

## Having a successful local UKC Field Trial

By Fred Overby

*Most new UKC local gun dog clubs struggle with sponsoring their first field trials. All clubs have done so, and the clubs that are successful have done the following.*

1. The organizers must personally solicit entries and explain the overall process to first-time participants.

First, your club will more than likely not have adequate entries to make the field trial a financial success by merely placing an advertisement, and hoping enough entries show up. They will not, as the UKC Pointing dog program has not yet attracted enough interest. The sponsoring club MUST call members and persons known to be interested, and ask them to enter dogs, both to help with the financial aspect of the associated expenses, as well as to educate people about the relatively new field trialing format.

Most folks who own Epagneul Bretons or a gun dog have never entered a dog in a field trial. They think of it as a contest normally involving professionals, where there are a couple of winners, and everyone else loses. They are worried about getting criticized or looking silly. They do not even understand the rules and the difference between Open Class, and Gun Dog Class. After prospective entrants are encouraged, educated about the process, and they understand that it's not so much about winning or losing, as the dog doing well and receiving a Pass, then their confidence and enthusiasm builds. The leaders MUST educate and encourage friends and associates to come, and take part. If not, your club may not be successful, the first few times.

2. Pick a judge who wants to help people and their dogs enjoy the process and learn to succeed.

No one wants to be made to feel stupid or inadequate. They have a dog to have a good time. Some judges have better demeanors than others. That does not mean they are "easy" or forgiving, just that they are courteous, have a positive attitude, and they want to make the handler feel comfortable and to enjoy the experience. This is a venue for amateurs, and judges need to be prepared to work with people who are learning the process. A good judge with a positive attitude can make all the difference in what participants take from the experience.

3. Pick a nice venue near where a number of participants can drive in a reasonable amount of time.

People love to see a nice hunting place, or to hunt new terrain. They will drive an hour or two, to go to a good place. But you have to have a nucleus of folks who are definitely going to show up.

4. Try two consecutive trials on two successive days to double revenues and give more than one chance to win.

It is a lot to ask a person to drive for hours, to only have the chance to run a dog once on a single day for fifteen minutes. Many simply will not do that. If you have two events on successive days, this gives people a lot more incentive to come a long way. If their dog makes a mistake on one day, they still have a second chance to be successful. Not only does this give people two chances to succeed, but most will enter their dogs both days and the revenue will be doubled for the club's finances.

#### 5. Have a nice meal or banquet and social event.

Not only does having a nice fish fry or barbecue add a nice touch to the event, but it makes it more conducive to a setting where families and friends will want to come each year. Some folks mainly just come to socialize and eat the barbecue—but that's o.k. It's not just about winning a ribbon; it's about enjoying friends, food, dogs and the outdoors. It's not how fancy the event is, just how much fun,--- and whether the food is good.

#### 6. Enthusiasts need to agree to help underwrite the event to get it off the ground.

To have a nice event, the organizers are going to have to take a little bit of personal financial risk to help the first couple of trials to succeed. However, the harder the organizers work to secure participants, the less risk they have of not having the revenue to cover all the club costs for UKC fees, award ribbons, birds (in liberated trials), and liability insurance.

#### 7. Consider opening the event to other continental breeds.

Field Trials in Europe involve all the breeds. There are only a couple of SPECIALTY- ONE BREED Field Trials events each year in Europe for a given breed. The UKC Program is designed for all breeds of pointing dogs. To have a viable program of field trials for people to be able to title dogs, other breeds need to participate. And the dogs and handlers need the competition, to rise to the occasion!

Good Luck.