

NRCC TASK FORCE REPORT

February 2015

Part 1- The State of Field Trials in Canada

**Part 2-Review and Recommendations to Improve Field Trials and their Support in
Canada**

The reports of my death have been greatly exaggerated

Mark Twain

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In pursuit of the 18th Dog

A retriever breeder and his three sons

A highly successful retriever breeder died leaving his 17 retrievers to his three sons.

When his sons opened up the will it read:

My eldest son should get $1/2$ (half) of total retrievers;

My middle son should be given $1/3$ rd (one-third) of the total retrievers;

My youngest son should be given $1/9$ th (one-ninth) of the total retrievers.

As it's impossible to divide 17 into half or 17 by 3 or 17 by 9, the three sons started to fight with each other.

So, they decided to go to another breeder who they considered quite smart, to see if he could work it out for them.

The breeder friend read the will patiently, after giving due thought, he brought one of his own retrievers over and added it to the 17. That increased the total to 18 retrievers.

Now, he divided the retrievers according to their fathers will.

Half of 18 = 9. So he gave the eldest son 9 retrievers.

$1/3$ rd of 18 = 6. So he gave the middle son 6 retrievers.

$1/9$ th of 18 = 2. So he gave the youngest son 2 retrievers.

Now add up how many retrievers they have: Eldest son 9, Middle son 6, Youngest son 2

TOTAL IS 17

Now this leaves one retriever over, so the breeder friend takes his retriever back to his kennel.

Problem Solved!

Moral:

The attitude of negotiation and problem solving is to find the 18th retriever i.e. the common ground. Once a person is able to find the 18th retriever the issue is resolved. It is difficult at times. However, to reach a solution, the first step is to believe that there is a solution. If we think that there is no solution, we won't be able to reach any!

Synopsis of the Report

This report contains two parts.

Part 1 describes the State of Field trials in Canada.

It provides an introduction and background to the NRCC Task Force Report. It presents results from a Cross-Canada Survey, analyses of CKC field trial entries and stakes and comments from discussions among the Task Force and retriever people across the country.

In this section you will learn about the type of people involved in field trials in Canada as well as their reasons for participation. You will also see some trends in numbers of entries and field trial stakes that overall indicate some declines especially in the minor stakes. National entries also fluctuate and have overall declined while National Amateur entries are fairly consistent overall,

Part 2 provides the 50 recommendations of the Task Force with their rationale.

Implementation of all of the recommendations will require the efforts of everyone- all-Individuals (amateurs and professionals), Retriever Clubs, the NRCC, the CKC and those who support and Sponsor the retriever sports.

As a synopsis, we note that many recommendations are quite easy to implement and could be adopted by the 2015 trial season. Indeed many are already in place and in some cases we are just encouraging their continuance.

Other recommendations are relatively inexpensive and very feasible. We see retriever clubs as an important backbone of the sport. Some clubs are already actively implementing our recommendations but we are encouraging a greater effort by all to improve the game. We provide some specific examples. Similarly, an increased support of National Sponsors is critical but much can be implemented with little financial cost and relatively minor effort if all pitch in.

We see the NRCC as a leadership organization for communication, coordination and as a defense against threats to our sport. One threat is apathy and the NRCC can do much to foster an attitude change and a community spirit. Thus, some of our recommendations for the NRCC are the most challenging but perhaps the most important to truly change the status quo.

Finally, we need to build a stronger community of retriever participants which includes field trialers, all of the hunt test people, hunting retriever owners and all those who dream of having a great retriever companion.

Part 1- The State of Field Trials in Canada

Introduction

The National Retriever Club of Canada has membership and representation from across Canada. It consists of an Executive, a Board of directors, various appointed positions and retriever field trial clubs from all across Canada. In addition to holding two Nationals a year in conjunction with hosts clubs, the NRCC has an annual meeting and multiple Director Meetings and Conference Calls. The NRCC is in a unique position to oversee field trialing issues, coordinate solutions and communicate information to those involved in the retriever sport in Canada.

At a Board meeting in November 2013 a motion was passed

That the NRCC executive assemble a NRCC Task Force to develop and implement a marketing plan to:

Increase participation in field trials and Nationals, and,

Attract and maintain major Sponsors for the NRCC and Host clubs.

Subsequently, in December 2013, a Task Force was developed. That group had regular conference calls, conducted a country-wide survey and consulted with many interested individuals during 2014. Data on field trial entries across Canada were also collected and analyzed.

It soon became apparent the many individuals had suggestions to improve field trialing in Canada. It also became apparent that there were many factors affecting the current state of the sport. In addition, those factors varied widely on a regional basis. Issues in Ontario were different from the Maritimes or the Central or Western provinces in many cases.

It was also obvious that despite the great success of the NRCC Corporate Sponsor Program in reducing the financial risk to National host clubs and improving the quality of Nationals, continued support or increased support by Sponsors would be a challenge. More and more groups are vying for Sponsorship while Corporations continue to look for ways to penetrate key markets to improve revenue to cut costs and improve profits. At the same time, the expanded operation of the NRCC indicated insufficient funds to operate as desired.

This report provides a summary of Task Force findings as well as recommendations to the NRCC for implementation. Our findings are based on results of a Survey, plus feedback from many discussions amongst the Task Force members and individuals through-out Canada and the USA. We also analyzed data on cross-Canada licensed "weekend" trial entries as well as National entries, primarily from the NRCC archives.

