

Performance Evaluation (PE)

Purpose

The purpose of this evaluation is to record the level of performance of the fully finished versatile hunting dog on land, and in water, before and after the shot. The Performance Evaluation is for fully trained versatile hunting dogs that have had a good deal of experience hunting and recovering game in the field. The results will tell owners and the public hunting community the utility of the dog as a versatile hunting companion. These records for individual dogs and possibly whole litters should be useful to breeders for future breeding decisions. Additionally, public demonstrations of fully trained versatile hunting companions will serve to educate, as well as foster appreciation for the proper training and handling of the versatile hunting dog.

The Performance Evaluation will consider all practical areas of the versatile hunting dog. The evaluation will take into consideration the dog's obedience, experience, and the thoroughness of training as it relates to all circumstances that generally occur during typical hunting scenarios.

In contrast to the Hunting Aptitude Evaluations, the Performance Evaluation looks exclusively at the level of performance in each subject. This does not negate the fact that this evaluation is a valuable and important breeding indicator for high quality breeding. If successful, the demands of the Performance Evaluation require that a dog be very proficient in all areas of hunting and as such has proven himself capable of high levels of trainability.

The site

The setting in this evaluation should be natural land or agricultural land that could hold wild game. The evaluation will be conducted on wild birds where possible and augmented with flight conditioned captive-raised game birds. The area should be large enough such that all the dogs being evaluated in a day can sometimes hunt over new ground.

Scoring System

(1) The subjects are divided into ability and trained subjects. The ability subjects require both inherited ability and a certain level of training and, therefore have a higher multiplier. The dog is scored in each subject from 0 to 12 points. The scores of 11 and 12 are only given as an exception for truly excellent work under difficult circumstances. Scores of 11 and 12 should be documented in writing by the judging team.

The 12-point scoring system allows for a detailed evaluation of each subject, and since these scores are important for breeding decisions, it is required that judges take care to apply the scores in a uniform and consistent manner.

Ability Subjects

	Subject	Multiplier	Max Score
1	Independent Water Search	2	12
2	Search behind the Duck	2	12
3	Field Search	2	12
4	Pointing	2	12
5	Backing	2	12
6	Blood Track (Optional)	2	12
7	Nose	2	12
8	Desire	2	12
9	Cooperation	2	12

Trained Subjects

	Subject	Multiplier	Max Score
10	Blind Water Retrieve	1	12
11	Steadiness and Manners on Game	1	12
12	Retrieve of Shot Bird	1	12
13	Retrieve of Dragged Game	1	12
14	Obedience	1	12
	Total Possible with all 10's		230

(2) Each subject is then ranked into the appropriate categories. Before a specific score is determined, judges should determine by consensus which category the work in a particular subject falls. Once a category for the individual piece of work is determined, an individual score can be awarded with deductions for negative performances and credits for positive performances or difficult conditions

CATEGORY	POINTS
Excellent + Difficult Circumstances	11-12
Very Good	9-10
Good	6-8
Fair	3-5
Poor	0-2

(3) One designated judge will average the point scores within a given category to arrive at a final score. The final average score will be the official score for each subject. Fractions are rounded to whole numbers.

(4) Judges must record their notes regarding each stage of the dog's work in each subject.

Scoring Specific Subjects

1. Independent Water Search.

(1) The dog should enter the water upon command and begin to search the assigned cover in an independent fashion. Further coaxing or commands to encourage the dog to enter the water should lower the score.

- (2) The water search should demonstrate a persistent desire to find game without undue handler interference. The handler may help the dog with hand or voice signals, but constant influencing will lower the score.
- (3) If a dog encounters a living duck it may be assessed as in #2 Search behind the Duck.

2. Search behind the Duck

- (1) A live flightless duck is released into the water within 20 meters or 65 feet from the starting point. The duck is then hazed out of the area into cover. The dog should not see the duck being released.
- (2) The dog is sent to retrieve the duck from a starting point where it should find the scent trail within 20 meters. The dog should enter the water with one command. Additional commands at entry should be penalized.
- (3) The dog should search for and find the duck independently of the handler once it has found the scent trail.
- (4) If the dog finds the duck and the task turns into a sight chase, the judges may request to have the duck shot by the handler or a gunner. Safety is paramount at this point, and great care must be taken to only shoot the duck if a safe shot is presented. If the duck is shot and the dog has located the duck, it should be retrieved to hand.
- (5) The dog does not have to catch the live duck to receive a good score. If the dog encounters other ducks, the work may be scored accordingly.
- (6) Any live or dead ducks caught by the dog should be retrieved to hand.

