



November 22, 2011

## Changes to Retriever Hunting Test Regulations

At its November meeting, the AKC Board of Directors passed a number of changes to the Regulations for AKC Retriever Hunting Tests. All changes become effective January 1, 2012 except #4.

**1. CHAPTER 1, SECTION 4. TESTS OFFERED, ENTRY REQUIREMENTS, No Special Inducements.** A hunt test giving club shall not accept an entry fee other than that published in its premium list or entry form, or in any way discriminates between entrants. . . . . Except a club, at its discretion, may allow for a reduced entry fee for dogs handled by juniors. A junior handler is someone less than 18 years of age on the first day of the test.

*The addition to the “no special inducements” clause allows a club at its discretion to offer a lower entry fee for junior handlers as a way to promote youth involvement in the sport.*

**2a. CHAPTER 2, SECTION 4. SENIOR HUNTER TITLE (SH).**

Dogs that have acquired a Senior Hunter title at an AKC licensed or member Hunting Test are eligible to enter Junior Hunting Tests. No JH title will be issued.

**2b. CHAPTER 2, SECTION 5. MASTER HUNTER TITLE (MH).**

Dogs that have acquired a Master Hunter title at an AKC licensed or member club Hunting Test are eligible to enter Junior and Senior Hunting Tests. No JH or SH titles will be issued.

*This modifies the current Regulation that says once a dog has earned a title at a higher level, it may not enter lower level tests. The AKC has received requests from owners with elderly dogs that are no longer capable of performing at a high level but the owner would like to run the dog for the enjoyment of the dog and owner. This change may also find application with a professionally handled dog whose owner would like to try handling but does not feel comfortable entering a high level test.*

**3. CHAPTER 3, SECTION 25. HUNTING TEST COMMITTEE, Weather.** Weather is an important consideration for the hunting test event committee. The safety of participants and animals is of utmost importance. Extreme weather such as lightening, strong winds, heat or cold, snow or heavy rain can create hazardous conditions. The hunting test event committee, in consultation with the judges, has the responsibility to decide if an event should be halted due to weather and at what point the event shall resume. If a weather delay results in an entrant being unable to participate, the refund of entry fees, in whole or in part, will be at the discretion of the event committee. If an entire event or part of an event is cancelled due to weather, the refund of entry fees, in whole or in part, will be at the discretion of the event committee.

*This is meant to clarify that the event committee has the responsibility of deciding when an event should be stopped/started due to weather conditions. The event committee also has the right to decide how to handle entry fees when weather causes delay or cancelation.*

#### **4. EVENT APPLICATION FEE**

The AKC Board passed an increase in the event application fee to \$35.00 (previously \$25.00) for all events held on or after April 1, 2012, unless the event has been applied for prior to December 12, 2011. The current Hunt Test Application fee has been in effective since the beginning of the program in the mid-80s.

**5. CHAPTER 3, NEW SECTION 18. Walk Ups.** In Senior and Master hunting tests, a walk up is used to test a dog's steadiness. The bird represents a surprise situation therefore gunning stations must be well concealed, utilizing natural cover when possible so that only the bird may be seen when launched. Birds shall be presented at distances ranging from 35 to 45 yards of the dog with no attention getting devices utilized. As the first bird is thrown in a walk up situation, the handler may give either a verbal or whistle command to steady the dog once the bird is in the air. Judges shall tell handlers in advance of the start of judging when it is appropriate to give the steadying command or whistle. There shall be no walk up test situations in Junior level tests.

*This modification is meant to provide a better explanation regarding how a walk up should be structured.*

**6. CHAPTER 3, SECTION 6. Honoring.** In Senior and Master Tests every dog shall honor in at least one hunting situation involving the retrieve of a marked fall(s) by remaining on the line off-lead while the working dog retrieves, unless otherwise directed or until dismissed by the Judges. Only one dog at a time shall be required to honor the retrieve of the working dog. The honoring dog must be in an area designated by the judges. The specific position (sitting, lying down, etc) of the honoring dog will be determined by the handler provided the honoring dog is positioned to clearly see all the marks without having to reposition itself. Judges should be careful in establishing the honoring scenario to maintain adequate distance between dogs.

*This modification is meant to clarify that there shall be only one dog at a time required to honor. It further cautions judges that the distance between the working and honoring dog should be a consideration when setting up the test.*

**7. CHAPTER 5, NEW SECTION 4. Marking and Memory of Birds.** In Junior, Senior and Master Tests, marking and memory of birds are of primary importance. While dogs may be handled in all three levels of testing, this is undesirable in marking tests and should be utilized only as a last recourse to get a bird out of the field. A dog that goes to the area of the fall, establishes a hunt and finds the bird unaided must be scored appreciably higher than a dog that has to be handled to the bird.

In conjunction with the inclusion of this general Regulation, the following Regulation in Chapter 5, Section 4, Junior Hunting tests, paragraph 2 is eliminated – ~~Junior Hunting dogs shall not be handled on more than one mark.~~

*This change is meant to clarify that since marking is of primary importance, dogs that do not require handling on marked retrieves must be scored higher than dogs that require handling. This general statement is true for all three testing levels. The current statement in the Junior section implies that a Junior dog may be handled to one mark and receive the same score as a dog that performs in a similar manner but without handling. The current statement has caused confusion and has been eliminated.*

**8. CHAPTER 5, SECTION 5. Junior Hunting Tests.** Dogs shall be tested on a minimum of four single marks, two on land and two on water. No more than two marks may be thrown in a series.

Judges in keeping with simulation of realistic and natural hunting conditions must remember the use of numerous decoys, islands, points of land, rolling terrain, cover, ditch lines, wind direction, etc. are

important factors to consider when designing test scenarios to evaluate Junior dogs as capable hunting companions.