Survey on Field Trialing in Canada

A survey was sent out January 8, 2014 by various digital means such as email and Facebook to retriever folks across the country and to a small number of trialers in the United States. The Task Force felt that some trialers in the US could offer additional insight since a number of them have run Canadian Trials and have experience with the Canadian sport. The Task Force was pleased with the number (n = 214) and the quality of the responses. Responders were asked to forward the questionnaire to others who may not have received it. We do not know how many people became aware of the survey. However the number of responses is a good representation of Canadian field trial and hunt test people and survey results paint a good picture of the state of field trials. There is widespread recognition that our sport needs improvements in order to attract new participants and a strong interest in providing solutions.

Data Limitations

Respondents did not always answer every question. Responses to open-ended questions requiring subjective answers were analyzed for patterns and organized by these patterns. The percentages quoted represent the number who indicated a preference as a percentage of those who answered the question and not as a percentage of the total responses. The bias in this type of survey is that it only represents the thoughts of those who responded. We suspect that few trialers that are no longer in the game responded. Thus, we could draw few conclusions from the survey as to why people have left the game. Similarly, it was sometimes difficult to tell if responders were hard-core and frequent competitors or whether they ran many Nationals.

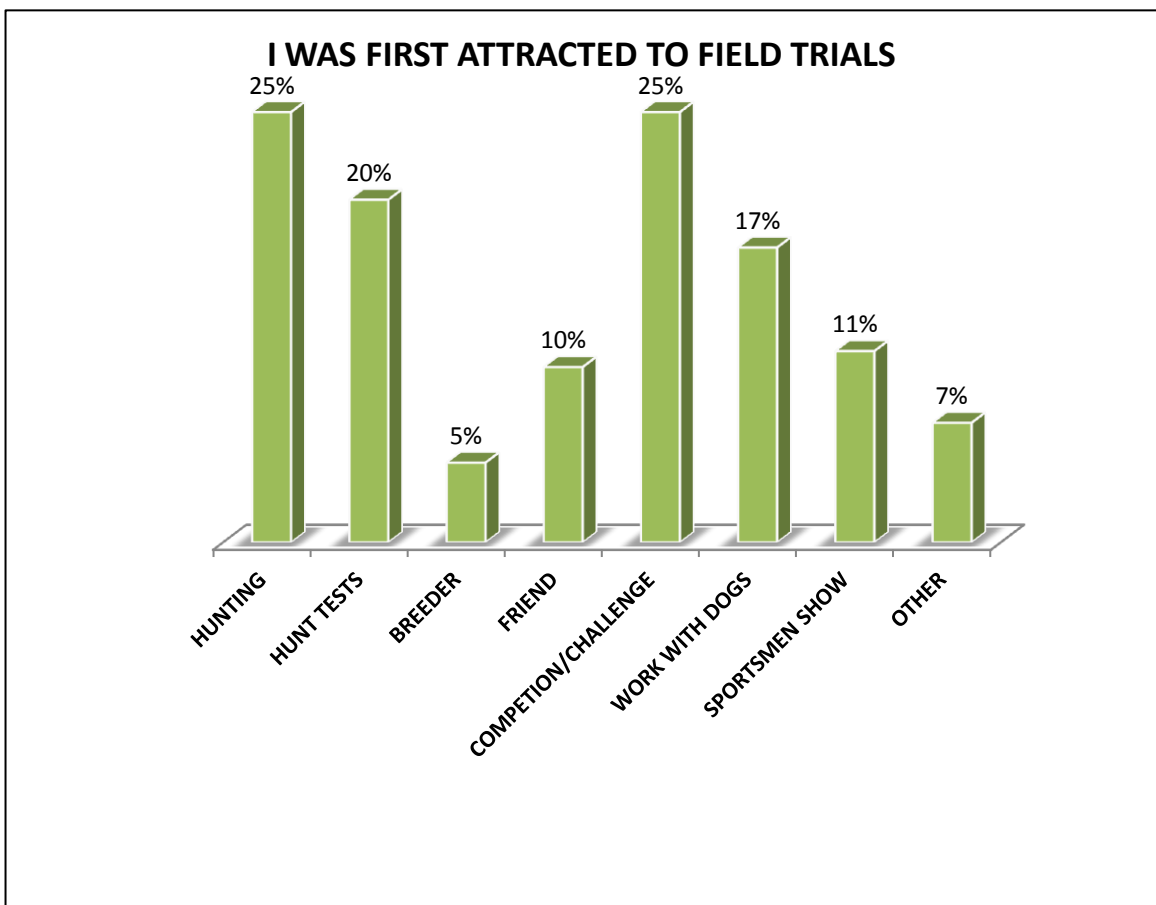
Summary of Findings

People were initially drawn to the sport because they were looking for a hunting dog or wanted help to train their dog, wanted something different than what hunt tests could offer, or wanted more challenge and competition. The things that drove them to participate are working with the dogs, competition and the social aspect. The answers to the question about the joys and benefits confirm that working the dogs and the social aspect are important in people's participation. A significant number (40%) are retired and the majority of trialers are over 56. The majority are married but only 12% have children at home, which reflects the large age group over 56.

The biggest hurdles for those working are the time to train (63%), travel (53%) and the lack of grounds (44%). As might be expected for retired trialers the opposite is true for time to train (12%) and travel (16%). Both groups view lack of grounds as a big problem. For the retired group finances, 51% and the lack of helpers are issues. Surprisingly, few identified the lack of a competitive dog as a big issue.