3. Search

- (1) The search should be conducted in an area where the dog is likely to encounter game. After about 30 minutes into each brace, a designated bird field should be salted with flight conditioned captive game birds so that pointing and backing behaviors may be judged in detail.
- (2) The search is conducted as a brace of two dogs and should last between 40 and 60 minutes.
- (3) The search should demonstrate a persistent desire to find game without undue handler interference. The dog's use of cover, terrain, wind conditions and other variable factors are also considered.
- (4) The balance between cooperation and will to find game, is a key element of the search.
- (5) Judges may have a dog leashed during the field work if it causes a fight, repeatedly steals point, or otherwise interferes with its brace mate.

4. Backing

- (1) Dogs are required to back their brace mate during the field search.
- (2) A dog should back on his own without command. If a command is given to influence the dog to back, the score must be lowered.
- (3) The backing dog should remain steady through the end of the retrieving work. Commands to remain steady during the backing sequence may lower the score.

5. Pointing

- (1) Pointing instinct is evident when the dog stops to acknowledge the scent of game.
- (2) The point must be by scent, and established independently of influence from the handler.
- (3) Moving game should be considered an added difficulty.
- (4) If both dogs are pointing different birds at the same time, the dog that established point first should have its bird shot first. The second dog should remain on point during this time.

6. Blood Tracking (Optional)

- (1) Judges experienced in the subject of blood tracking should lay the artificial track.
- (2) All tracks must be at least 400 meters, 437 yards, and must be laid in a clean area that has not been hunted, used for bird work or drags in the previous 48 hours.
- (3) Blood tracks should be laid in areas that could hold big game.
- (4) The start of the track should be clearly identified, and the judges should note the time that track was laid. The track should be run after it has been aged for two to five hours. Track markers should not be visible to the handler.
- (5) The track should be laid with two obtuse angles as in the figure "S" and should include one wound bed. The track should end at the second wound bed. The handler may have a dead animal or reward of their choice at the end of the track.
- (6) Blood tracks should be laid in a natural manner as in the way a wounded animal would travel.
- (7) No more than .25 liters, 8.5 liquid ounces of blood can be used to lay the 400 meter track. The blood is supplied by the handler.
- (8) The dog is to work the track on leash. The leash should be at least 6 meters, 19 feet and the whole length should be available to the dog during the track.
- (9) The dog should work the track in a calm, confident manner. Hastiness leads to failure in very difficult situations; therefore, excessive and uncontrolled speed should lower the score.
- (10) The handler can temporarily stop the dog to look for blood himself. The handler can also help the dog by casting it to the appropriate area. If the dog and handler are off the track, the judges should not alert the handler and they should continue to follow the team for 60 meters, 65 yards.
- (11) If the team deviates more than 60 meters, 65 yards from the track the judges should call them back to be restarted on the track. The score should be lowered for each call back. If the team is called back more than 2 times, the track should be scored no higher than the poor category. The handler may restart the dog without penalty; however, constant restarts or correction by the handler should also lower the score.

7. Nose

- (1) Evaluating the use of nose can be difficult due to the many unseen environmental and climatic factors existing at any given moment. Nose should be evaluated carefully.
- (2) The nose is evaluated during the search by how frequently and rapidly the dog finds game or acknowledges scent. Dogs that briefly acknowledge old scent or non-game scent should be given credit, while dogs that work unproductively should be rated accordingly.
- (3) The use of nose is evaluated during the water work primarily by how the dog reacts as it searches for and finds the track of the duck. The duck track on water is easily lost due to the nature of the cover, weather conditions, and the ability of the duck to dive. The nose can be judged as the dog constantly looks to regain the track of the duck over the water and through vegetation.
- (4) The final evaluation shall use the above observations as a base for determining nose score, but in the end the overall performance and conditions can be used to determine the quality of the nose.

8. Desire

- (1) Desire to work is determined after observing how the dog applies itself to each task during the entire evaluation. Desire to work is not to be confused with running speed, range, or excitement, or simply how active the dog is. The dog's will to complete the task at hand is the primary consideration when evaluating overall desire.

9. Cooperation

- (1) Cooperation is demonstrated by the manner in which the dog interacts with its handler. A cooperative dog is willing to be in contact with, and work for, the handler.
- (2) Cooperation is evaluated during every dog and handler interaction throughout the day.

