 3 2 1		3	
				Obedience 3 2 2		3	

CALL NAME:

CHAPTER:

DATE OF TEST:

NAME OF DOG:

AGE ON TEST DATE:

BREED: SEX:

OWNER: MEMB#:

HANDLER: MEMB#:

REGISTRATION #:

PHYSICAL ATTRIBUTES:

1._____(out) (in) Eyes: ectropic, entropic, other defects _____

2._____Testes

3._____H.D. X-rayed

4._____Bite and Teeth _____

Butt Overshot Undershot Extra Missing

_____

List ID Number(s) of Involved Teeth

COAT:

Density	**Harshness**
Dense	Harsh
Medium Dense	Medium Harsh
Open	Soft

TEMPERAMENT:

NORMAL SENSITIVE "Recovers Fast" SHY "Recovers Slow"

COMMENTS:

PRIZE CLASSIFICATION _____ TOTAL _____

JUDGE'S NAME _____ (Print Name)

SIGNATURE _____

JUDGE # _____

☐ **Check here if this is an Apprentice Card**

☐ **Check here if this is the Senior Judge's Card**

Primary Secondary Where Applicable A=Judge's Score B=Consensus (if different from A) A/B

7 The Utility Test

7.1 Purpose and Scope

The Utility Test is designed to measure a hunting dog's usefulness to the on-foot hunter in various hunting situations both before and after the shot, in field and marsh, and on different species of game. While the dog that has successfully received a prize in the Natural Ability Test or the Gun Dog Test has demonstrated hunting ability and the necessary characteristics upon which to base continued training, a dog that has prized at any level in a Utility Test has demonstrated ability as a hunting dog of proven usefulness to the on-foot hunter.

This test is a challenging and demanding one, as befits the NAVHDA aim of "fostering, improving, promoting and protecting the versatile hunting dog in North America." It is not, however, an unreasonable test with unattainable goals. A very large number of fine dogs have earned prize classifications in NAVHDA Utility Tests.

Serious breeders generally await the results of the Utility Test before making a final evaluation of a dog's probable worth as a sire or dam. Most dogs entered in the Utility Test have reached maturity and latent faults will probably have surfaced.

There is no set sequence of events for conducting the Utility Test. The decision on this matter is the responsibility of the Judging Team.

The Utility Test is divided into two groups as shown below:

Water Group
-Search for Duck
-Walking at Heel
-Remaining by Blind
-Steadiness by Blind
-Retrieve of Duck

Field Group
-Search
-Pointing
-Steadiness on game
-Retrieve of Shot Bird
-Retrieve by Drag

There is no set sequence for conducting any events in a NAVHDA test, the decision on this matter is the responsibility of the Judging Team.

The following are judged throughout:
-Use of nose
-Desire to work
-Cooperation
-Stamina
-Obedience
-Physical attributes

7.2 Search for Duck

The dogs are evaluated on use of nose, desire, stamina, cooperation and obedience.

This is a test of the dog's ability to locate wounded waterfowl. Of significance is the fact that it places the dog in an environment where the handler often cannot physically follow the dog or even see the actual situation, thus requiring the dog to rely on its own initiative and intelligence in going about the task independently. A dog that must depend entirely on signals from the handler to locate game is unsatisfactory.

A pond or marsh, preferably two acres or larger, with sufficient vegetation to allow the duck to get out of sight, yet open enough to allow free movement of the bird, is selected. Portions of the area must be of swimming depth for a dog. The Judging Team may determine a pond or marsh of less than two acres to be suitable. A fresh duck must be used for each dog. With dog and handler both out of sight, a healthy pen-raised mallard or other wild species of duck is rendered flightless by pulling, not cutting, the primary feathers of one wing. The duck may be placed by boat, when necessary, in an area identified by the Judges. The duck should not be placed an excessive distance from where the dog is started. Generally, placing the duck within normal shooting range of 40 to 60 yards is recommended. If the cover or lack of cover dictates that a duck should be placed farther away, it may be appropriate to have a kayaker place the duck within shooting range and then guide the duck to the appropriate cover. This allows the Judging Team a chance to observe nose work during the duck search. Placing the duck at a greater distance, especially over open water, is not ideal. Open water distances over 100 yards are to be avoided.

When the Judges are convinced that the duck has gone sufficiently far from the point of landing and is well hidden, the handler and dog are called up, and the dog is placed in position off lead. A Judge will indicate to the handler the direction in which the handler should fire the blank gun. The dog should remain quietly at the handler's side until commanded to search. The handler will fire one blank shot over the water and send the dog. The handler may choose to hold the gun or hand the gun to one of the Judges. From then on it is desirable that the handler interferes as little as possible with the dog's search. Hand, whistle, or voice commands should be used only when the dog is completely off course and is obviously in serious need of help. These additional commands will lower the dog's search score. Throwing an object to mark an area for the dog to search may lower the search score to a maximum of 2.

The capable dog will systematically search likely cover and, if conditions are appropriate, will find and follow the scent path left as the duck moves through cover and over stretches of open water. If the scent is lost, the dog should not mill around aimlessly at the spot but should start a systematic search to relocate the scent. However, if the duck dives while being chased, the experienced dog may circle the area looking for the duck to surface and this can be viewed as a positive behavior.

Each dog is allowed approximately ten minutes to search for the duck. The dog may complete an adequate search of the water in less than ten minutes, and the test may be terminated at that time. For example, a dog that has searched diligently for five to seven minutes does not need to be resent to fulfill an arbitrary ten-minute period if the Judges have seen enough to properly score the search. An adequate search is defined as the dog having covered enough of the pond so that there remains little doubt that in a hunting situation a wounded duck would have been found. This is a search test. A short productive track is not a search. No retrieve of the duck is required. However, if the opportunity for a retrieve occurs, such as the duck being caught or shot, the retrieve must be successfully completed to hand. The best score will be given when the dog returns the retrieved duck directly to the handler and waits calmly until told to release the bird to hand. Any additional commands, other than the release, may reduce the overall Search for Duck score and may also cause a reduction in scores for this portion of the test in desire, cooperation and obedience.

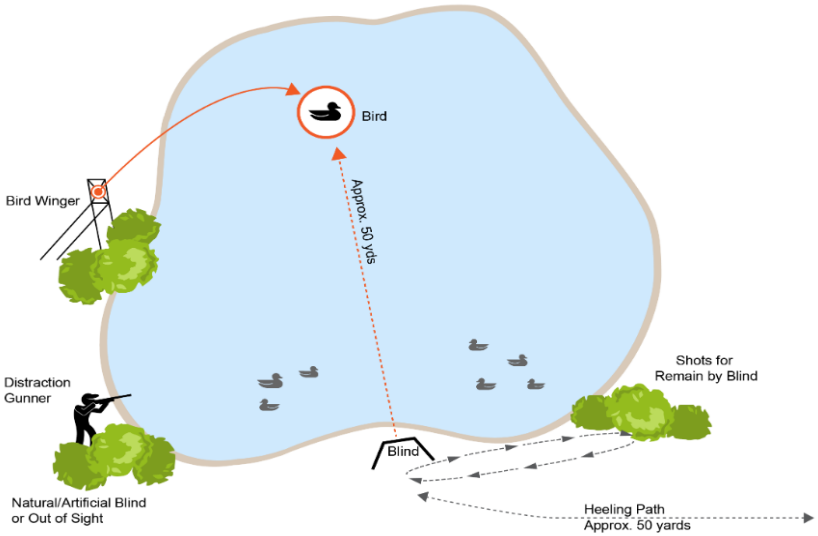
If the dog voluntarily leaves a live duck shortly after sighting it, the desire score should be reduced to zero and will be reflected by notes made on the front of the judging card. In this situation, the overall desire score cannot be averaged higher than a non-qualifying zero. A dog leaving a live duck after a diligent search that ends in an extended, but unsuccessful, chase should not be given a non-qualifying overall desire score. If the duck is to be shot, when possible, a Judge or qualified Chapter gunner, should do the shooting. The test is concluded when the Judges have seen enough to render fair judgment as to whether the dog used its nose, desire, sense of cooperation and intelligence to the extent that, under normal hunting conditions, the game would have been brought to the bag. It is emphasized that this is an exercise in searching and is not a chase. If the duck is retrieved in too short a time to make a proper judgment of the search, the handler will be asked to send the dog again without delay and from the same initial starting place. There will be no additional shot and a second duck will not be released. If the dog abandons or mutilates the duck in any way, rendering it unfit for consumption, the dog's score in cooperation may not average more than a non-qualifying 0.