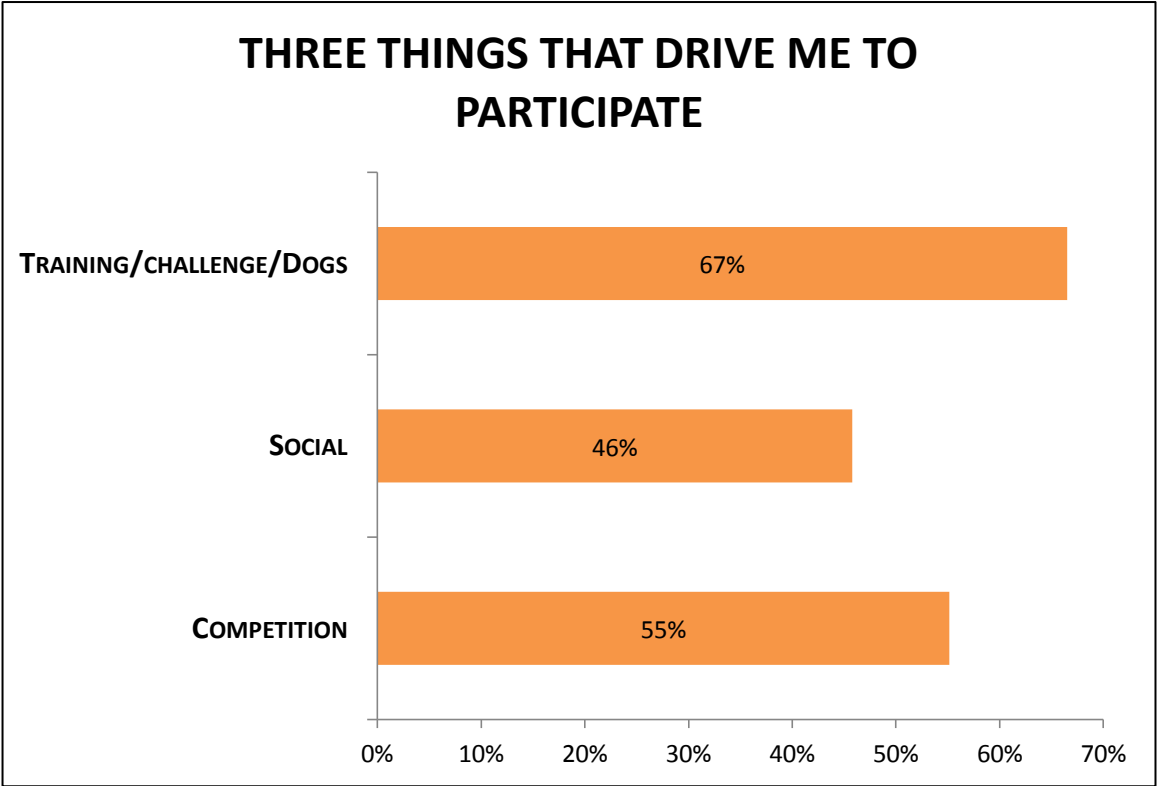
The single biggest way people participate is through training groups. This makes sense when you consider that one of the biggest benefits people said they get from the sport is the social aspect. The responses to the question about how to improve the sport indicated three distinct themes. The first was that the judging had to improve and the second was that the sport had to be more user friendly to the pure amateur and finally, closely related to the amateur theme, must start to feel that they are getting value for their entry fee, their expenses and their time and effort,. This latter issue is also directly related to cost. Many would like to see the cost of trialing come down but if that cost won't come down then they want to see more value for their expenses. A close fourth was improving the social aspect.

