

# American Water Spaniel Club Water Trial Rules and Regulations

## SECTION A OBJECTIVES

1. The goal of the American Water Spaniel Water Trial is to determine the relative merits of the AWS as a waterfowl retriever, simulating as nearly as possible the conditions met in a day's shoot.
2. To encourage and promote the breeding of purebred American Water Spaniels. To do all that is possible to bring their natural qualities to perfection.
3. To protect and advance the interest of the breed by encouraging sportsmanlike conduct at water trial tests.
4. To encourage the use of trained American Water Spaniels while hunting, thereby preserving game.

## SECTION B REGULATIONS, PROCEDURES, AND POLICIES

### Eligible Dogs

1. Only purebred American Water Spaniels are allowed to enter the annual National Water Trial. Dogs may compete in one stake only. Gate entries are allowed until the start of the stake being entered.
2. No bitches in season shall be allowed entry or allowed on the test grounds during the trial. Entry fees will be refunded upon presentation of a veterinary excuse.
3. No dog shall be entered or run in any trial and if brought on the test grounds shall be immediately removed if it shows any symptoms of any communicable diseases .

### Judges

1. Professionals are allowed to judge at the National as long as they are not judging in a class in which a dog is entered that they have trained in the past year.
2. Professionals may run dogs owned by themselves or others in any class.
3. Judges may not run a dog in the National Test. Family members of a Judge may run a dog in the Nationals excluding the class being judged by a family member.

4. The judges are representatives of the American Water Spaniel Club and shall abide by the regulations and procedures for judging water trial tests.
5. Handlers are allowed to approach the judges only after completion of the awards ceremony to request information on how their dog could have improved its performance. The decision of the judges is final. Judges will only discuss the performance of a dog with the handler or owner.

## General

1. The term dog includes male and female dogs.
2. All tests will be approved by a minimum of two members of the Trial Committee.
3. A dog may be entered in only one level.
4. Dogs will be run in catalog order as closely as possible. Running order may be changed as necessary.
5. A test shall be defined for these purposes as the evaluation of a dog as required by the regulations and procedures and during which the dog is being scored.
6. All the tests shall be judged by a MINIMUM of two judges.
7. Four place ribbons and JAM (Judges Award of Merit) ribbons may be awarded in each class. In the event of a tie for first place, judges will set up a runoff to determine the winner.
8. All tests must be completed (except in runoffs) for a dog to receive any type of ribbon.
9. There will be a designated area at each event where handlers may air their dogs and throw fun bumpers. This is not to be construed as allowing training on the grounds. No whistles will be allowed in this area.
10. Handlers are responsible for controlling their dogs at all times. Any dog or handler interfering with the test of another dog may be subject to disqualification at the judges' discretion.
11. The function of a non-slip retriever is to seek and retrieve fallen game when ordered to do so. The dog should sit quietly on line or in the blind, walk at heel, or assume any position designated by the handler until sent to retrieve. When ordered, a dog should retrieve quickly, briskly and without disturbing too much ground, and should deliver tenderly to hand. The dog should then await further orders.
12. Dogs shall be judged on their natural abilities as well as trained abilities. Trained abilities include steadiness, control, responses to direction and delivery. Natural abilities include memory, intelligence, attention, nose, courage, perseverance and style. Dogs will be judge on a 10 point system in each series.