Sequence at the Blind

The Walking at Heel, Remaining by Blind, Steadiness by Blind and Retrieve of Duck tests are set up so that they are completed in sequence. It starts with a heeling course of approximately 50 yards to a position by the blind. The designated starting point may be a natural object, a line in the dirt, etc. The course should be obvious, but no "physical line" to mark the course may be used. The heeling course should contain a bend, preferably around some natural object. Care must be taken that crated birds are not resting within the scent range of the test course. This could create unfair problems in later parts of the test as well as Walking at Heel.

Sequence at the Blind diagram

The direction of heeling in and out and the direction from which the retrieve duck is thrown can be different depending on terrain, conditions or other factors.



A body of water large enough to allow a retrieve of approximately 50 yards and sufficiently deep to require the dog to swim for most of the retrieve is required. The blind must be 3-sided and at least 36 inches tall and set up on the shore about 2 feet from the water. The blind must be positioned so that the dog has an unrestricted view of the area where the duck will be thrown and land. The local Chapter may have to cut some grass or brush to ready the area. Six to ten decoys should be set in front of the blind with short lines and leaving a clear channel for the dog to swim through without becoming entangled in decoy anchor cords. Decoys are only meant as a visual distraction.

The duck thrower and distraction gunner should be out of sight either behind natural cover, a blind or camouflage and must be well separated. The distraction gunner is stationed out of sight to either the right or left of the blind. The duck thrower is hidden in such a position as to be able to throw a dead duck high in the air so that it lands beyond the decoys in open water, not into cover, and high for visibility preferably with the sky for background. The background should not be a rising or setting sun. The gallery should be positioned so as not to compete for the dog's attention.

7.3 Walking at Heel

The dogs are evaluated on obedience.

Walking at Heel is a demonstration of basic obedience that is useful around the house and in a variety of hunting situations. Any good versatile hunting dog should be able to walk with its handler at heel on or off lead. This test evaluates the handler's ability to quietly approach a pond with his or her dog to jump shoot ducks.

Prior to starting the Walking at Heel, a Judge will meet the handler and give instructions, usually for the entire Water Sequence. Judgement of Walking at Heel begins when the first verbal or non-verbal command is given after the instructions. Heeling ends when the dog and handler reach the blind.

The dog is to be walked at heel, on or off lead, while the handler carries a break open shotgun. Two of the Judges are placed at different points on the heeling course while the third one follows a short distance behind the handler and the dog. The highest score should be given to the dog and handler that accomplish the task with minimal or no commands. The dog that walks beside the handler requiring no commands receives the highest score. The dog that leads the handler down the path is not at heel no matter what the slack in the lead may be. Excessive pulling of the lead by the dog or handler, foot stomping, shuffling, or an abnormal pace may be penalized depending on the frequency and severity. Similarly, voice or other commands given by the handler while proceeding along the path may lower the score. However, occasional tightening of the lead may still be Prize I work. This is not to be judged as an elimination test but rather to establish if the dog is being obedient to the handler.

7.4 Remaining by Blind

The dogs are evaluated on cooperation and obedience.

This is a test of obedience, control, and calmness in the presence of gunfire when the handler is not within the dog's view. Upon arrival at the blind, the handler is allowed to position the dog in or at either side of the blind. The handler may leave one object, such as a cap, jacket, or unattached lead with the dog without incurring a penalty. If an object is left, it must not touch the dog. Judges and onlookers should stay far enough away so as not to be a threat to disobedience or to block the path between dog and handler. The handler, after positioning the dog, walks to a hidden spot designated by the Judges and fires two blank shotgun rounds at an interval of approximately ten seconds. This test is completed when the handler returns to the dog.

A dog under complete control will remain quietly at the blind awaiting the return of the handler. A dog who stays quietly at the blind with only minor changes in position, should not be penalized. A dog that takes only a few steps away from the original position but

remains in the immediate vicinity of the blind may receive a Prize I score, but not the maximum score. Similarly, a dog that leaves the blind but stops without command may still receive a qualifying score. However, one that completely abandons the blind area for any reason is deemed unsatisfactory. A dog that barks or whines to the point that ducks on the pond or approaching would fly away or flare off may have their score lowered in cooperation.

7.5 Steadiness by Blind

The dogs are evaluated on cooperation and obedience.

This is a test of the dog's steadiness in the presence of game while in the exciting atmosphere of repeated gun fire. Upon arrival back at the blind, the handler will, if required, position the dog on one side of the blind, move into the blind and load the gun with blank shells. Blank shotgun ammunition is mandatory. When ready for the sequence to begin, the handler will give the Judge a pre-arranged signal to proceed. The Judge will then signal the distraction gunner to fire the first shot. On report, the handler will mount the gun as if shooting approaching ducks and fire one shot. On signal from the Judge, the distraction gunner fires a second shot. Next the Judge will signal the thrower to launch the duck. When the duck is in the air, the handler, without prompting, mounts the gun and fires a second shot to simulate shooting at the duck while it is in the air and prior to hitting the water.

In summary, the firing sequence is:

(1) Distraction Gunner - (2) Handler - (3) Distraction Gunner - (4) Handler (simultaneously with the appearance of the duck).

Judges should ensure, before calling for the duck to be thrown, that the dog is looking in the direction in which it will land and that there are no obstacles interfering with the dog's ability to mark the splash. After the duck has hit the water, the handler sends the dog to retrieve with a single command. There should be a distinct time interval between the fall and splash of the duck on the water and the handler's command to fetch. Judges will not signal the handler to send the dog. The highest score will be awarded when both dog and handler are silent, and the dog remains at the blind until commanded to fetch. The dog that is steady until the duck hits the water should not receive a 0. A dog requiring many reprimands, or one that leaves the blind, or that whines and barks will be severely penalized.

7.6 Retrieve of Duck

The dogs are evaluated on use of nose, desire, cooperation, and obedience.

The dog is expected to mark the fall of the duck and complete the retrieve with desire and enthusiasm. The place of entry may be a short distance on either side of the blind. Style of entry into the water, i.e. a leap or slow steady forward movement, is immaterial. The dog should move forward directly to the water and toward the duck. Running the bank prior to entering the water for the retrieve may reduce the retrieve score. The dog should swim around or through the decoys without paying undue attention to them, pick up the duck without hesitation, and return it to the handler without delay using either a land or water route. Shaking upon emerging from the water should not be penalized unless the game is dropped in the process. The handler must stand back from the water's edge so that the dog must carry the duck out of the water. The handler may ask a Judge to hold his or her gun after sending the dog for the retrieve. The handler may choose to "handle" the dog that has gone off course with voice, whistle, or hand signals. Use of hand signals to direct the dog to the duck may reduce the retrieve score. If the dog ignores any commands given, the score in obedience will be lowered.

To receive a 4, the dog, upon returning close to the handler, should sit or stand quietly until commanded to release the bird to hand. Additional commands, steps, thrown objects, and avoidance behaviors will lower the score accordingly. A single verbal encouragement is allowed at the pickup of the duck. To receive a minimally passing score, the dog must bring the duck out of the water onto shore, and within a short distance of the handler. He or she must be able to pick up the duck within two steps.

7.7 Field Search

The dogs are evaluated on use of nose, desire, cooperation, stamina and obedience.