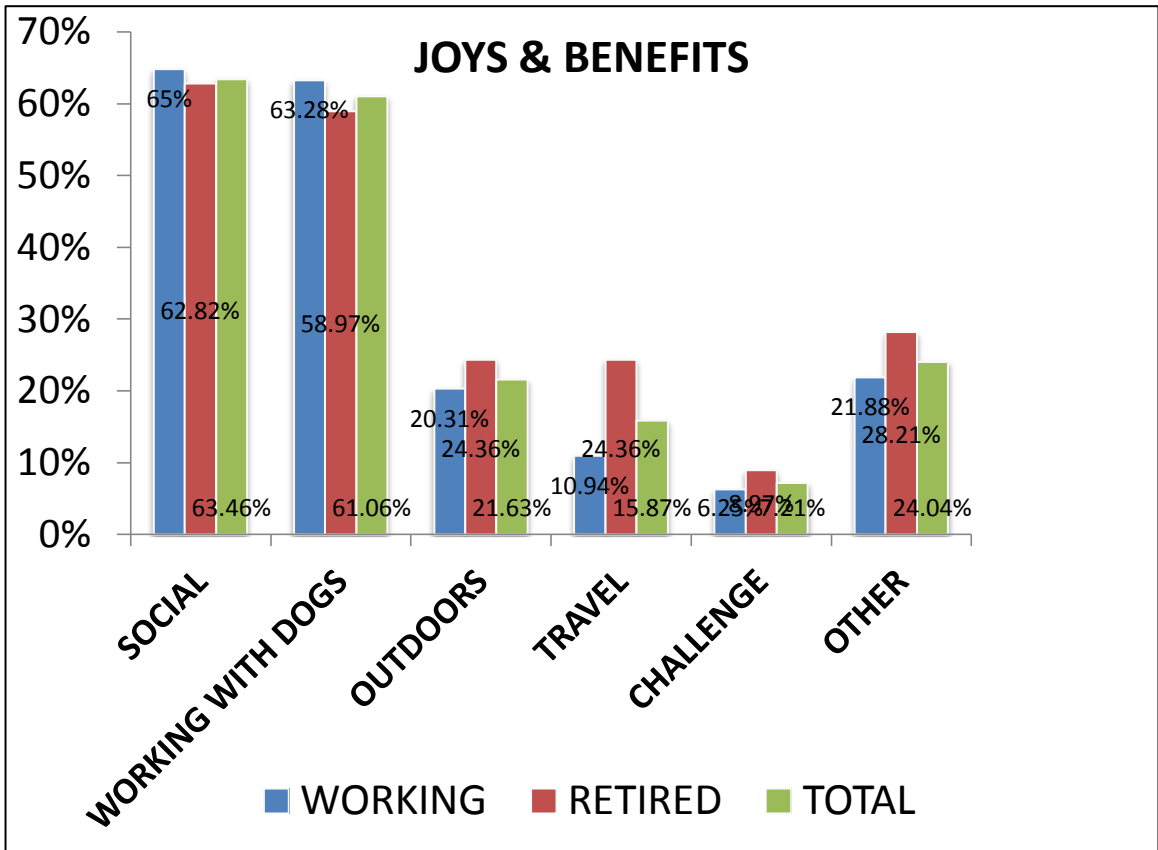
Details of Responses



The above chart indicates that one of the main reasons 25% of the respondents were originally attracted to field trials was that they were either looking for a dog for hunting or help to train their hunting dog. Many of those same people (25%) were also attracted by the competitive nature or challenge of field trials. Hunt testers looking for a different challenge, another way to

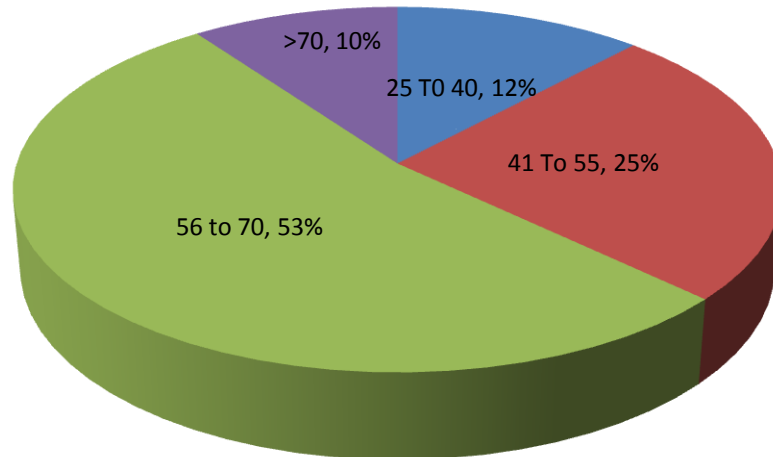
progress their dogs, or competition are the third largest source of current trialers. Finally, as you would expect 17% indicated that working with dogs was another reason they were attracted to the sport. It's interesting to note 11% were originally attracted to the sport through the Sportsmen Show whereas today the indoor trials have been replaced by the "marvelous mutts".



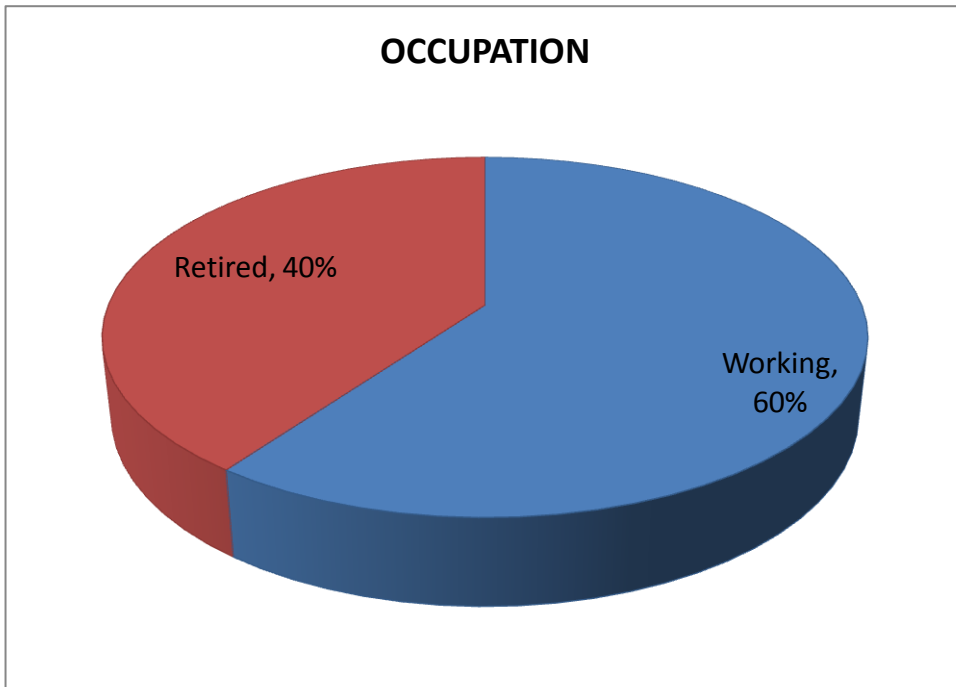


The top three reasons to field trials were Competition, Social and the Training and Challenge of working with dogs. The previous page charts indicate that for both working and retired participants the social aspect (65% and 63% respectively) and as you would expect, working with dogs received the most responses. Being outdoors and travel were distance seconds, although travel was important to those that were retired. The other category contained many different reasons that were too diverse to group into one category. Where people specifically indicated that training their dog was a challenge they enjoyed, we grouped the answers together.