10. Blind Water Retrieve

- (1) A fresh dead duck is thrown into light cover or just in front of heavy cover such that the dog cannot see the fall, and that it must swim across water to make the retrieve. The dog should not be able to see the duck and should be approximately 30 meters, 32 yards from the duck at his starting place. The duck should not be placed in the middle of heavy cover such as thick cattails. As an example of appropriate placements, the edge of a grass island or just at the edge of a stand of cattails is ideal. The handler is given the approximate location of the duck. The handler should send the dog, and the dog should search for and find the duck and then retrieve it to hand.
- (2) This is not a test of the dog's ability to be handled to the bird. This is a test of the dog's water aptitude, and his desire to find and recover game from water. The handler may aid and encourage the dog; however, over handling or constant influence will lower the score.
- (3) The dog should enter the water after one command. Further influence to get the dog into the water should be penalized. Immediate water entry is the key element of this subject. Dogs that are willing and eager to enter the water should find the game with little difficulty.
- (4) The dog should be able to easily find the duck. Once the duck is found, it should be retrieved to hand.

11. Steadiness and Manners on Game

- (1) Two gunners are designated by the host club. All persons participating as gunners must read and follow all safety instructions for gunners. One gunner will be designated for each handler. If the two dogs are in close proximity, as in a point and back situation both gunners may be used. The handler may elect to flush the bird, or have the gunner flush the bird. If the gunner is to flush, the handler must not be in front of the dog during the flushing and shooting sequence. Safety is paramount during the shooting sequence. Handlers or gunners may call safety and not shoot if the bird flies in the direction of any people, dogs, or property.
- (2) The dog should be steady to fall and not attempt to retrieve until commanded to do so. The dog should remain staunch, not endanger the flush, and relocate cautiously on moving game.
- (3) Moving game should be considered an added difficulty.
- (4) Artificial circumstances, which would not normally occur while hunting wild birds, should be discounted or ignored. (i.e. the bird runs under the dog, or jumps into the dog's mouth)

12. Retrieve of Shot Bird

- (1) During the search, each dog must have at least one bird freshly shot for a marked retrieve. When the dog establishes point the handler, who is to carry a gun during the field search, is to walk in, flush the bird and swing the gun on the flight path of the bird. The handler is not to have live ammunition and is not allowed to shoot his or her own birds. The gunner(s) are to shoot the bird. All guns in the field must be "break open" type guns. Autoloader and pump shotguns are not allowed in the field.
- (2) The dog should promptly go to the game, pick it up, and return to the handler and sit or stand until told to release the game to hand.
- (3) If the dog's brace mate is in the area, or has established a back, the handler must wait until the other handler has reached his dog, or controlled his dog in the event of a non-backing situation.

13. Game Drag

- (1) The drag should be 250 meters (275 yards) and must be laid immediately prior to judging each dog. There must be 80 meters (88 yards) between individual drags for each dog. The drag should be laid on covered ground and not bare soil or rock. The drag should have feathers or fur at the starting point. The drag should have two obtuse angles as in the figure “S”, and should be laid with the wind or at very least across the wind. The dog cannot see the drag being laid. At the end of the drag track, the judge will remove the string from the game and leave it in the open as much as possible. The game will generally be a bird unless the handler has brought a fur-bearer for the drag. The game should never be left in a depression or in or behind heavy cover. The judge will then continue down wind of the fresh game and must take a position out of sight of the oncoming dog. The handler may chose to have a second game animal laid in front of the judge. Once hidden, the judge will lay the second game animal 2 meters in front of his position. If the dog chooses the second game animal, the judge can in no way interfere with the retrieving of this game. The handler may have the option of having the drag laid with only one animal, in which case the judge is positioned well out of site of where the drag animal is left.
- (2) The handler may work the dog on leash to start the tack for a short distance. If the dog returns without game, and does not restart the track on his own accord, the handler may restart the dog with permission of the judges. A restart is defined as: any effort by the handler to influence the dog to complete the task.
- (3) The dog should willingly follow the drag track, find the game and retrieve it promptly and eagerly to hand without influence from the handler. The dog is to be evaluated on his eagerness to find and retrieve the game.
- (4) If the dog does not find game due to some extra ordinary disturbance during the track, the judges have the discretion to give the dog a new drag.

14. Obedience

- (1) Obedience differs from cooperation in that it is trained and not natural ability. Obedience is requested from the handler of the dog. Cooperation comes from the dog and is shown in the dog's willingness to work as a team with the handler.
- (2) Obedience is demonstrated by the way the dog can be handled and by how it responds to commands from the handler.
- (3) At this level, the highly trained versatile dog should be completely obedient before, during, and after the evaluation; in the presence of live game, nongame, and even big game such as deer and elk. Performance level dogs should stop to flush on wild flushed game, and should not chase bumped birds, or safety birds.

Other Characteristics Noted

1. Conformation

- (1) Judges will conduct a basic conformation evaluation including eye defects, teeth, bite, testicles, hair coat, and other visible faults.

2. Temperament

- (1) The personality and the temperament of the dog will be summarized in the judges' own words at the end of the evaluation.