Each dog will be hunted for 30 minutes over typical hunting terrain where strong flying game birds have been released under the direction of the Judging Team. Ideally, part of the course on which the test is conducted should be a woodlot, shelter belt, or some other dense cover. When entering heavier cover, the dog should range in such a way as to maintain contact with the handler while searching the cover thoroughly. Whether the dog shortens its range of its own accord based on experience or shortens its range on command is not relevant. The efficiency of the search determines how the dog is scored. During the search, the handler will carry an unloaded, break-open shotgun. Judges may direct the handler on a natural hunting route which will utilize available cover and terrain. By directing the handler, the search of the dog who is working with the handler can be better observed. The dog's search should show maturity and purpose at this stage of development. As always, desire is critical for a productive hunting dog. Desire is shown by the dog conducting its search in an enthusiastic manner, checking likely cover and using wind to its advantage. Age is not a factor in evaluating a dog in the Utility Test.

An efficient search will have the four basic elements: Enthusiasm, Independence Coverage, and Productivity. **Please refer to Section 3.3 Search for a detailed description of these elements.**

7.8 Pointing

The dogs are evaluated on use of nose, desire, and cooperation.

Judgment of pointing begins when a point is established and ends when the dog is aware of the handler's, a gunner's, or a Judge's presence. The pointing stance must be intense, convincing, and unmistakable as a point and, in the end, the point must be productive. **Please refer to Section 3.4 for all details related to Pointing.**

7.9 Steadiness on Game

The dogs are evaluated on cooperation and obedience.

Of utmost importance is the fact that well executed steadiness gives the hunter the opportunity to concentrate on safe and skillful handling of the gun. The highest score in steadiness can only be awarded when quiet, confident and sportsmanlike teamwork between handler and dog are displayed during most of the bird contacts. The more teamwork is lacking, the lower the score must be. No fast rules can be given. Gunners must also be alert to the dangerous combination of a low flying bird and a dog that has broken and is chasing. Only pointed birds will be shot: gunners are not permitted to shoot wild flushed birds or bumped birds.

When approaching the dog, a quiet caution, e.g. "whoa," may be given without lowering the score. A raised voice, harsh voice, or threatening gesture through body language is to be construed as a command and will have the effect of lowering the score in this area. If, after a point is established, the handler cannot produce a bird; he or she has the option to either order the dog forward in an attempt

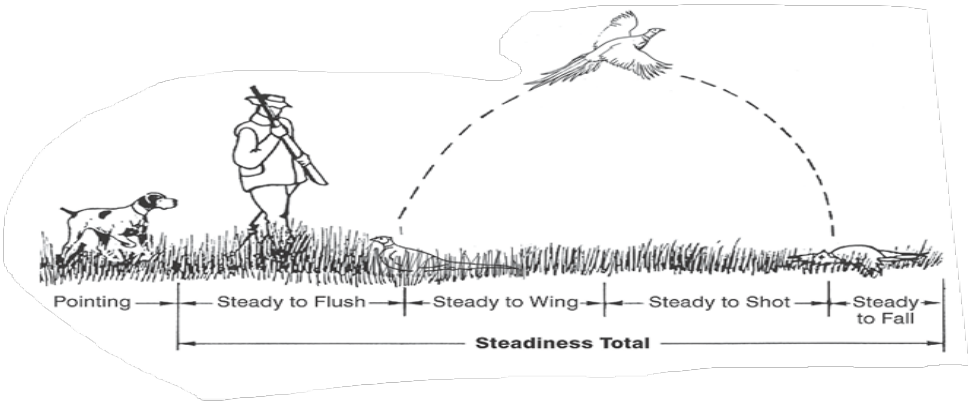
Steady to Flush
Judging Steady to Flush begins when the dog is aware of the presence of either the handler, gunner or Judge. Think of Steady to Flush as behavior during the flushing period. The judgement ends when the bird leaves the ground.

Steady to Wing
Judging Steady to Wing begins when the bird leaves the ground and ends when the gun is fired.

Steady to Shot
Judging Steady to Shot begins when the gun is fired and ends when the bird hits the ground.

Steady to Fall
Judging Steady to Fall begins when the bird hits the ground and ends when the dog is sent for the retrieve.

to find the bird or heel the dog off and move on. Of primary importance in judging steadiness is an evaluation of the dog in the context of the hunting situation. For example, if the bird is missed by the gunner, the dog should remain steady until commanded to continue the search. A dog with an obstructed view that takes a step or two when the gun is fired to mark the falling bird should not be penalized. If for some reason it is unsafe for the gunners to shoot the bird (i.e., it flies back over the Judges or toward the gallery), Judges may instruct the gunners to fire a safe shot in the air. This allows the Judges to judge steadiness through steady to shot on that particular bird contact. The steadiness total score is determined by independently evaluating the dog's behavior during each bird contact through flush, wing, shot, and fall. A command during the flush does not necessarily have to carry over into wing, shot or fall. However, the severity of the infraction may influence scoring the other components of steadiness. But, generally, an infraction in one cell does not necessarily mean that all the following cells will have lowered scores or be given a zero. A 0 is reserved for dogs that ignore commands and continue to break.



This is not a test involving "always a 4 or 0," but rather a test of the usefulness in the production of game for the bag. A score of 4 is reserved for the dog that is steady and waits to be sent for the retrieve. Lower scores are determined by the number and variety of commands given. Dogs that flush the bird or require repeated harsh or near continuous commands should receive a 0 for that bird. Judges will not severely reduce a dog's overall steadiness score for a bad performance on one bird if other birds are well handled.

7.10 Retrieve of Shot Bird

The dogs are evaluated on use of nose, desire, cooperation, and obedience.

A good versatile hunting dog will accomplish the retrieve quickly and eagerly. On command, the dog should go quickly to the fallen bird, pick it up, return directly to the handler and then wait calmly until told to release the bird to hand. Putting the bird down

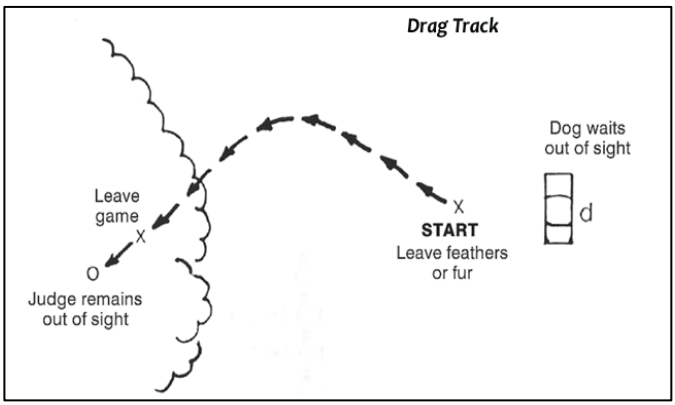
anywhere en route before being commanded to release it or anticipating this command or dropping the game must be penalized by lowering the retrieve, cooperation and obedience scores. The dog should hold the bird gently, but firmly, with a balanced grip. Unduly damaging the bird during the retrieve may be faulted. A dog that so willfully mutilates the bird as to render it unfit for the table, cannot receive a prize. The Judges may examine retrieved birds and determine whether any significant damage was the result of the shot or mishandling by the dog. At the pickup of the bird, a single encouragement is permitted. No additional commands are permitted including both verbal and non-verbal commands.

Any additional commands or steps and dog avoidance behaviors will lower the score accordingly. To receive a minimally passing score, the dog must bring the bird within a short distance of the handler. He or she must be able to pick up the bird within two steps. The handler is expected to stand quietly until the dog finishes the retrieve and is commanded to release the game. Nose will be judged for a retrieve of a bird the dog fails to mark or if a bird is running after being shot.

7.11 Retrieve by Drag

The dogs are evaluated on desire, cooperation, and obedience.

The Utility dog should be a reliable retriever of game under all hunting conditions. The drag has proven to be a most satisfactory test of the Versatile dog's retrieving ability. The drag is a means to get the dog from point A to point B, i.e. from the start of the drag to where the dragged dead game is left. At the end of the drag, the dog should be out of sight of the handler. This is most easily done when the track ends in the woods or brush. After the initial command to retrieve there should be no commands or encouragement. A cold game bird (Chukar, pheasant, or duck) will be provided for the drag. Ideally, the same duck used in the "Retrieve of Duck" sequence should be used. If fur is preferred, the handler must provide a cold, furred game animal that is in good condition. The drag track is not a test of nose because of the obvious path left by the dragged game and the foot track of the Judge doing the drag. This test is strictly a retrieving test and demonstrates only the dog's desire, cooperation, and obedience.