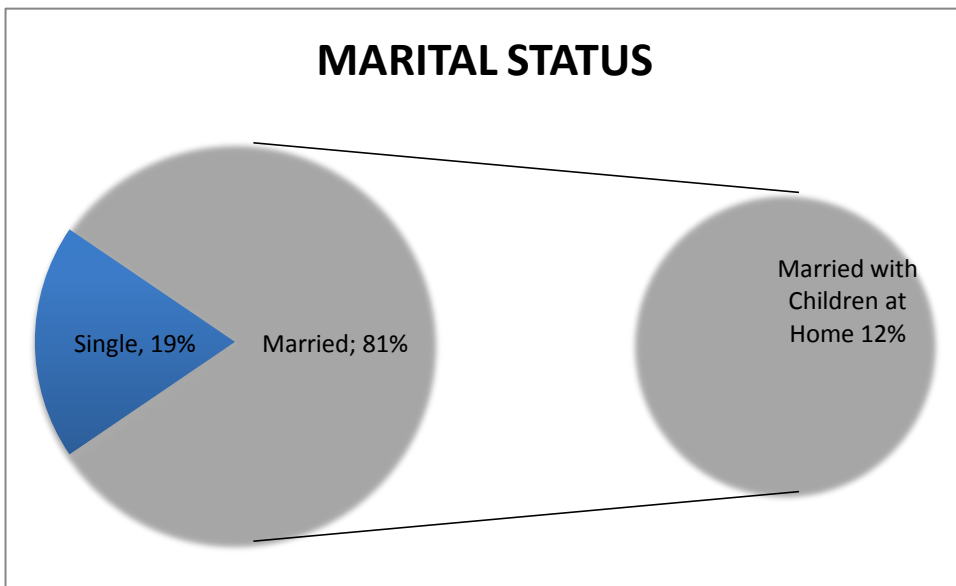
AGE OF RESPONDENTS



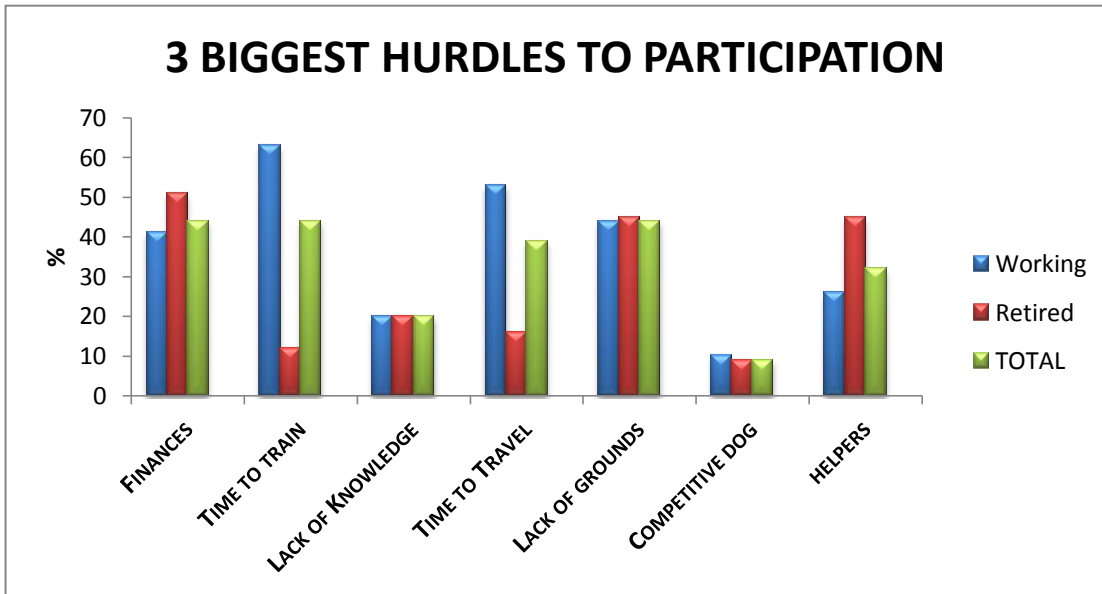
The age distribution of the respondents reflected in the above chart, illustrate that most trialers are in the age range of 56 to 70 and if we add those over 70 then 63% of trialers are over 56. Such a large percentage in the plus 56 age group adds considerable emphasis on solutions needed sooner than later as they will be leaving the sport at a faster rate than new entrants. If , if we assume that the 41 to 55 age groups, which were 25% of the respondents and that what we will call late boomers will be moving into the 56 to 70 age group, then our marketing efforts should be directed at these three age groups. The age group 24 to 40 only represents 12%. This tends to be the group that doesn't have the time or resources to play the game as they are still raising children and accumulating capital that will allow them to play the game later on in life.



