

ORGANIZING A VHDF TEST

This article covers all the details of setting up and conducting a VHDF test. We have included all the key elements, people, tasks and equipment that you will need to put on a successful test. Each level of testing has different requirements. The Hunting Aptitude Evaluation can be relatively simple in terms of grounds and man power, while the Performance Evaluation requires significant water and field areas as well as man power. Please be sure to read the appropriate sections herein and in the Test Rules to determine your needs. Should you have any questions, you may contact the VHDF Testing Director listed on our website at www.vhdf.org.

Forms You Will Need

The following forms may be found on the VHDF website at www.vhdf.org under the Forms section

- Test Request Form is to be filled out by the Test Coordinator and sent to the VHDF Testing Director as far in advance of the test as possible. This is the form that updates the VHDF calendar and publically lists your event.
- Test Entry Form is to be submitted to the Test Coordinator by the people who want to enter your test. All entrants must be VHDF members. All entries must be accompanied by the dog's registration papers and entry fee. Any registered dog from any registry may be evaluated at a VHDF test.

People you will need

The success of any test is preparation and hard working people. You need to get your team of key people set several months before your test date. The following are suggested assignments. More than one task may be assigned to each person, or your club may choose to create a more extensive labor force.

- Test Coordinator

The entire process starts with and revolves around the coordinator. It helps to have one person involved in all aspects of the test so confusion can be avoided. This person needs to be appointed as soon as you set a date for your test. They will make sure you have proper grounds, birds, and key people. It is also their responsibility, unless otherwise assigned to be available by phone, fax and email to schedule dogs for the test, collect the test fees and communicate with all of the handlers about all aspects of the test. They should also print up a running schedule by day listing the dogs and handlers that will be running and in what running order. They will also be responsible for filling out the judges score books with the information on the dog and handler. VHDF will provide the test coordinator with the judges score books.

- Field Marshall

The Field Marshall orchestrates the running of the test on test day. The Marshall's responsibilities include instructing bird planters to be in the field at the right time; instructing handlers and gunners, having them ready on time; having the appropriate test subjects setup in advance and having the proper materials such as poppers, drag birds, etc, ready at the appropriate times.

- Judges

The VHDF will provide the judges. You need request specific judges on the test request form; otherwise random judges will be assigned. Local judges will be used when and where appropriate, but out of town judges will be intermixed frequently. The testing director is the final authority on judging assignments. The host chapter is responsible for providing the judges transportation to the test, their meals for the weekend. If local members are able to provide lodging for judges, this is a significant cost savings for VHDF. Judges are not paid and they put in a considerable amount of time before and at the test. They are donating their time and expertise because of their commitment to VHDF and the improvement of the versatile breeds.

- Judge Host

It is often convenient to assign one person that can supervise the all the needs of the judges, such as verifying appropriate travel considerations, as well as making housing and feeding arrangements.

- Equipment Manager

Some clubs have a trailer and own all their own equipment. Some groups have equipment scattered with numerous members. Some may choose to use donated equipment from their members. Whatever the case, it will be helpful to have one person in charge of making sure all the necessary equipment is in the right place at the right time. See VHDF Equipment Checklist, later in this article.

- Food/Cooks

This person(s) is responsible for meals whether provided on site, or if arrangements at dining establishments need to be made.

- Bird Planters

Experienced bird planters are very valuable asset to a well run test. All bird planters should speak to the judges regarding bird planting instructions. All birds should be cared for properly before during and after the test.

- Gunners

Gunners are used throughout VHDF test in various subjects. In the HAE there is a blank gunner that is used during the gun sensitivity test. In the AHAE, there is a blank gunner that is used in gun sensitivity test that is conducted at the water. In the AHAE and the PE gunners with live ammunition are used during the field portion to bag game for the dogs. During AHAE, and PE a gunner may be used during the search behind the duck. In all cases, only experienced well qualified gunners should be used. Safety is paramount and should be considered before and during all shooting situations.

