



## **The National Master Hunt Test Stake: Philosophy and Judging Guidelines**

The Canadian National Master Retriever Club is committed to hunting and the CKC Hunt test events and devoted to the promotion, training, and best interests of retrievers. In order to carry out our commitment, dogs who have qualified according to the Rules and Regulations of the CKC will be invited to be tested in a non-competitive manner at the annual National Master Hunt Test Stake.

The National Master Hunt Test Stake will allow the talents of the dogs to be showcased in an atmosphere of good sportsmanship. At the National event there shall be input from three judges from different regions of the country and there shall be utilization of terrain, bird placement, and natural conditions to provide a significant challenge to the abilities of a master hunting dog. Judges should design tests that will allow them to assess dogs in each of the abilities to be tested; marking, style, perseverance and trainability.

All of the requirements and rules pertaining to CKC Hunt Tests should be strictly applied, as well as the particular specifications of the Master National Stake.

The National Master Hunt Test Stake shall consist of the following:

- (1) Two series of multiple land marks (usually triples)
- (2) Two series of multiple water marks
- (3) A minimum of two blinds and a maximum of three blinds on land
- (4) A minimum of two blinds and a maximum of three blinds on water
- (5) An upland test - every effort should be made to provide a realistic upland test. It is strongly encouraged that clubs use live birds for this test
- (6) An honour on land and an honour on water.

The National Master Hunt Test Stake will normally be held over a period of 4 to 6 days, allowing opportunities for a broad testing of dogs in many different circumstances.

### **GUIDELINES FOR JUDGING:**

1. In the National Master Hunt Test stake, the scenarios for each test should simulate natural and realistic hunting conditions. Natural hazards, obstacles, hunting blinds (hides), duck or goose calls, decoys and other hunting paraphernalia should be utilized extensively. Most gun stations should be hidden and gunners, handlers and judges should be dressed in camouflage or appropriate hunting attire. Handlers are required to carry a gun on all marking tests.

2. National tests should be designed to showcase the impressive abilities of the participating retrievers and their usefulness in a hunt, not to trick or eliminate dogs.

Common principles of good judging should apply:

a. The visibility of thrown birds in marked retrieves is of paramount importance, as marking cannot be assessed if the dogs cannot see the birds.



- b. Dogs of all sizes and colors should remain visible to the handler during most or all of their path to a blind if they are on the correct line. Care should be taken by the judges to not set up blinds with such a narrow corridor of visibility that the blind retrieve becomes an unrealistic test of obedience that penalizes stylish dogs or eliminates dogs because of one miscast.
- c. Hot blinds (blinds that are placed in the field before the marks go down and are retrieved after one or more marks are retrieved) should not be used unless they are sufficiently removed from the area of the fall and the gun station that there is no chance that they will interfere with a dog's ability to hunt for a marked retrieve even if there are changes in wind direction during the test.
- d. Two qualified test dogs should be run on each test to allow the judges and participants to understand the test, assess the conditions in the field and recognize the hazards. Whenever possible, one male and one female test dog should be run. Handlers that still have a dog in contention should not run a test dog.
3. As is indicated in the CKC Hunt Test rules, marks and blinds should normally be 100 yards or less, and should never exceed 125 yards. Diversion shots, diversion marks and poison birds should be used in accordance with the CKC rules for MH tests.
4. Tests at the National Master Hunt test stake should approximate the same level of difficulty and require the same dog and handler skills as a typical weekend master hunt test, realizing that this standard may vary from region to region. It is acceptable and expected that the tests will become more difficult or complex as the event progresses. Judges should, however, feel no pressure to cut the field of dogs or to set up tests that will eliminate the average qualified dog in order to select for dogs with superior abilities because this is a non-competitive event.
5. Judges need to keep in mind that many factors intrinsic to National events make it difficult for dogs to do their best work, so especially during the first 2 or 3 days of the event, judges should avoid setting up tests that will lead to failures. Elimination during the first days of testing is undesirable and should be restricted to dogs that fail to complete all retrieves or those that commit a very serious fault leading to automatic elimination.
6. Judges will score dogs as described for CKC Master Hunt tests, assigning them a numerical score (0-10) for each ability for each series. Whenever possible, dogs should be called back to participate in another series to allow further evaluation and (according to CKC rules) judges should only drop dogs who have been assigned a zero score in an ability (marking, trainability, perseverance or style) for a series by all 3 judges. It is possible for dogs to complete all series at the National but not achieve a qualifying score at the conclusion of the event. In order to qualify and earn the title NMH a dog must have achieved an average score of at least 5 for each ability over all of the tests, and an overall average score of at least 7 across the abilities.