A few soft feathers (or fur) are pulled from the game and put in a small pile to mark the spot where the drag begins. The game will be dragged by a Judge approximately between 100 and 200 yards with one bend (not a sharp hook) near the center of the course. The first part of the drag should be over fairly open cover so the dog's attitude and actions can be observed. The balance of the drag should be out of sight of the handler and the game should be deposited at the exact end of the drag in cover, but not in a hole or depression. The placement of the game should ensure the dog will be feeling "all on its own" and out of visual contact with the handler. This is important since some dogs, when they feel they are out of sight, abandon the search or mishandle or bury the game. The Judge should then continue walking in the same direction to a point of concealment 15 to 20 yards (depending on the density of the cover or terrain) from the game on the downwind side. The concealed position should allow the Judge to observe the dog's actions when it arrives at the game. If an Apprentice is participating in the drag, he or she will drag the game and follow immediately behind the Judge. When the Judge is concealed, a ready signal will be given to start the test.

The handler brings the dog up on a lead and the Judge points out the feathers (or fur) at the start of the drag and gives the handler a general direction in which the bird was dragged. However, the Judge will not explain to the handler where the game is. The handler will then send the dog. If required, the handler may take a few steps with the dog to ensure the track is well taken. Once released, the handler must stand still on that spot, remain motionless and silent. The way the dog works the drag matters little. This can vary widely with the weather, dog's experience, and temperament. If there is a side wind the dog may run the drag on the down-wind side. Some dogs work with their head high, others with their noses very close to the ground. The dog should go to the game, pick it up and directly retrieve to hand. After being sent, the dog is on its own, no additional commands or encouragement are permitted. If a dog returns without the game, the handler may restart the dog one time with the best score possible being a 3. If the dog comes back without the game and goes back to the track without a command, it should not be considered a restart but may affect the score.

For a 4, the dog should find the game quickly, pick it up, and return eagerly to the handler. The dog should sit or stand close to the handler and hold the game until commanded to release it to hand. Additional commands or steps, dog avoidance behaviors or dropping the bird will lower the score accordingly. To receive a minimally passing score, the dog must bring the game within a short distance of the handler. He or she must be able to pick up the game within two steps. If the game is not retrieved, the score is 0 no matter how precisely the track is followed.

For a maximum score, the handler is not allowed to provide any encouragement to the dog during the Retrieve by Drag.

7.12 Judged Throughout

Physical Attributes
Evaluation of physical attributes will take place immediately after the water retrieve, when the dog's coat is wet. **This phase of the test is described in Section 3.7.**

Use of Nose
During the Utility Test, the dog must demonstrate the quality of its nose not only by checking likely cover and objectives, but also through intelligent use of wind to produce game.

The dog that consistently finds game in the field with sureness under varied conditions is demonstrating a good nose. If the opportunity presents itself, the way a dog locates and follows the path of a duck in the Search for Duck may provide an excellent opportunity to judge the nose. In any event NAVHDA Judges should remember that the dog is a nose directed animal. That is, the nose is always in use for everything the dog does. We should be astute enough observers to ascertain, in almost all environments, how and how well the dog is using its nose. While the Utility Test is more comprehensive than the Natural Ability and Gun Dog tests, the same clues used, i.e. productivity, distance, and accuracy provide the baseline for scoring how the dog uses its nose in the Utility Test.

Desire to Work
The desire to work must be evident throughout the Utility Test. The dog that continues when the going gets rough in thick cover or cold water shows the presence of this fundamental quality. Desire is not demonstrated by speed nor is aimless running to be confused with desire. It is the firm, determined, yet controlled will to get on with the job that typifies the dog possessing this indispensable characteristic. The dog with desire goes about the work with a no-nonsense attitude and does not require being pushed to complete a task. Conversely, quitters should be severely penalized. Dogs that turn away, blink, or leave a bird should receive a zero in the appropriate area. This would include backing away from a point, moving away from an obviously scented bird, leaving a located shot bird, or turning away from a sighted duck. These are faults of the highest degree and must be scored accordingly with an overall non-qualifying score of no better than a 1. As noted throughout this manual, dogs that voluntarily leave live game in any NAVHDA test will receive a 0 in desire. However, if a dog is carrying a bird, such as in a retrieve, and is distracted or drawn off by a live bird and drops or leaves the bird being carried, this is a cooperation issue, not a desire issue and therefore may result in a 0 in cooperation. The obedience score may also be lowered.

Close attention must be paid to weather conditions. Extremely hot and humid days will affect the performance of even high-desire dogs. Avoid confusing desire with stamina.

Stamina
Stamina is the physical counterpart of the dog's desire to work. Without stamina, even the most willing dog cannot be fully effective for any length of time. Owners should keep this

in mind when preparing their dogs for the Utility Test because it is a reflection on the owner when an otherwise good dog is in such poor condition that it cannot perform even for the relatively short periods during which it is actually under judgment. The score achieved for stamina applies only during the test and does not imply that the dog has the stamina required for prolonged hunting conditions.

Cooperation

The dog should always demonstrate willingness to handle and to hunt with the purpose of producing game for the hunter. The intelligent, cooperative dog seems to sense the hunter's wishes and movements. Even while on a solid point the versatile dog will often slowly turn its head to make sure the hunter is moving up.

Older dogs with more hunting experience will typically display more cooperation than younger dogs. Cooperation is a silent understanding and is much like an invisible bond that ties the owner/handler and dog together because both know their tasks and have spent time together. Cooperation should not be mistaken for over-dependence. The cooperative dog is confident, knows its work and displays eagerness. An overly dependent dog is suppressed and shows no spirit. Conversely, a dog that constantly ranges out of control and is unresponsive to the handler's movements is not a cooperative dog.

In the hunt, the handler makes the major decisions, within limits, such as when, where and what will be hunted. The dog works out the details of the strategy. There should be no apparent competition in any phase of the work. Pointing and holding the game for the flush are high points demonstrating cooperation. Additionally, a stop to flush or not rushing in on a moving or sighted bird are strong measures of cooperation. Once again, mutilation of game (rendering it unfit for the table), burying the game and EXTREME hard mouth on any of the retrieves are reasons to lower the cooperation score. (**Note:** Judges should ENSURE that the dog has indeed mutilated the bird and is not just hard mouthed.) If the bird has been mutilated, or the dog refused to bring the bird to the handler while biting down, eating etc., then an overall cooperation score of a non-qualifying 0 is warranted. **See note on cooperation in 3.8.**

Obedience

The good versatile utility dog must always be controllable. Experienced hunters are aware that during any outing in the field, occasions can arise when obedience on the part of the dog must take priority. The safety of the dog and simple “good citizenship” on the part of both dog and handler demand it. The actual success of the hunt can hinge upon an obedient dog that will willingly suppress its natural instincts and desires and obey the handler’s commands. The dog should readily take hand, voice, or whistle signals as a matter of course when a change of direction by the handler or the end of the work demands it. A calm, understanding handler and an eager, obedient dog working as a team are a joy to watch.

This area is the most consistently measured characteristic of any judged in the test. Some parts of the test such as walking at heel, remaining by blind and behavior by the blind are

purely obedience. Other portions of the test have a significant element of obedience. Each time the handler gives the dog a command, the response can be judged and the degree of compliance may be considered.