13. Commands must be given in a quiet, non-intimidating manner. Excessively loud and repetitive commands will result in a lower score.
14. Dogs must be kept on a leash and under control at all times unless the dog is being aired in a designated area.
15. While on test grounds no handler will use any training aid that might intimidate a dog including but not limited to electronic collar, quirt, whip, healing stick, pinch collar or choke collar.
16. Handlers must not allow their dogs to view the test of any class in which their dog is entered prior to coming to the line with said dog. Violation of this section is grounds for elimination.
17. All firearms or dummy guns are assumed to be loaded with live ammunition and must be handled accordingly. The handler must hold the firearm in a safe hunting position. Mishandling of firearms will result in a warning by the judges; the second infraction will result in immediate disqualification of the handler. It shall be the duty of the judges to promptly report to the Water Trial Committee (WTC) the expulsion of a handler for gun safety. The WTC may then expel the handler from all other categories at that event if in the committee's opinion such further action is warranted. Whenever a handler is expelled from a category or from participation at a water trial under this section, the dog or dogs that he/she is handling may continue to be tested with another handler. The WTC shall submit in writing to the AWSC Board a complete report of any action taken under this section.
18. Primers, primer pistols or primer loads only will be used with the exception of live loads if shot flyers are to be used.
19. All persons participating in or observing any event are expected to be reasonably quiet and display good manners. Any person who interferes with the orderly process of any test may be obliged by the judges or the water trial committee to leave the trial grounds. People in the gallery wearing light or white clothing that may distract the working dog may be asked to move away by the judges or marshal.
20. Dogs will be eliminated for unprovoked fighting or attacking handlers, participants, spectators, judges or AWSC officers. Dogs that are disqualified under this section must be immediately confined or removed from the trial grounds. It shall be the duty of the judges to promptly report to the water trial committee the expulsion of a dog from a category. The WTC may then expel the dog from all other categories at the event if, in the committee's opinion, such further action is warranted. The WTC shall submit, in writing, to the AWSC Board a complete report of any action taken under this section.
21. If a dog wins Gun Dog or Novice it must move up to a higher level in subsequent years unless the owner chooses to enter the dog at the same or lower level and run out of contention .
22. The placement of the dogs by the judges is final. Water Trial results for each class are subject to review by the Water Trial Committee. The WTC will consult with the judges in the event it is necessary to correct any error or omission.

## Tests

1. All tests shall be set up within the prescribed distance and cover limitations of each particular category.
2. Duck blinds, numerous decoys, boats, game calls, and other hunting implements shall be utilized when appropriate.
3. Judges shall decide on the placement of gunners and bird boys.
4. Handlers, bird boys, gunners, judges and others shall be required to wear camouflaged or dark clothing.
5. Events shall utilize dead ducks (exception will be live birds may be used for shot flyers except where prohibited.)
6. Prior to the start of each test, the judges shall explain to the handlers the hunting scenario and the object of each test and expected performance of the dogs. The American Water Spaniel Club's purpose in establishing these regulations and procedures is to discover and reward dogs that can fulfill the hunters needs in the field while performing in a manner consistent with the demands of actual hunting conditions. The purpose is to test the dogs' natural as well as trained abilities.
7. Unless otherwise instructed by the judges, dogs should be considered as being tested from the time they are called to come to the line until they have left same and are behind the judges and on lead.
8. All series will be started with the handler blowing an appropriate game call to indicate their readiness.
9. A dog may be released by the handler when the final bird has hit the water or land.
10. Moderate voice or whistle commands shall be allowed to steady the dog at the line. However, voice or whistle commands that are excessive in the opinion of the judges shall be marked down.
11. Handling on marks, regardless of category, shall be at the handler's option but to do so will require a mark down.
12. Handlers shall not point out the location of the gunners and bird boys to the dog prior to the time the first bird is thrown. A violation of this section will result in elimination.
13. In all classes, hidden gunners and bird boys shall be used unless they are at the point of origin (line). A game call shall be blown prior to each bird being thrown and, additionally, a shot fired from the point of origin of the bird as the bird is thrown. It is the intent of the regulations to provide the dog with adequate opportunity to focus its attention on the area of the fall.