(1) ...

(2) Dogs shall be steady but may be brought to the line on leash with a flat buckle collar. The dog is under judgment when it leaves the holding blind. A Junior dog that is not under control when brought to the line (jumping, strongly tugging, etc) even though it is on a leash shall risk receiving a lower score in trainability including zero in extreme cases. Dogs may be restrained gently with a slipcord *looped through the flat buckle collar*, or held gently by the flat buckle collar until sent to retrieve.

*Notable changes/clarifications made to the description of the Junior Hunting Test include: (1) Judges may, at their discretion, require more than four marks. (2) No more than two marks may be thrown in a series. (3) While a Junior dog is being brought to the line on leash, it is expected that it be reasonably under control. If it is not, the dog risks being scored lower in trainability in accordance to the degree of its misbehavior.*

**9. CHAPTER 5, SECTION 6. Master Hunting Test.** Dogs shall be tested in a minimum of five hunting situations as follows: multiple land marks, multiple water marks, multiple marks on water and land, a land blind and a water blind (at least one that shall be a double blind in any combination). There shall be at least three series. At least one of the series shall include a walk-up. Diversion birds and/or diversion shots such as described in Chapter 3, Section 24, must be used at least once. In Master tests, in at least two multiple marking situations the dog's marking/memory will be tested with at least three (3) falls, before the dogs is sent to retrieve. During a double set of marks (2 falls) Master judges shall include additional elements of testing i.e. walkup, diversion bird, diversion shot, blind/s etc. in testing the dog's abilities.

*This change increases the testing requirements for Master dogs by specifying that they shall complete two triple marks (previously one) and that an additional testing element shall be included during a double mark.*

#### **10. CHAPTER 1, SECTION 3. Making Application.**

Clubs that sponsor more than two hunting test in any twelve month period shall be required to offer at least once in any combination, each of the three (3) test levels.

*Current Regulations state that if a club holds more than one hunting test per calendar year, a Master level test must be included in the second hunting test. Some clubs do not have the resources to hold all three testing levels at an event. Currently these clubs are limited to one junior/senior test per year. This change will allow these clubs to hold two junior/senior tests (for example, one on Saturday and another on Sunday) if they desire.*

**11. CHAPTER 1, SECTION 6. Judges' Eligibility.** Anyone at least 21 years of age and in good standing with the American Kennel Club may be approved to judge a Hunting Test subject to the eligibility requirements in force at the time. While the AKC approves individuals to judge based on eligibility requirements, it is the responsibility of the clubs to determine the "qualifications" of each prospective judge by researching experience accumulated through training, actual hunting over dogs, handling dogs in field events and prior judging activities. Clubs may at their discretion develop a questionnaire in order to request background information on prospective judges.

#### **Prior to Becoming Eligible to Judge.**

- (1) Seminar: Attend an AKC Retriever Hunting Test seminar. This first seminar allows an individual to judge for three years assuming the apprenticeship requirement is met.
- (2) Apprenticeship: Individuals that have not judged prior to January 1, 2012 must successfully apprentice at least once at the level being judged ~~or higher~~. (Club's responsibility to monitor.)

**Prior to Becoming Eligible to Judge the Senior/Master Test.** Individuals that have not judged Senior or Master tests prior to January 1, 2012 must first have judged at least twice at the testing level immediately below before they are eligible to judge a Senior or Master tests. (Club's responsibility to monitor.)

**Maintaining One's Ability to Judge:**

(1) Second Seminar: If an individual has judged within three years of attending the first seminar, that individual is required to attend a second seminar to maintain the ability to continue to judge. If an individual has not judged within three years of attending the first seminar, another "first" seminar is required prior to being allowed to judge. However, if you have earned six (6) points at the Master level, you do not need to take the second seminar. Anyone that has attended two or more seminars (one prior to judging and one after having judged) is exempt from any further seminar attendance.

(2) Written Test: After the second seminar (one prior to judging and one after having judged), an individual must complete a written self-administered AKC test every four years *and pass the test with a score of 90% or better.*

(3) Must Remain An Active Judge: An individual must judge at any level at least once every four (4) years to maintain eligibility. Individuals who have not judged within the four-year period of the mandatory written examination will be required to attend the Seminar.

(4) Must Remain An Active Handler: An individual must have handled a qualifying dog at the level to be judged or higher within seven (7) years of the date of the event. (Club's responsibility to monitor.)

Note: Current judges who do not meet this requirement have until January 1, 2014 to come into compliance.

*For new judges, working up through the three testing levels can provide valuable experience. Two changes to the judge eligibility conditions require this logical progression. (1) A prospective judge must apprentice at each level prior to judging that level, and (2) An individual must have judged twice at the Junior level prior to judging at the Senior level and further must have judged twice at the Senior level prior to judging at the Master level.*

*Another change to the judging eligibility requirements is that an individual must remain an active handler. An individual in order to maintain his eligibility to judge a specific level must have handled a qualifying dog at that level or higher within seven years of the date of an event he is being asked to judge.*

*Note #1: The new judges' eligibility requirements do not apply to events applied for prior to January 1, 2012.*

*Note #2: For a complete overview of judging eligibility requirements, please see the AKC Retriever Hunting Test website at: [www.akc.org/pdfs/events/hunting\\_tests/retrievers/Retriever\\_HT\\_Judges.pdf](http://www.akc.org/pdfs/events/hunting_tests/retrievers/Retriever_HT_Judges.pdf).*

*Note #3: This document can be found on the AKC Retriever Hunting Test website at: [www.akc.org/pdfs/events/hunting\\_tests/retrievers/Changes\\_Regulations\\_Nov2011.pdf](http://www.akc.org/pdfs/events/hunting_tests/retrievers/Changes_Regulations_Nov2011.pdf).*