- Miscellaneous

You may need persons to shuttle dogs, birds, or judges depending on the layout or your test grounds. You may need someone with a boat or waders to complete certain elements of the test. You should consult the VHDF Test Rules and review each element of the test to determine if other helpers are needed. You should also have someone to police the grounds, for litter, holes dug by dogs, waste and other nuisances for the land owner.

Birds you will need

- Field Birds

Chukar and Quail are the best choice for field birds. Pheasants are a poor choice because of cost and their tendency to run out of the area. For the field you can use a combination of both chukar and quail or stay with one species for the entire weekend. Bird quality is important. Poor birds make evaluation very difficult and often times have a negative impact on performance. You need to order your birds early. One year is not too early. Most bird breeders take deposits and orders in the fall of the preceding year the birds will be delivered. The North American Game Bird Association has a web site that lists all of their breeders by state. www.naga.org.

You should plan to use 3 birds for each HAE dog, 4 birds for each AHAE dog, and 10 birds for a brace of PE dogs. The judges may need to use extra birds for some or all of the dogs. It is best to have a few extra birds available. If there are numerous wild birds available, you should adjust the quantity as appropriate.

- Tracking Birds

Pheasants are best used in the tracking field. You should plan on two birds for each HAE dog. AHAE and PE dogs are not tested in the subject of a live tracking bird. You may want to have a few extra tracking birds available in case of poor and nonperforming birds.

- Water Birds

Some HAE dogs will need a dead bird at the water test

You should plan for two live ducks, and two or three dead ducks for each AHEA and PE dog. Sometimes the dead ducks can be used more than once if they are in good condition. The AHAE and the PE dogs will each use a dead duck on 3 separate tasks. They will use one live duck if all goes well, but very frequently two live ducks are used for most dogs depending on grounds, bird quality, and conditions.

Equipment, Grounds, and other items you will need

- Grounds

Good grounds are critical for the proper evaluation of versatile hunting dogs. VHDF prefers to run each dog over new ground during the search and water subjects as much as possible. While there are no predetermined size requirements, more ground available usually makes the test less complicated. At a minimum, you need a field large enough to run a dog for 30 to 40 minutes without going over the same ground. You will need a separate tracking field with enough room to run each dog in a new area. You will need a pond with swimming depth water for HAE, and expansive water with vegetation for the AHAE and the PE tests. If you have questions about your specific grounds, contact the VHDF testing director listed at www.vhdf.org. If the area you plan to run the test is public ground, you will most likely need a permit. Don't wait until the last minute to obtain your site you should try to secure your site six months in advance of the test.

- Meals

Breakfast is nice, but frequently the host organization will provide coffee and rolls at the site. Tests usually begin quite early, so it is best to be flexible.

Lunch & Dinner: One or two people should be appointed to be in charge of the meals. It is their job to plan the meals and get things set up. They should to plan to have plenty of water and other beverages available. Many times groups will underestimate the amount of water consumed on hot days. Most clubs provide fantastic lunches and dinners on site for a fee. The meals are often used to supplement income for the test. Sometimes meals are catered, sometimes groups caravan to local restaurants. The local members will best be able to determine which course you pursue. The important thing is to plan for the day's events.

- Equipment

- ✓ Birds and Bird Crates and food and water for birds
- ✓ Bird bags
- ✓ Live ducks
- ✓ Dead ducks
- ✓ Blaze orange for field work
- ✓ Water for dogs

- ✓ Water for Judges and workers
- ✓ Ice
- ✓ Score books
- ✓ Break open shotgun
- ✓ Blank popper loads
- ✓ Tables
- ✓ Chairs
- ✓ Shelter
- ✓ Bumpers for puppy water work
- ✓ Signs and directions to test site
- ✓ Game drag string
- ✓ Food, refreshments, coffee
- ✓ Trash bags
- ✓ Coolers for drinks and birds
- ✓ First aid kit
- ✓ Shovel
- ✓ Rocks for hazing ducks
- ✓ Radios
- ✓ Sunscreen
- ✓ Pens, pencils
- ✓ Test rules
- ✓ Waders
- ✓ Boat (if needed)