7.13 Scoring System and Judge's Scorecard

Scoring System for Utility Test

Judged	Index Number	Max Points Attainable	Prize I	Prize II	Prize III
Water					
Search for Duck	4	16	16(4)	12(3)	8(2)
Walking at Heel	2	8	6(3)	4(2)	2(1)
Remaining by Blind	2	8	6(3)	4(2)	2(1)
Steadiness by Blind	2	8	6(3)	4(2)	2(1)
Retrieve of Duck	3	12	9(3)	6(2)	3(1)
Field					
Search	5	20	15(3)	15(3)	10(2)
Pointing	4	16	16(4)	12(3)	8(2)
Steadiness on Game	3	12	9(3)	6(2)	6(2)
Retrieve of Shot Bird	3	12	9(3)	6(2)	3(1)
Retrieve by Drag	3	12	9(3)	6(2)	3(1)
Judged Throughout					
Use of Nose	6	24	24(4)	18(3)	18(3)
Desire to Work	5	20	20(4)	15(3)	10(2)
Stamina	3	12	9(3)	9(3)	6(2)
Cooperation	3	12	9(3)	6(2)	3(1)
Obedience	3	12	9(3)	6(2)	6(2)
Total		204	172	129	90

Minimum score for each prize classification is indicated in parentheses.

NAVHDA

NOSE	DESIRE	STAM	COOP	OBED	TEST	SCORE		POINTS
					Search for Duck 4 3 2		4	
					Walking at Heel 3 2 1		2	
					Remaining by Blind 3 2 1		2	
					Steadiness by Blind 3 2 1		2	
					Retrieve of Duck 3 2 1		3	
					Search 3 3 2		5	
					Pointing 4 3 2		4	
					Steadiness to Flush			
					Steadiness to Wing			
					Steadiness to Shot			
					Steadiness to Fall			
					Steadiness Total 3 2 2		3	
					Retrieve of Shot Bird 3 2 1		3	
					Retrieve by Drag 3 2 1		3	
					Use of Nose 4 3 3		6	
					Desire to Work 4 3 2		5	
					Stamina 3 3 2		3	
					Cooperation 3 2 1		3	
					Obedience 3 2 2		3	

PRIZE CLASSIFICATION _____ TOTAL _____

JUDGE'S NAME _____
(Print Name)

SIGNATURE _____

JUDGE # _____

☐ **Check here if this is an Apprentice Card**

☐ **Check here if this is the Senior Judge's Card**

NAVHDA UTILITY TEST

CALL NAME:

CHAPTER:

DATE OF TEST:

NAME OF DOG:

AGE ON TEST DATE:

BREED: **SEX:**

OWNER: **MEMB#:**

HANDLER: **MEMB#:**

REGISTRATION #:

PHYSICAL ATTRIBUTES:

1._____Eyes: ectropic *(out)*, entropic *(in)*, other defects _____

2._____Testes

3._____H.D. X-rayed

4._____Bite and Teeth _____

Butt Overshot Undershot Extra Missing

_____
List ID Number(s) of Involved Teeth

COAT:

Density	**Harshness**
Dense	Harsh
Medium Dense	Medium Harsh
Open	Soft

TEMPERAMENT:

NORMAL SENSITIVE "Recovers Fast" SHY "Recovers Slow"

COMMENTS:

Primary Secondary Where Applicable A=Judge's Score B=Consensus (if different from A) A/B

8 The Invitational Test

8.1 Purpose and Scope

The Invitational Test is NAVHDA's highest level test. This Test is designed to evaluate an exceptional hunting dog in all phases of work and a variety of hunting situations.

Dogs successfully completing the Invitational Test, with a passing score, clearly demonstrate exceptional skill, ability, and obedience. Qualifying dogs are awarded the title "Versatile Champion" and are further recognized by placing "VC" before their name in all test records and the NAVHDA Registry. Entries to the Invitational Test must have DNA information on file or applied for, through NAVHDA, prior to the closing date for entry and the primary owner of each entry must be a NAVHDA International member. All dogs participating in the Invitational Test must have received a Utility Prize I in the preceding calendar year.

8.2 Invitational Rules

The Invitational Test is not necessarily the same each time it is held, as the test may be modified for evaluation of exceptional hunting dogs in various hunting conditions or to fit the available grounds. All references to distance, size or sequence of events are very general and may be significantly different at any Invitational Test. The Invitational Test participants will be informed of the expected scenario well in advance of the Test. When handlers check in on test day, they will receive the running order and their bracemate.

Dogs achieving a VC Title will not be eligible for entry in any subsequent Invitational Tests. All females will be inspected on the day of testing. Any female determined to be "in season" will be rescheduled for testing on the last day(s) of testing after all males have run. The Invitational Test is a pass or fail test.

In both the field and at the water, Invitational handlers are expected to remain standing throughout all retrieving sequences. Handlers may bend over to receive the bird, but kneeling, squatting, or crouching while the dog is returning may lower the retrieving score. A single encouragement when picking up the bird is allowed. Retrieves must be clean and efficient. Avoidance, parading with the bird, or dropping the bird will be severely penalized. The dog must sit or stand quietly until commanded to release the game. Handlers are permitted to touch their dog only for watering or praise.

The Invitational Test is divided into two groups: Field and Water.

8.3 Field Work

A Judge will meet the handler at the starting line. If the handler has any questions, this is the time to ask. The handler is required to wear orange in the field and carry an empty break open shotgun, which must be kept in hand for the retrieves. The use of a reflective collar will be allowed to more easily identify dogs that have similar appearances. If the handler does not have any of these items, they will be provided for use. Handler and dog will be in the field for a minimum of one hour with a bracemate. Two approved gunners and three Judges will accompany each brace. Although the handlers will carry break-open shotguns, under no conditions will handlers shoot at any time during the brace. The dogs and their handlers are expected to hunt together as a "team." If either dog interferes with its bracemate by repeatedly stealing point or initiating aggressive behavior, the handler may be asked to leash their dog. In such cases, the dog cannot receive a passing score. However, a minor encounter with no further aggression will not be grounds for ejection.

Dogs will be provided with multiple opportunities to find and handle game properly, which may include "stop to flush" situations. If the gunners have a safe shot on a wild flush or a bumped bird, the bird will be shot. If a safe shot is not possible, a gunner may fire a shot in the air. The handler will be required to shoulder the gun on all handled birds. In all cases, the dog is expected to display steadiness through fall, as well as retrieve to hand. When the handler sends his or her dog on a retrieve, excessive or loud commands are to be avoided. After the retrieve, the retrieving dog is to be kept under control as the other dog may still be honoring and/or be pointing its own bird. If the gunners miss a bird or are not able to make a safe shot, handlers will be expected to heel their dog out of the situation without touching the dog or grabbing its collar. At this level "bumped" and "wild flushed" birds may be shot if the shot is safe. Invitational dogs are expected to display excellent manners on game in these situations.

In the field, backing of the bracemate's point is evaluated. To receive a passing score, a dog is expected to back without command. The backing dog must be off wind or downwind a sufficient distance that, in the opinion of the Judges, the backing dog stopped as a result of seeing its bracemate on point rather than scenting and pointing game. Dogs that require excessive handling to come in for a back will have their backing and/or obedience scores penalized which can result in a failing score. If the dog clearly avoids backing its bracemate, the cooperation and backing score may be reduced. Standing next to the handler should not be confused with backing. Backing dogs that creep or otherwise move in will be penalized. Judgment of backing ends when the dog becomes aware of a handler's, a gunner's, or a judge's presence. Commands after an established back will impact the dog's steadiness score and, if continued, may result in a failing score.

Should both dogs go on point on different birds, the dog that established point first will have its bird shot first. The second dog will be expected to remain on point and steady during this time and will be expected to complete its sequence upon the completion of its bracemate's bird.

There may be times throughout the field when the handler and his or her bracemate may be split up for various reasons. These reasons may include when Judges have seen a sufficient number of backs from both dogs, one of the handlers may need a bird to complete scoring of pointing, steadiness, or retrieve, or the Judges may want to see how dogs react after being split up and rejoined to complete the hunt, particularly if they are concerned about potential interference or intimidation. In the event either dog interferes with its bracemate or, in the Judges' opinion this interference is extreme, the dog may be ordered leashed during its brace mate's bird work. However, once a dog is leashed, it no longer can receive a passing score. Any dog that initiates a dog fight may be expelled from the field and cannot receive a passing score. A minor encounter with no further aggression will not be grounds for ejection.

Any dog that leaves the field for more than twenty minutes is out of judgment and will not be allowed back in the field but will be allowed to participate in all other segments of the Test. A bye dog will then be used in place of the ejected dog.