14. A no-bird will be determined solely by the judges of the testing category. E.g. a flyer that is unintentionally missed by the gunners or a bird that sinks during a water test, etc.
15. A re-run may be granted if, in the opinion of the judges, an unfair or unforeseen circumstance occurs during the test such as a no-bird. It is the option of the handler to re-run immediately or after the next dog.
16. A controlled break occurs as soon as a dog leaves the point of origin and manifests an intent to make the retrieve without being so ordered and is immediately stopped and brought under control.
17. Creeping should not be considered as a dog manifesting an intent to retrieve. Therefore, creeping shall not be considered a break and the judges shall not instruct the handler to re-heel the dog. However, if the creeping is excessive where it takes the dog out of the area of the point of origin, then it should be considered a controlled break and the handler should be required to control his/her dog. The judges should designate the area of the point of origin and advise the handlers of this designated area before the test begins.
18. Dogs participating in Novice classes may wear a flat buckle collar. Choke or slip type collars are not allowed. Dogs participating in the Gun Dog and Open dog categories are not allowed to wear any type of collar. Leash or line dragging in any class is prohibited. The intent of these regulations is to protect the dogs rather than restrict their handlers.
19. If a dog is unproductive on a retrieve (given any recast allowed) the judges shall instruct the handler to place the dog on lead and retire from the line. Under no circumstances shall the handler be allowed to continue to get the dog to make the retrieve. A pickup dog shall be utilized to retrieve the bird if on water.
20. Incidents of intentional hard-mouth or stickiness resulting, in the opinion of the judges, in a bird unfit for the table, shall be grounds for failing a test. The dog should pick up a bird tenderly but firmly and without delay. A dog shall be eliminated for hard mouth or badly damaged game, but before doing so, both judges should inspect the bird and be satisfied that the dog alone was responsible for the damage. The handler will be notified immediately that the dog has been dropped for hard mouth. Any bird so damaged shall be tagged with flagging tape and removed from the pool of birds.
21. Dogs requiring help from the bird boys shall be disqualified. Stone or object throwing is not allowed.

## Misconduct

Some types of conduct that are specifically prohibited include, but are not limited to the following:

- Demonstration of or dissatisfaction with a judge's decision
- Altercations with hunt test officials or exhibitors
- Abusive and foul language in public
- Mistreatment of a dog

- Behavior that intentionally disrupts the running of the hunt tests.

Smoking on the test grounds will only be allowed in areas designated by the WTC. At no time will smoking be allowed in the field.

The consumption of alcohol or being impaired by alcohol or drugs prior to the completion of the day's hunting events at any AWSC Inc. hunting event is strictly prohibited. There will be no consumption of alcohol until after the last dog has run.

Any person found consuming alcohol or being under the influence of alcohol on the test grounds, during testing hours must leave the site for the day. If that individual is a handler, on that day, any dog handled by him/her will be disqualified regardless of whether or not the dog has already run and/or qualified in the tests. Any person found to be in violation of this rule at two separate hunting events would be suspended from running in any AWSC. Inc. sanctioned hunting event for a period of three months. Any person found to be in violation of this rule on three occasions would be barred from further participation in any AWSC Inc. hunting event.

Illegal Substances: The use or possession of illegal substances on the grounds of any AWSC. Inc hunting event is strictly prohibited and will result in the immediate removal from the hunting event grounds and barred from further participation in any AWSC Inc. hunting event. Any person found to be in violation of this rule may be subject to additional sanctions by the AWSC Inc.

The AWSC Hunting Events Committee or its designated representative (i.e. the assigned local Water Trial Committee) is responsible for the enforcement of the rules of misconduct that pertain to any AWSC INC. sanctioned hunting event. At all AWSC INC. hunting events sponsored by a licensed spaniel or retriever club or individuals, the Water Trial Committee for that event shall have jurisdiction over all questions of misconduct and shall supersede the authority of the AWSC Hunting Events Committee whether or not it is in attendance at the event. The procedures found in the American Kennel Club's booklet, "Dealing with Misconduct," shall guide the committee or its representative in determining the outcome of misconduct charges.

Judges are advised to report any abusive language directed at them or any refusal to follow their instructions as well as any improper suggestions or request they might receive to favor a particular dog.

Other concerns regarding misconduct include:

- A. It shall be deemed misconduct if a person during the running of or in connection with an event abuses or harasses a judge or official or any other person present in any capacity at the event. The AWSC Hunting Events Committee or its designated representative (i.e. the assigned local Water Trial Committee) shall act in accord with paragraph (d) of this section.
- B. Any handler who displays unsportsmanlike conduct or who is seen to kick, strike or otherwise roughly manhandle a dog while on the grounds of a hunt test at any time during the holding of the event may be expelled from the test by the AWSC Hunting Events Committee or its designated representative (i.e. the assigned local Water Trial Committee), which shall also act in accord with paragraph (D) of this section.