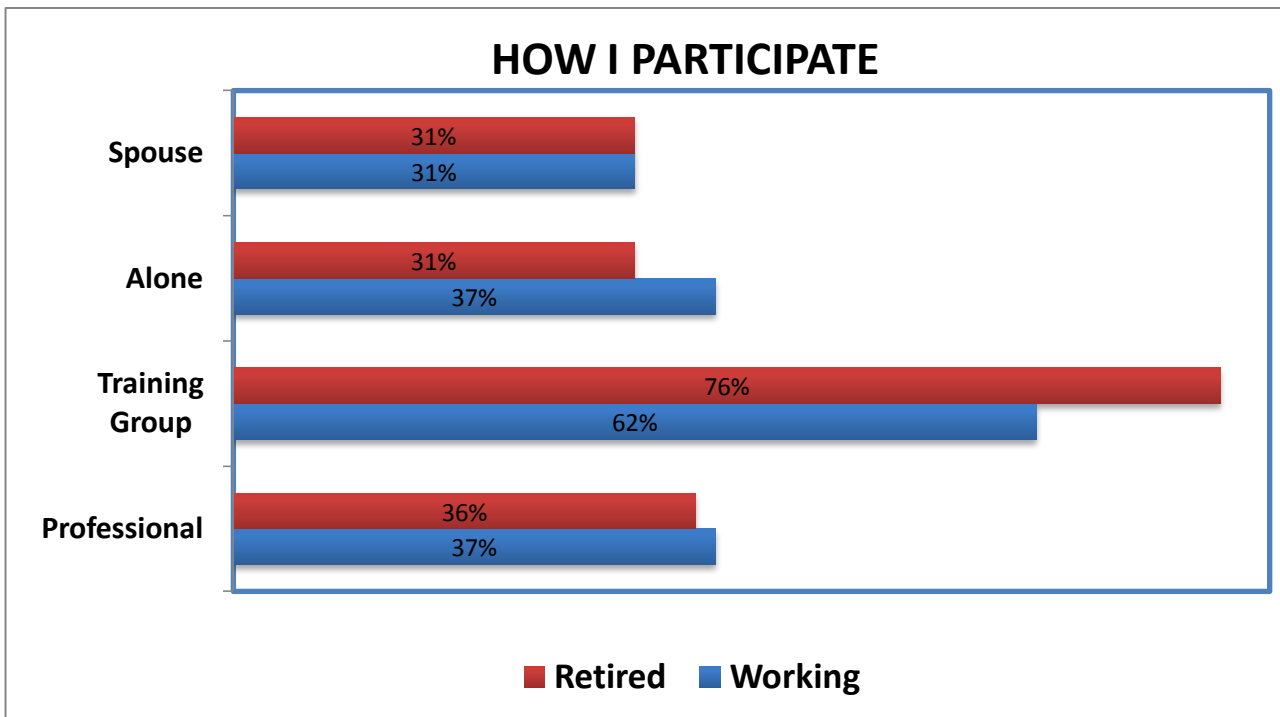
A significant portion of trialers are retired which affects how they play the game. See the chart on Participation



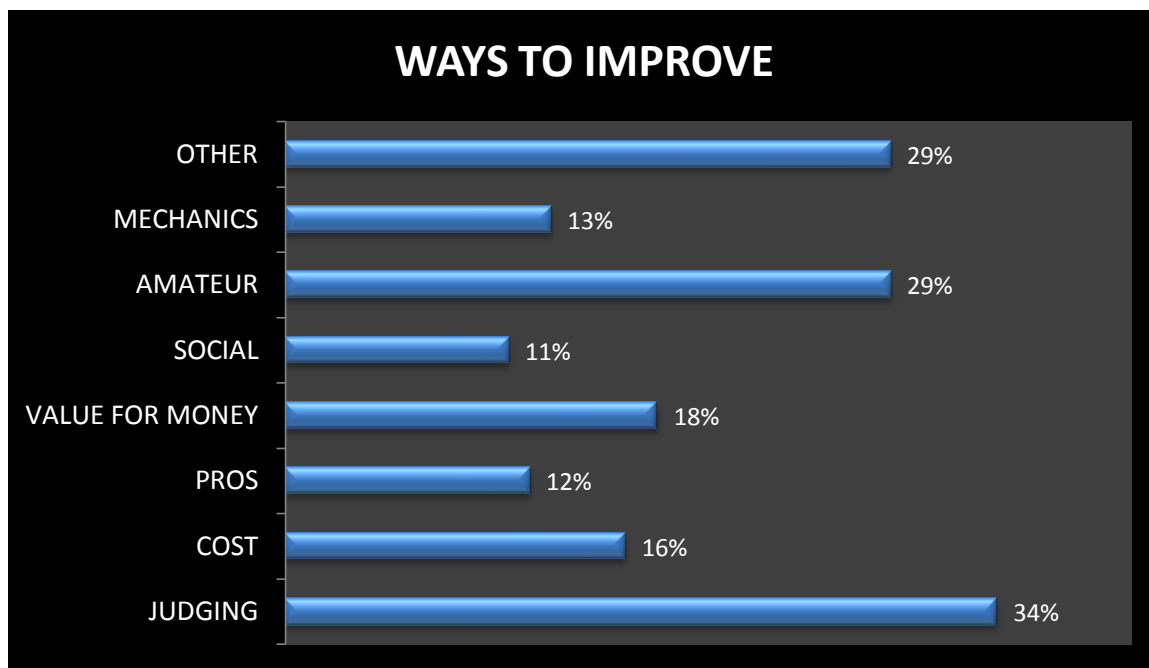
While 81% of the survey respondents are married only 12% indicated that they had children at home. This correlates to the age categories and occupation charts



The biggest hurdles for those working are the time to train 63%, travel 53% and the lack of grounds 44%. As might be expected for retired trialers the opposite is true for time to train 12%, and travel 16%. Both groups view lack of grounds as a big problem. For the retired group, finances 51% and the lack of helpers are issues. Surprisingly, the lack of a competitive dog doesn't seem to be a big issue.