8.4 Double Mark Retrieve

The Double Mark Retrieve Test is designed as a realistic duck hunting scenario where two ducks are shot. The purpose of the Test is to evaluate the dog's ability to 'Mark' and remember the location of a downed duck while remaining composed and steady during the flight, shooting and additional distraction during the retrieve of the second duck shot. The Test is completed with an efficient retrieve of the first duck shot.

Requirements for this test are a body of water mostly of swimming depth, a minimum of 2-3 acres with no, or very little, vegetation. There will be a small rig of six to ten decoys spread near the water line, but not in line with the marks. Please see the diagram below for detailed information on distances and orientation.

Test Dog: Prior to the test each day, a dog not entered in the test will be run through the sequence. This measure provides handlers with an opportunity to see how the test will be conducted and assures Judges the marks can be seen and are positioned as intended.

A Judge will meet the handler at the starting line. If there are any questions, this is the time to ask. The handler will be handed two blanks and a double barrel break open shotgun to use so reloading will not be required between shots. Off lead heeling, between 50 to 100 yards on a clearly defined path, begins at the designated marker and ends when the dog is positioned at the water's edge between the markers. The dog is expected to heel with only a single command at the start. Any additional commands will lower the heeling score.

Once the dog is set, the handler should nod his or her head to signal to the Judges that he or she is ready to begin. Excessive time taken to get the dog positioned will affect the steadiness at the Double Mark Retrieve score. The handler may not position or align the dog by grabbing it or its collar, or by moving or lifting it in any manner without being severely penalized.

When the first dead duck (memory bird) is thrown, the handler will swing and fire a blank shot at the top of the arc. After the first duck hits the water, the second duck (wiper, or "go-to" bird) will be thrown. The second dead duck "wipes" across the line of the memory bird and, at this time, the handler will fire a second shot. The second duck will pass close to the handler and his or her dog. The dog must remain steady through all sequences, if not, the steadiness at the Double Mark Retrieve score will be severely affected. After the second duck (wiper or "go-to" bird) has hit the water, the handler should pause to demonstrate steadiness before sending the dog with a line and/or a tap on the head or ear. **The second (wiper / go-to bird) must be retrieved first.** The handler may hand the gun to the Judge after sending their dog on the first retrieve or may choose to keep it through the entire sequence. The handler should inform the Judges of their intention prior to this sequence. Once the dog has the wiper bird in its mouth and has turned back towards the handler, a diversion shot will be fired by a distraction gunner. The handler must NOT mount the gun and point in the direction of the memory bird when the distraction shot is fired. After receiving the first retrieve, the handler may hand the bird to a Judge before sending the dog on the second retrieve. Alternatively, the handler may keep the bird until the dog has been sent for the retrieve and then hand it off. Again, the handler must tell the Judges which option he or she will use.

Position or align the dog and send it for the second retrieve (the memory bird). The handler is not allowed to position the dog by grabbing it or its collar in any manner without being severely penalized. Heeling the dog to line its direction to the memory bird is allowed as is sending the dog with a line with the hand and/or a tap on the dog's head or ear. Entry into the water should be direct; excessive running the bank and avoidance of the task will result in the termination of the retrieve portion of the event.

Minimal handling is permitted. Excessive handling and commands that are not obeyed will affect the score. After the dog has the bird in its mouth, a single light whistle or verbal praise is allowed; harsh return commands will negatively affect the score.

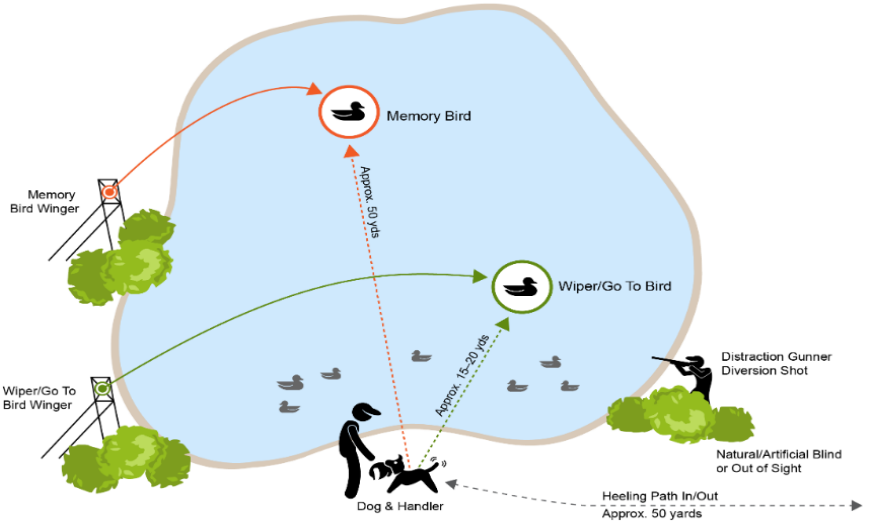
After receiving the second retrieve, the handler will hand the bird to the judge. The dog must be kept under control and in a heel position. A single command is permitted. The gun will then be handed back to the handler (if they do not have it) and he or she will heel the dog off lead back to the marker where the event started. A single command is allowed but excessive commands to get control of the dog will negatively impact the score.

Handling, as a means of directing the dog on a correct line to the duck is allowed during these sequences. A dog that completes the retrieves with efficiency, requiring only a

minimal amount of direction, may receive a high score. Beyond this, any commands by the handler may reduce the dog's score. To achieve a qualifying score, both ducks must be retrieved to hand, in the order prescribed above, with a minimum of commands.

Double Mark Retrieve Diagram

Note that in this diagram, heeling begins on the right and the memory and wiper birds are shown being thrown left to right. Depending on terrain, conditions or other factors, these directions can change.



8.5 Blind Retrieve

The Blind Retrieve represents an actual hunting situation in which a crippled duck has landed approximately 100 yards across open water, near the opposite shore and crawled up the bank some distance before expiring. To replicate this scenario, a test volunteer will drag the duck from the water's edge a short distance up the bank. The test requires a dog that has not seen this duck fall or heard a shot fired to take directions from its handler to the area to locate and retrieve the duck to hand.

Test Dog: Prior to the test each day, a dog not entered in the test will be run through the sequence. This measure provides handlers with an opportunity to see how the test will be conducted, note the scenting conditions, and assures Judges that the setup is correct.

A Judge will meet the handler at the starting line. If there are any questions, this is the time to ask. The dog will be expected to heel off lead from the designated marker to the water's edge where it will be positioned anywhere between two marked spots. Positioning the dog by grabbing it or its collar or by moving or lifting it in any manner will be severely penalized.

When the handler is ready, he or she may send the dog by using a hand to line the dog and/or a tap on the head or ear. If the dog repeatedly refuses (often called a "NO GO") to leave the shore, or requires excessive coaxing to do the task, it will result in the termination of the Blind Retrieve sequence, however, handler and dog will still complete the heel and honor sequences. If a resend is needed and is taken, it can still result in a passing score. If the dog enters the water and turns to face its handler (most often called a "POP") while crossing to the far shore, the handler may command or handle the dog without impacting the score providing the dog does not require several commands to reverse its course and/or does not "POP" several times. Handling is not penalized if the commands are obeyed and are minimal.

Avoiding the task and going on an extended search is also severely penalized. The handler may be asked to call his or her dog. Locating the duck by search is not the objective. Likewise, merely retrieving the duck does not automatically result in a pass as any number of the above scenarios may play a part in the score. Once the dog has reached the other side, handling is allowed if the dog requires it. As noted before, handling is acceptable as long as the dog obeys the commands and they are minimal in nature. Excessive commands to fetch the bird are penalized. Once the dog makes the retrieve, a single whistle or light praise is allowed. Multiple commands to get the dog to return will negatively impact the score. The dog should make the retrieve to hand. The handler will then hand the bird to the Judge while keeping the dog under control in a heel position. Giving a single command to heel at this point is allowed. The dog will then be heeled off lead directly to the marked honoring site. Additional commands used or needed for heeling during this portion of the test will affect the dog's overall obedience score.

