

# **Advantages of VHDF as a Breeders Support Organization**

By Jeff Funke

Since the announcement of the VHDF as a new versatile-dog testing organization, we have been asked repeatedly what the VHDF offers. Here are some of our answers.

VHDF is or has:

## ***Inclusive***

All breeders and breed clubs will be able to take advantage of Federation testing, regardless of registry or breed club membership. VHDF does not discriminate against breeds of any make or model, newly formed breed clubs, or other breeds that some American registries do not recognize. It is not our intent to decide who is right or wrong; which dog is best; which dogs should be recognized or not; we simply support breeders by providing detailed and accurate data regarding hunting dog performance.

## ***Focused***

No registration is required. Most other clubs require that you register with them. There are several disadvantages of this. i) No organization should merely duplicate a pedigree if it does not have the means and document-trail to verify accuracy. ii) Requiring re-registration adds cost and paperwork with dubious purpose. iii) Registration outside of breed club or home registry may jeopardize consistency in existing breeding protocols. iv) Maintaining registry takes away focus from maintaining the testing and judging system. v) The dollars generated by a registry may prove to become as attractive as to become self-serving, and steer the organization away from its original goals.

## ***Cost-consistency***

VHDF strives for cost consistency across the U.S. and Canada for local test-hosts or clubs. The VHDF will work with local committees to ensure the financial viability of a test and may chose to subsidize tests in certain areas. Since VHDF oversees the financial aspects of the different tests, host clubs in Texas will pay the same for a test as a host clubs in Alberta.

## ***Breeding Information***

Currently the only group that offers an advanced aptitude evaluation is the Jagdgebrauchshundverband (JGHV). Our AHAE is unique in that it primarily evaluates dogs' inherited characteristics, and does so at a higher-level than is widely available today. Training is important only insofar as it helps display these heritable characteristics, obedience per se is not evaluated. VHDF judging is structured such that training can do little to mask or overcome inadequacies, nor can it significantly improve inherited characteristics that make up the versatile hunting dog.

## ***Detail***

The 10-point plus system is used to provide a greater level of detail to better identify individuals with above average aptitude in particular subjects or across the board. Since the purpose of the aptitude test is to determine the value of the young dog for breeding and the genetic potential of its parents, the 10-point plus system allows for a more detailed, descriptive and uniform evaluation than does the 4 point system. Hence the results will be more credible and informative especially when trying to identify dogs that are highly suited for breeding.

## ***In Depth***

All Federation judges must be experienced hunters that have spent a good deal of time training their own dogs. Many VHDF judges have breeding experience as well which gives them a unique perspective especially with regard to the importance of progeny testing. Judges are encouraged to have a dog repeat a task or hunting event as may be required in order to arrive at a clearer judgment of the dog's abilities. Taking the time to reach a proper judgement can be very important as misjudgement of even one dog in a litter may drastically change the focus of a breeder that is committed to selective breeding.

## ***Flexibility***

The VHDF is flexible in their testing system, allowing for add-ons that may be required by breed clubs, or for updated versions of our existing testing program.

## ***Borrowing from a Time-tested Tradition***

Federation tests are designed for North American hunting practices, including our topography, our laws, our game and non-game species, and our habitat. However, we did not re-invent the wheel but have incorporated the best of the German system of testing versatile dogs. After all, many of our versatile breeds were formed under this system during the last Century.

## ***Assisting breed clubs***

The VHDF attempts to provide an objective evaluation of a dog's hunting-related behaviour patterns, according to a dog's age and experience. While VHDF considers a "Good" in all categories to be an average dog, the VHDF encourages breed clubs to use VHDF scores but make their own interpretation of what is desirable and thus a minimum requirement in their breeding program.

## ***Advanced***

VHDF is working on a web-based platform that will automate the membership and test entry process. More importantly, this platform will contain a detailed, searchable, online database which will allow for scores or performance and conformation ratings from all venues, not just our own. This level of acceptance and support is unparalleled among similar groups.