- C. The judges shall have the authority to expel a handler if they observe unsportsmanlike conduct on the part of the handler or see the handler kick, strike or otherwise roughly manhandle a dog while the event is in progress. It will be the duty of the judges to report promptly to the water trial committee the expulsion of a handler and the AWSC Hunting Events Committee or its designated representative (i.e. the assigned local Water Trial Committee) shall then proceed in accord with paragraph (D) of this section.
- D. The AWSC Hunting Events Committee or its designated representative (i.e. the assigned local Water Trial Committee) shall investigate, at once, any instance of alleged unsportsmanlike conduct on the part of the handler, or any report that a handler has been observed kicking, striking or otherwise roughly manhandling a dog. If a hunt test committee, after investigation, determines that a handler is in violation of this section, and that the incident, if proven, would constitute conduct prejudicial to the sport, it shall exercise its authority to disqualify the handler from running the dog.
- E. If any information on any entry form is found either immediately or at a later date to be deliberately false, misleading or otherwise misrepresents the truth, then the dog and handler shall be disqualified from running in that test and the AWSC Hunting Events Committee or its designated representative (i.e. the assigned local Water Trial Committee) will have discretion to impose further penalties, such as suspension from future tests.
- F. If a dog is seen to be vicious and/or attacks another dog and this activity interrupts or prevents the running of a test, that dog may be disqualified.

## **OPEN CLASS**

### **Regulations and Test Requirements**

Reminder: In addition to the Rules listed below, Section B in its entirety is applicable to this class.

1. Any dog may compete in this class. This water trial test is for the finished dog. Tests in this category must consist of serious tests worthy of the hunter's retriever. Dogs will be tested on their natural ability and training accomplishments. To perform these tests the Open dog must accomplish the tasks required with both style and precision. Dogs must respond promptly to voice or whistle commands and be under control at all times.
2. An open dog is required to come to the line without lead or collar.
3. An Open water trial test must include a minimum of three tests, which must include the following: a triple marked water retrieve with distances up to 70 yards ; a blind retrieve on water up to 80 yards; an honor. The blind retrieve will be incorporated with the required triple marked retrieves. In addition, at the judges' discretion a walk-up to the marks may be utilized as well as a diversion thrown while the dog is returning to the line from the final mark retrieved or from the blind. A shot will be fired from the line to set up the blind. In the event of a tie for first place a blind of up to 100 yards will be run with any additional factors that the judges deem necessary to determine a winner.

4. The honor dog will be placed at a location determined by the judges and must be able to see all three marks. The honor dog will be dismissed when the working dog has been sent for its first retrieve. The handler may speak quietly to steady the honor dog.
5. A dog shall be steady at the line. Therefore an uncontrolled break will result in disqualification.
6. Moderate commands shall be allowed to steady a dog at the line or point of origin at any time.
7. The dog may not be touched from the time they leave the holding blind or a place designated by the judges where the lead must be removed.
8. A controlled break shall not fail a dog, but shall be considered a serious fault. As soon as the dog leaves the line and manifests an intent to make the retrieve without being so ordered, it must be stopped. A controlled break will receive a three point deduction. More than one controlled break may result in disqualification.
9. The retrieving line may be set back from the water's edge at a distance deemed appropriate by the judges but preferably no more than 20 yards.
10. A dog shall deliver all birds to hand without delay.
11. A dog may be handled on marked retrieves with voice/whistle/hand signals, if in the opinion of the handler, the dog can't find or has missed the mark. The dog is being tested for its marking and memory, not handling; however, a crisp cast is preferable to a long hunt. Repeated evidence of lack of memory, marking or lack of control shall be grounds for elimination. Handling on marks requires deductions in points.
12. A dog shall be cast from the line by its handler only once. If the attempt is unsuccessful, the judges shall step in and direct the handler to pick up his/her dog. However, if in the judges' opinion, the dog exhibits confusion at the line the judges may allow a recast.
13. Handlers will be required to shoulder a gun or dummy gun with both hands as if actually shooting the bird. All firearms are assumed loaded with live ammunition and must be handled accordingly. The handler is required to place the gun in the gun stand or give it to the judge after the dog is sent for the first mark.
14. Tests for this event shall be held in appropriate cover on land and water.
15. Marking tests for this event shall consist of triple marks on water.
16. Quadruple marks shall not be used.
17. Judges may not dictate the order in which marked birds are retrieved.
18. Dogs may be required to be placed at a point of origin at a distance from the handler.
19. Simultaneous falls with birds and shot originating from the same location may not be used.