Survey respondents were asked to select one or all of the categories but weren't asked which one was their primary way of training. Some for example, elected one, two or all of the categories. Nevertheless, the majority of the responses of both groups indicate that Training Groups are a big part of how and why they participate in the sport, especially for the retired group.



The answers to this question varied widely and required some subjective interpretation. For example, the other category above accounted for 29%, many of which were simply editorial comments. In order to allow for a better understanding of the answers we organized the responses into eight themes. That said, many of the suggestions are linked.

The Trial Mechanics theme at 13%, dealt with suggestions related to time management, signage, improving how entries get to the Field Trial Secretaries and trial logistics, like using wingers.

The Amateur theme at 29% was the second biggest category. It dealt with the better care and feeding of the amateur (especially the amateur who trains and handles his or her own dog). What came across is the sense that it is very difficult for most (there are a few who can but they are a small minority) amateurs to compete with the pro-handled and/or trained dogs. Many of the winning dogs, especially in the all-age stakes, are pro-trained or at least trained by experienced Amateurs that are retired. As a consequence some that started in trials ended up moving to hunt tests which met their needs better or they left the game completely. Of course, the reverse is true as hunt testers moved to Field Trials for the added challenge and competition. This factor also has to be considered along with the cost of trialing as a negative to amateurs. Despite this, we had discussions with some Amateurs (more in the west) that trained their own dogs and readily accepted the challenge. They suggested that new participants

should not be discouraged but instead encouraged to get with experienced trainers and helpful retriever clubs.

One suggestion that was made was to carry dogs in the minor stakes through 2-4 series (see suggestions re minor stakes later). Some pointed out that the CKC Rules and Regulations that recommend judges be generous in their call backs is not always followed.

There were a number of suggestions that there should be more owner/handler events. Some strongly wanted to discourage Amateurs running a group of the dogs on a pro truck but not training partners running each other's dogs.

A number of people felt that the local clubs need to do better job encouraging newcomers. This includes mentoring and recognition that there will be varying degrees of interest from the person who only wants a hunting dog to those who are only "Weekend Warriors" and to those who are very passionate and committed. Each group must be made to feel welcome and realize that their participation is just as important as the person who is trying to qualify for Nationals. Respondents also felt that local clubs need to have more events like picnic trials, training days and puppy stakes (even at licensed trials) that would help encourage new people.

Many felt that trials should have a bigger social aspect to them. This is consistent with the answers to the questions on why people participate where responders indicated that the social aspect was one of the big reasons. Suggestions include tailgates or socials during the trial, including socials with training days and making trials family friendly to encourage trialers to bring their families. Things like port-a potties help.

This also ties in with the concept of value for money theme. Having a good social experience along with being carried for at least a couple of series should make the trialers feel that they have got some value for their entry and/or travel expenses. There seems to be a need to make a trial an event with more than one aspect to it. We recognize that this can be a financial issue for clubs. Running a trial in one day usually results in it being a very long day and as such leaves little time for a social event that is well attended because most people are still feeding and airing dogs until well after dark. Yet, if you do a trial over two days it is much more expensive to run as a result of having only one event per weekend versus two, and cutting entry income in half..

There were a number of suggestions related to professionals, ranging from not allowing them to run in the minor stakes; asking them to judge; making sure that their involvement with stakes not be considered a conflict i.e. throwing marks or coaching their clients in holding blinds when running amateur stakes; and helping more with trials.

The suggestion related to cost was to keep entry fees from rising. However, a closer look at this issue reveals that the cost problem for trialers is not primarily with entries as fees increases have not kept pace with inflation. For example a \$25.00 entry fee in 1970 adjusted for inflation (CPI) would be equivalent to \$154.00 in 2013. Unfortunately, the major costs of trialing

are gas (currently seeing some relief with lower prices), hotels, and food (much of which are not controllable by the sport), and continue to increase.

The area that received the most suggestions was Judging at 34%. Suggestions ranged from making sure judges have read the rulebook; had actual training experience (i.e. too many judges have little training experience because their dogs are trained by pros and thus don't understand dog work). There were also suggestions that judges and contestants need to avoid actual or perceived conflicts of interest or favoritism. Examples cited were training partners judging each other or pro clients judging their pro's dogs (given the size of the field trial community it's almost impossible to avoid this).

There was a constant theme that judges needed better training i.e., judging clinics that will teach them, among other things, test design, time management and evaluation.

It was also felt that we need to expand the pool of judges by encouraging new judges and bringing judges in from outside your club's area. We did look at judging assignments for the past five years in Ontario to see patterns. The data were incomplete but they suggest that about one-third of the approved judges do almost three-quarters of the judging. A recent analysis by Retriever News showed a very similar phenomenon. A review of the judging assignments in 2014 in Ontario showed little, if any, attempt by clubs to bring in new judges. The majority of the judges in many circuits year would be considered senior.