8.6 Honor by Blind

This Test simulates a duck hunting scenario where two dogs are working from the same blind or position, taking turns in honoring the other's retrieve of downed ducks.

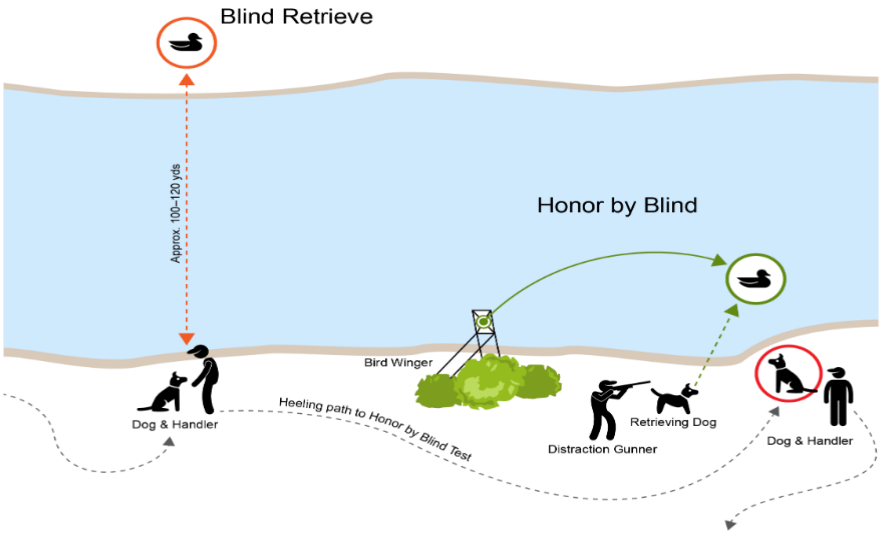
The handler will position the dog by the marker at the water's edge in a standing, sitting, or down position with a single command. Once the dog is set, a single command to remain in position may be given and the handler will position themselves behind the dog at the mark indicated for them. The handler will nod their head to signal they are ready to begin the sequence. Excessive time taken to get control of the dog and position it will affect the score.

On signal from a Judge, a shot will be fired by the handler of the retrieving dog as a dead duck is thrown into open water nearby. The dog must remain in its place throughout the throw, shot and retrieve of the duck by the retrieving dog. Commands needed for the dog to stay in place will severely impact the honoring score.

Once the sequence is over, the handler will be told to return to the dog. At this time a single heel command is allowed and the handler will heel the dog off lead to the end point which will be marked as well. Additional commands needed for heeling will be reflected in the dog's overall obedience score.

Blind Retrieve and Honor by Blind Diagram

As with the Double Mark Retrieve, the direction of heeling in and out and the direction from which the retrieve duck is thrown can be different depending on terrain, conditions, or other factors.



8.7 Scoring System and Judges' Scorecards

Scoring System for Invitational Test

Judged	Index Number	Minimum Qualifying Score	Points Max.	Points Min.
Field				
Search	5	3	20	15
Pointing	5	4	20	20
Backing	3	3	12	9
Field Steadiness	3	3	12	9
Field Retrieve	3	3	12	9
Water Work				
Walking at Heel	2	3	8	6
Steady at Double Mark	2	3	8	6
Double Mark Retrieve	4	3	16	12
Blind Retrieve	4	3	16	12
Honor by Blind	2	3	8	6
Overall				
Nose	6	4	24	24
Desire	5	4	20	20
Cooperation	3	3	12	9
Obedience	3	3	12	9
Totals			200	166

INVITATIONAL FIELD

Brace #: Test #:

Judge Name

Total Time:_____

Minutes & Seconds from pickup of brace to pickup of next brace.

SEARCH	SEARCH
POINTING	POINTING
BACKING	BACKING
STEADY FL WI SH FA	STEADY FL WI SH FA
RETRIEVE	RETRIEVE
NOSE	NOSE
DESIRE	DESIRE
COOPERATION	COOPERATION
OBEDIENCE	OBEDIENCE

NAVHDA Invitational Judges Worksheet
Double Mark Retrieve/Heel

HANDLER: CALL NAME:

TEST #:

JUDGE_____

Nose	Desire	Coop	Obed in	Obed out	Test	Score
					HEELING OFF LEASH	
					STEADINESS AT MARKED RETRIEVE	
					Ret 1	Score
					Ret 2	
					DBL MARK RETRIEVE	
					NOSE	
					DESIRE TO WORK	
					COOPERATION	
					OBEDIENCE	

InvitDoubleMark-Heel.jpl 10/2009

NAVHDA Invitational Judges Worksheet
Blind Retrieve/Honor

HANDLER: CALL NAME:

TEST #:

JUDGE_____

Nose	Desire	Coop	Obed	Test	Score
				BLIND RETRIEVE	
				HONORING AT THE BLIND	
HEEL Notes only. Score as part of obedience				Blind / Honor	
				NOSE	
				DESIRE TO WORK	
				COOPERATION	
				OBEDIENCE	

InvitBlindRetrieve-Honor.rpt 9/2011

NAVHDA INVITATIONAL
SUMMARY SHEET

HANDLER: _____ DATE OF TEST: _____

CALL NAME:_____ _____Years Old TEST NUMBER: _____

Registration #_____ Registered Dog Name:_____

TEST				SCORE	PASS
FIELD WORK					
Field Search					
Pointing					
Backing					
Field Steadiness					
Field Retrieve					
WATER WORK					
Heeling					
Steady at Dbl Mark					
Double Mark Retrieve					
Blind Retrieve					
Honoring at Blind					
OVERALL					
Nose	Dbl:	Blind:	Fld:		
Desire	Dbl:	Blind:	Fld:		
Cooperation	Dbl:	Blind:	Fld:		
Obedience	Dbl:	Blind:	Fld:		

PASS _____ **NO PASS** _____

JUDGES:

YEAR-TEST #

9 Education and Training Assistance

9.1 The Rewards of Training

A well-trained versatile hunting dog will warm the heart of any sportsman. So much more pleasure is derived in the field, forest, and marsh when a dog is properly trained. Deep personal satisfaction comes to the hunter when both function as a well-knit team. Of even greater importance is the fact that much less game is lost when the dog is well trained and, as mentioned in the introduction to this Aims, Programs & Rules book, this conservation of game is a fundamental and underlying aim of NAVHDA.

9.2 Chapter Training Sessions

Another informal way NAVHDA assists in training versatile hunting dogs is through Chapter training sessions. The local Chapters of NAVHDA hold many training sessions during the year. These training sessions are marked by camaraderie and mutual assistance among those in attendance.

Sessions may include basic obedience training applicable both at home and afield. These basics may include such skills as sit, down, come, stay, and heel. Other topics may include training for an energetic and reliable retrieve, ways to improve intensity on point, teaching the basics of tracking for the recovery of wounded game, and strategies for getting a reluctant young dog into water. Most Chapters have the required tools and may also be able to supply the game needed to train. In short, the owner of a versatile hunting dog is never far from help in training his or her dog.

You can find a Chapter near you by using the Chapter locator map and a list of Chapter key contacts on our Website under the *Membership and Chapters* section.

9.3 Training Assistance Program

NAVHDA has developed a Training Seminar Assistance Program to partially fund training seminars that would have a lasting impact on local Chapter training programs. Although most funded seminars will likely involve hosting an established trainer from out of the local region, proposals centered on other types of seminars are also encouraged. Regardless of the format of the seminar, the intent is to help Chapters get the information they need to better train their dogs for testing in the NAVHDA system and, ultimately, for upland and waterfowl hunting. More details on who can apply and funding are available on the Website under the *Membership and Chapters* section.

9.4 Test Videos

NAVHDA has also produced highly informative videos of tests that explain in detail their goals. Individuals may find currently available videos on the Website under *About the NAVHDA Testing System* for the respective test category. The videos are great tools to help handlers visualize, understand, and prepare for their next NAVHDA test.