20. Delayed marks or falls may be used.
21. Dogs will be required to honor another dog.
22. Even though this is a water triple, birds may fall on land at a distance deemed appropriate by the judges. Dogs are expected to swim the most direct line to the birds.
23. Game calls and additional birds with shots may also be used as diversions as a dog returns from a retrieve. A dog that drops and leaves its bird and retrieves the diversion bird shall be failed. (switch)
24. Inline marks are allowed but may not consist of more than 2birds of the three being in line with each other.
25. Walk ups to simulate jump shooting may be used in this class. The dog shall be brought to an area designated as the point of origin at heel or under control of its handler. The judges may signal for the bird while the handler and dog are walking.
26. Blind retrieve on water with shot shall be used. Maximum blind distances shall not exceed 80 yards. The blind may be a combination land/water blind. Handling in these tests must be done with precision. Failure to take direction through voice, whistle or hand signals is a serious infraction. The judges must decide on the seriousness of the refusal by taking into account the conditions and situation at hand.
27. Switching on diversion will result in automatic disqualification. Switching on marks (setting up a hunt and then picking up the other mark) shall be considered a serious fault.

## **GUN DOG CLASS**

### **Regulations and Test Requirements**

Reminder: In addition to the Rules listed below, Section B in its entirety is applicable to this class.

1. This class will be open to any dog that has not previously won the Gun Dog Class or Open at American Water Spaniel Water Trial. In addition, a dog may not enter Gun Dog if dog has a title at AKC Retriever Master, NAHRA Senior, HRC Finished, AWSC WDS. The purpose of the Gun Dog water trial test is to bring working dogs to a higher standard of performance. Desire and teamwork with the handler are important factors. They shall consist of tests that enable the judges to evaluate natural ability, training, and handler control.
2. A Gun Dog is required to come to the line without lead or collar.

3. A Gun Dog water trial test shall consist of a minimum of three tests including a double marked water retrieve; a diversion; a water blind. In the event of a tie for first place a water blind of up to 70 yards will be run with any additional factors that the judges deem necessary to determine a winner.
4. Maximum test distances are as follows: water retrieves are not to exceed 50 yards, the diversion not to exceed 20 yards and the water blind is not to exceed 40 yards.
5. The diversion may come after the second retrieve on the marks or the after water blind. It must land in the water.
6. A dog shall be steady at the line. Therefore, an uncontrolled break shall result in failure.
7. Moderate commands shall be allowed to steady a dog at the line at any time.
8. The dog may not be touched from the time they leave the holding blind or a place designated by the judges where the lead must be removed.
9. A controlled break shall not fail the dog, but it shall be considered a fault. As soon as the dog leaves the line and manifests an intent to make the retrieve without being so ordered, it must be stopped. If the dog is immediately brought under control, it shall be considered a minor infraction. Repeated evidence of this fault may be considered serious and, in the opinion of the judges, an eliminating factor. A controlled break will receive a two point deduction per occurrence.
10. The retrieving line may be set back from the water's edge at a distance deemed appropriate by the judges but preferably no more than 10 yards.
11. A dog shall deliver all birds to hand without delay.
12. A dog may be handled on marked retrieves with voice/whistle/hand signals, if in the opinion of the handler the dog can't find or has missed the mark. The dog is being tested for its marking and memory, however a crisp cast is preferable to a long hunt. Repeated evidence of lack of memory, marking ability or lack of control may be grounds for elimination. Handling on marks requires point deductions. The amount of deductions is based on the judge's discretion.
13. A dog may be cast from the line only once for each mark. If the attempt is unsuccessful, the judges shall step in and direct the handler to pick up his/her dog. However, if in the judge's opinion, the dog exhibits confusion at the line, the judges may allow a recast.
14. Handlers will be required to shoulder a gun or dummy gun with both hands as if actually shooting the bird. All firearms are assumed loaded with live ammunition and must be handled accordingly. The handler is required to place the gun in the gun stand or give it to the judge after the dog is sent for the first mark.
15. Tests for this event shall be held in appropriate cover on land and water.

