

# SPANIEL WORKING TESTS



The kennel club lays out the basic requirements of a spaniel in a field trial as :-

“Dogs shall be required to quarter ground hunting for game and other quarry species (hereafter game), to be steady to flush, shot and fall and to retrieve tenderly to hand on command.

Any dog that does not fulfil these basic requirements shall not receive an Award or a Certificate of Merit”

The same requirements apply to working tests without the presence of live game:-

- The dogs are expected to quarter the ground and show good treatment of the ground and must actually be hunting and not just running over the ground.
- The dogs should work the wind conditions appropriately.
- The dogs should hunt through all the cover on their “beat”
- The dogs should stop to shot and remain steady to the thrown dummy and the second dog completing retrieves.
- The dogs should retrieve to hand and not drop the dummy although unlike the retrievers re-positioning is generally accepted as long as the dog doesn’t disregard the retrieve.
- The dogs should be soft mouthed and dummies will be checked for excessive mouthing.

## **Competition**

Competitors and their dogs will be run in a pair with another competitor and their dog, with a judge each.

Odd numbers will run under the right-hand side judge first and evens on the left-hand side. Competitors will then switch over for their second run.

The competitor running under the right-hand side judge will always have the first retrieve.

The competitors will generally be asked to hunt up together after a while a shot will be fired where by dogs are expected to stop to shot. A retrieve will then be thrown out for the right-hand side dog, which the dog is then sent for. Once retrieved the right-hand side dog will normally complete a blind retrieve from behind.

Once both retrieves are completed both dogs hunt on again and the same sequence happens for the left-hand side dog.

Whilst the other dog is completing their retrieves the dog not retrieving is expected to remain in their stop. In some cases the judge may invite the competitor to call their dog in.

CREDIT POINTS – These are the areas your judge will be looking at to score you.

**Marking ability** – how well does the dog mark the retrieve?

**Drive** – Does your dog have drive and enthusiasm to get the job done hunting/retrieving

**Style** – Does your dog have a natural “flashy” hunting style?

**Control + Quiet handling** – Your dog completes the task with minimal input from you and remains under close control.

**Clean quick retrieving and good delivery** – Your dog runs out and back enthusiastically and delivers the dummy to hand

ELIMINATING FAULTS – These are faults that would result in elimination (although in most working tests unlike trials you will be able to continue with the rest of the test, although this is at the discretion of the club/judges)

**Sending your dog before the judge says** – sending your dog before told to

**Hard mouth** – A dog that mouths the dummy excessively leaving marks or damage.

**Whining or barking** – Any noise made by the dog

**Running in or chasing** – The dogs must not run in before being sent or run in on the other dogs retrieves. Whilst not actively seeking game in a working test, on occasion game is flushed and the dog should not chase.

**Failing to enter water** – Failure to complete a water retrieve ( not all WT will have a water retrieve)

**Refusal to retrieve** – Failure to complete a retrieve when directed

**Out of control** – The dog ignores the handlers instructions and becomes out of control

**Without merit** – Without merit means that the dog does not show any of the basic requirements as laid out at the start.

MAJOR FAULTS – These are faults that mean your dog may be eliminated but its more likely that in working tests you will just loose points.

**Toileting** – Your dog stops to urinate or foul. This is at the judges discretion scent marking is not acceptable.

**Poor control** - A spaniel should flow naturally in a quartering pattern which

has been instilled during training. It should not require the constant use of a turn whistle

while hunting nor use of noisy whistling or voice commands while retrieving, all of which will

disturb game. Any command, however given, should be promptly responded to.

**Catching healthy game** – Again whilst actively not seeking game if the dog were to find and catch healthy game.

**Noisy handling** – Over use and unnecessary use of the voice and whistle

**Not quartering or making ground good** – The dog misses large sections of the hunt area and pulls on.

**Not stopping to shot and game** – The dogs should stop to shot unaided although it is generally accepted that at novice level a stop whistle can be used. However, a dog that stopped unaided would always be put above a dog that didn't if all else was equal.

**Failing to find dummy** - The dog fails to find the retrieve. The judge will look at how well the dog hunted for the dummy following instruction. Of course exceptions will be made if the dummy is caught up in a branch or become wedged under an object. This is at the judges discretion.

#### HOW TO ENTER A WORKING TEST

Get in touch with your local gundog club and speak to the secretary about their scheduled tests. Working tests generally run from April to September in the off season.

For the most part your dog will need to be Kennel Club registered to enter a working test unless otherwise stated in the case of some charity tests for example.

There are usually 3 levels of test for the spaniels

Puppy – for dogs aged 18 months or younger on the date of the test

Novice - dogs which have not gained a COM or higher award at a field trial or 1st, 2nd or 3rd in an Open Working Test or 1st in any Novice test held in accordance with KC regulations.

Open - Open to all KC registered dogs however in the event of a large entry, preference may be given to dogs which have gained an award or COM in a field trial or been placed 1st, 2nd or 3rd in a Open working test or a 1st in any test run in accordance with KC regulations.

As well as the three levels you will also see

AV – meaning any variety of spaniel

Breed only stakes

AV – with exclusions of cockers and springers aimed at minority breeds

Once you have entered a test a draw is completed on a specified date and you will be drawn a running number. Occasionally if there are a lot of entries you may not get a run, and will be put on a reserve list and contacted if any competitors withdraw.

Members of the club running the test will be given priority over non members for a run.

MOST IMPORTANTLY GO AND HAVE FUN AND TREAT EVERY COMPETITION AS A TRAINING DAY.

It's always advisable to go along and watch a test before you compete so you can get a good idea of how things work so you are more prepared on the day.