10 NAVHDA Aims and Rules and Invitational Clinics

10.1 Aims & Rules Clinic

The Aims & Rules Clinic is an educational tool developed by NAVHDA to help dog owners and handlers understand how Judges use information from the Aims and Rules book to judge a test. The clinics are conducted by NAVHDA Senior Judges who have been trained and certified as Clinic Leaders. Aims & Rules Clinics cover a variety of topics over two days, including informal classroom style instruction on the NAVHDA philosophy, test mechanics, and the scoring system for each test.

Participants will also take to the field and water to judge and score dogs being run in a mock test setting. In the field and water portion, after each section, the participants and the Clinic Leader will score and discuss the dog's performance. Clinic leaders may also discuss any strengths or weaknesses in training or handling and may also provide helpful tips and suggestions for handling dogs in NAVHDA tests. The ultimate goal of an Aims & Rules Clinic is to provide a better understanding of the NAVHDA testing system.

Who Should Attend and Why?

- People with their first dog will see how other dogs work and gain insight into what their dog is doing and why. This will help them develop their pup's talents and improve performance.
- Novice handlers will learn how NAVHDA evaluates versatile dogs and thus will be better prepared to handle their dogs in a test.
- Experienced handlers will gain a deeper, more technical knowledge of how the team of dog and handler is judged.
- Participants will learn how to use NAVHDA records obtained through our Search Test Records service for selective breeding or selecting a dog.
- Breeders will learn what to look for in their breeding stock and their progeny.
- Aspiring NAVHDA Judges are required to attend an Aims & Rules Clinic, and attendance is one of the first steps in applying to enter the Apprentice Judge Program.

10.2 Invitational Clinic

The Invitational Clinic is an educational tool developed by NAVHDA to help dog owners and handlers understand both the procedural and technical aspects of the Invitational Test. The clinics are conducted by designated NAVHDA Invitational Clinic Leaders. Invitational Clinic Leaders are very experienced NAVHDA Senior Judges who have tested dogs at the Invitational level, as well as judged the Invitational Test. The clinic will cover a variety of topics over two days. Using an informal classroom setting, participants will review the test mechanics and scoring system. After that, participants will take to the field and water to judge and score dogs in a mock test setting. After each section, the participants and the Clinic Leader will discuss the dog's performance and how that performance might be evaluated during the test. Further discussions will focus on the strengths and weaknesses in training and handling. Clinic leaders include helpful tips and suggestions on handling dogs in the Invitational Test along with helpful training advice.

Who Should Attend and Why?

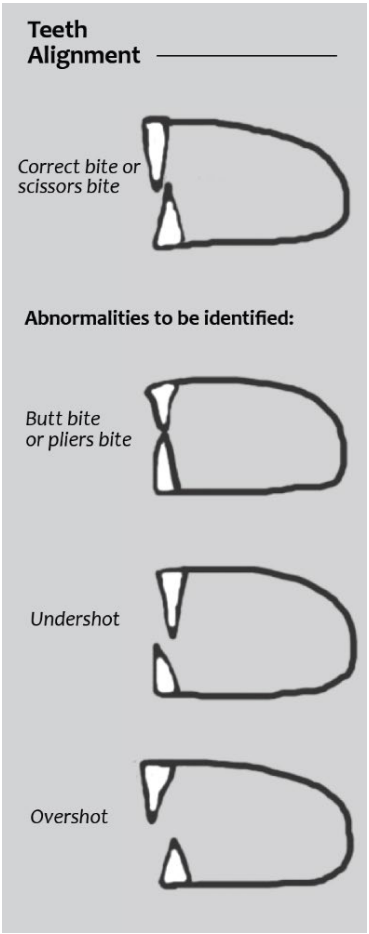
- Novice handlers will learn how NAVHDA evaluates dogs running in the Invitational and thus will be better prepared to handle their dogs in the test. This will help to develop their dog's talents and improve its performance.
- This clinic offers hands on opportunities for learning how the test is set up, how to train for it, and how to handle the dog to its best potential.

Many NAVHDA Chapters across the U.S. and Canada offer Aims & Rules and Invitational Clinics. Find a list of upcoming Clinics on the Website under the Events section. Contact the event secretary for more information. The host Chapter determines Clinic fees.

11 Physical Attributes

11.1 The Judges' Role

NAVHDA Judges are not skilled as all-breed judges of coat and conformation and are not expected to be. As trained observers, however, a team of Judges can make a valuable contribution in providing a consensus report and record of coat, conformation, teeth, and temperament. The Judges should point out obvious abnormalities to the handler when judging coat and conformation. The following notes and sketches are intended as an aid in remembering the terminology. Note: The Judges' decision on physical attributes is final and absolute. No appeal will be granted to those handlers who disagree with the Judges' evaluations or written comments.



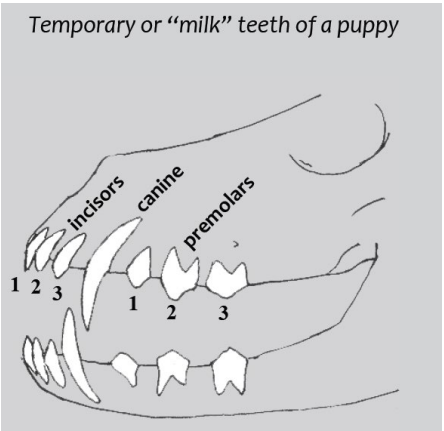
11.2 Eyes

Eye defects which are field recognizable are usually abnormalities of the lids. Entropic lids are turned in so that the eyelashes rub against the eye. Ectropic lids are turned out, usually making a pouch below the eye, which can collect seeds and field debris causing potential vision problems.

11.3 Teeth

The normal bite is usually referred to as a scissors bite and relates to the alignment of the incisors. The words tight scissors are an accurate description of teeth alignment.

Misalignment of the incisors is the most common bite fault, but all teeth should be checked for alignment. In addition, any missing or extra teeth should be noted. The following diagrams will help to understand both normal and abnormal bite and tooth alignment.



Dog's Right

103 102 101 201 202 203

104 105 106 107 108 109 110

204 205 206 207 208 209 210

R Maxilla L

Mandible

411 410 409 408 407 406 405 404

311 310 309 308 307 306 305 304

403 402 401 301 302 303

NAVHDA SANCTIONED TEST CAPACITY CHARTS

The recommended number of dogs tested in one day by a judging team has been established to assist chapters in planning their test schedule. This schedule provides enough time for adequate discussion of test scores between the Judges. A test of a single type is the simplest to run efficiently, and conversely changing from one type of test to another always takes some time. The combinations of dog numbers for a test are shown in the following table:

Recommended Number of Dogs per Judging Team

NA	&	GDT	GDT	&	UT	UT	&	NA
8		0	6		0	5		0
7		0	5		1	4		1
6		1	4		1	3		1
5		2	3		2	3		2
4		2	2		3	2		3
3		3	1		4	2		4
2		4	0		5	1		5
1		5				1		6
0		6				0		7
						0		8

A maximum of two Apprentice Judges can participate per Judging Team

<u>When conducting three types of tests</u> with one Judging Team, Gun Dog tests are considered to be Utility dogs in your calculations of the number of dogs which can be run in a day. Use the UT & NA section of the table.

Extra capacity is granted to chapters with a history of successful tests run on grounds that they are experienced with and that lend themselves to efficient operations. The maximum number of dogs allowed in a test and various combinations follows:

Maximum Number of Dogs per Judging Team

NA & GDT	GDT & UT	UT & NA
10 0	7 0	6 0
9 0	6 1	5 1
8 1	5 2	4 2
7 2	4 2	3 3
6 2	3 3	3 4
5 3	2 4	2 5
4 4	1 5	2 6
3 4	0 6	1 7
2 5		1 8
1 6		0 9
0 7		0 10

A maximum of two Apprentice Judges can participate per Judging Team

<u>When conducting three types of tests</u> with one Judging Team, Gun Dog tests are considered to be Utility dogs in your calculations of the number of dogs which can be run in a day. Use the UT & NA section of the table.

No NAVHDA Sanctioned Test shall exceed these maximum numbers.

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