16. Blind retrieves on water with shot will be used in this class, but shall not exceed 40 yards in length through appropriate cover.
17. Blind retrieves shall not be included with marking tests. The general area of the line for marking tests shall not be used as the line for blind retrieves.
18. A Gun Dog should display a willingness to cooperate with its handler. Handling should be a demonstration of obedience acquired through training and should be scored on the crispness of response. Failure to take direction through voice, whistle or hand signals is a serious infraction. The judges must decide on the seriousness of the refusal(s) by taking into account the conditions at hand.
19. Judges cannot dictate the order of retrieves on marks.
20. Switching on diversion is considered a serious fault. Switching on marks (setting up a hunt and then picking up the other mark) shall be considered a serious fault as well.
21. Dogs shall not be required to honor another dog in this class.

## **NOVICE CLASS**

### **Regulations and Test Requirements**

Reminder: In addition to the rules listed below, Section B in its entirety is applicable to this class.

1. Novice is intended for young and/or inexperienced dogs and will be open to any dog that has not won Novice, Gun Dog or Open. In addition, the dog may not enter Novice if dog has a title AKC Retriever Senior, NAHRA Hunter, HRC Seasoned, AWSC WDX or above.
2. A Novice water trial test shall consist of a minimum one series consisting of two single marked retrieves on water. In the event of a tie for first place a single water mark of up to 70 yards will be run with any additional factors that the judges deem necessary to determine a winner.
3. Maximum test distances are as follows: water retrieves are not to exceed 50 yards.
4. Tests in this class should be run in light cover.
5. Live flyers are allowed but are discouraged.
6. A dog should be steady at the line; however, it may have a collar, leash or line around its neck and/or may be lightly restrained to assist in achieving steadiness. Dogs that are restrained in any way shall be penalized a one point deduction per occurrence.
7. A controlled break shall not fail a dog but shall result in a one point deduction per occurrence. As soon as the dog manifests an intent to make the retrieve without being so ordered, it must be stopped. If a dog is immediately brought under control, it shall be

considered a controlled break which is a minor infraction in this category.

8. An uncontrolled break shall not fail a dog but shall result in a three point score deduction per occurrence.
9. A Novice dog is not required to deliver to hand, however the dog must deliver the bird within a reasonable radius of the line which is easily accessible to the handler. Therefore, it is not appropriate to require the dog to deliver the bird into a boat or blind. The dog should return to its handler without delay. A dog that delivers to hand shall be scored higher than a dog that does not.
10. Novice tests are marking tests, designed to test the dogs' natural marking ability. Handling will be counted down.
11. A Novice dog may be cast from the line no more than twice per mark. If the dog is re-cast it shall be marked down. After two unsuccessful attempts, the judges must inform the handler that the dog is eliminated.
12. Dogs shall not be required to honor another dog in this class.
13. Diversions and dry shots (i.e. shots for which no bird appears or falls) shall not be allowed.
14. Handlers have the option to hold an empty shotgun in the firing position if the handler is not restraining his/her dog.
15. Walk-ups to simulate jump shooting may not be used in the class.
16. Dogs shall not be required to be placed at a point of origin at a distance from the handler.