Trends in Field Trials in Canada

This study began from a concern that anecdotal evidence suggested that Field Trial and Hunt test entries and thus, participation was down at both the local and national level. To consider this concern we analyzed the available statistics on CKC field trial entries and stakes at both the local and national level. We considered the results of the US entry analysis for the past 13 years, the demographic and societal factors that influence participation and identified the Clubs that have disappeared or had little activity over the past five years

Methods

We tabulated data (2010 to 2014) from the National Retriever Club of Canada website (www.nrcc-canada.com) for field trial and hunt test local and regional results, and for the Canadian National and National Amateur entries for the past 26 years. Local and regional field trial results prior to 2010 were too incomplete to be used. The hunt test results for that period were very limited and thus not complete enough to yield any meaningful information.

We also contacted the Canadian Kennel club but the data they provided were very limited and in a form that was not very useful since it was tallied by number of events which could include Open and Junior or some other combination. They did have a measure of # of entries and # competing. Their numbers did show entries of 2,455, 2,219 and 2,240 in an average of 77 hunt test events from 2010-2012. Field trials showed 3,611, 3,225 and 3,327 entries in an average of 94 events for the same period. The significance of these data is that

hunt tests entries were not increasing but showed somewhat similar trends to field trials. These data were not used for any further analyses.

We analyzed the CKC licensed trial data from the NRCC archives from a number of perspectives including entries and stakes by category, region and nationally.

The number of stakes that are held influences the number of entries in any given year. Adding or deleting stakes in any given year can significantly influence totals entries and can result in misleading conclusions. Adding more stakes may only mean that the same people just ran more stakes and that in fact there really were not more people involved. To compensate for the possible distortion we also present the ratio of entries per stake in total and by various categories.

The best measure of participation would be the number of different people running dogs (or contestants having their dogs run by professionals) over a period of time. Unfortunately, this information is not available.

Results

Analyses of the last 5 years.

Note: We did compare entries, number of stakes and entries per stake in each year from 2011 -2014 versus 2010 but this is a relatively short period and caution should be used with percentages from such small samples. Small changes can show large percentages but results did show some years were up and others down. The per cent changes we report are for 2014 versus 2010.

Entries by Stake

Open entries are down by 8% because the number of stakes is down by 7% (Chart 1 and 2,). Ontario and Alberta accounted for the largest drop in open entries. Ontario open entries were down over the five-year period by 13% and Alberta's were down by 5%. This results in an 8% drop in open entries per stake. Both Ontario and Alberta have a significant impact on the cross-Canada numbers.

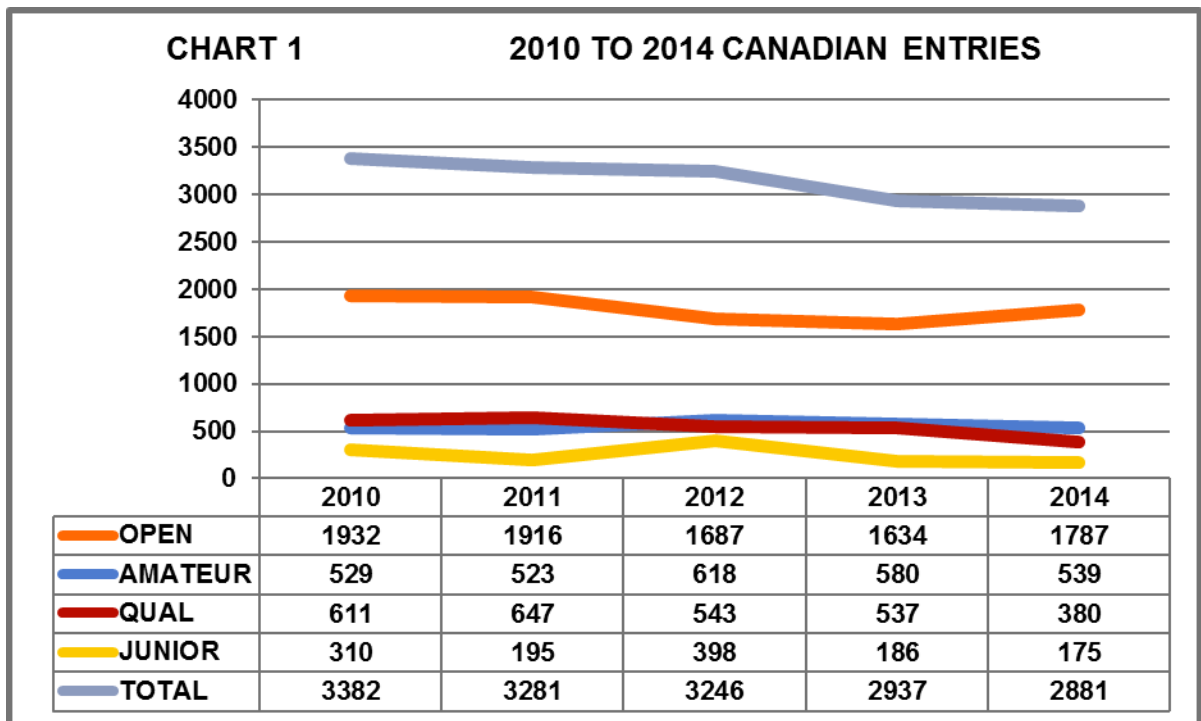
Cross Canada Amateur entries and stake (Charts 1) are relatively consistent resulting in entries per stake (Chart 4) being constant throughout the period although relative to Open stakes they are significantly less because many Western clubs hold Open stakes but not Amateur stakes. While Amateur entries and stakes are not declining, they aren't growing either growing which suggests relatively few new amateurs moving up through the ranks to this stake and Open.

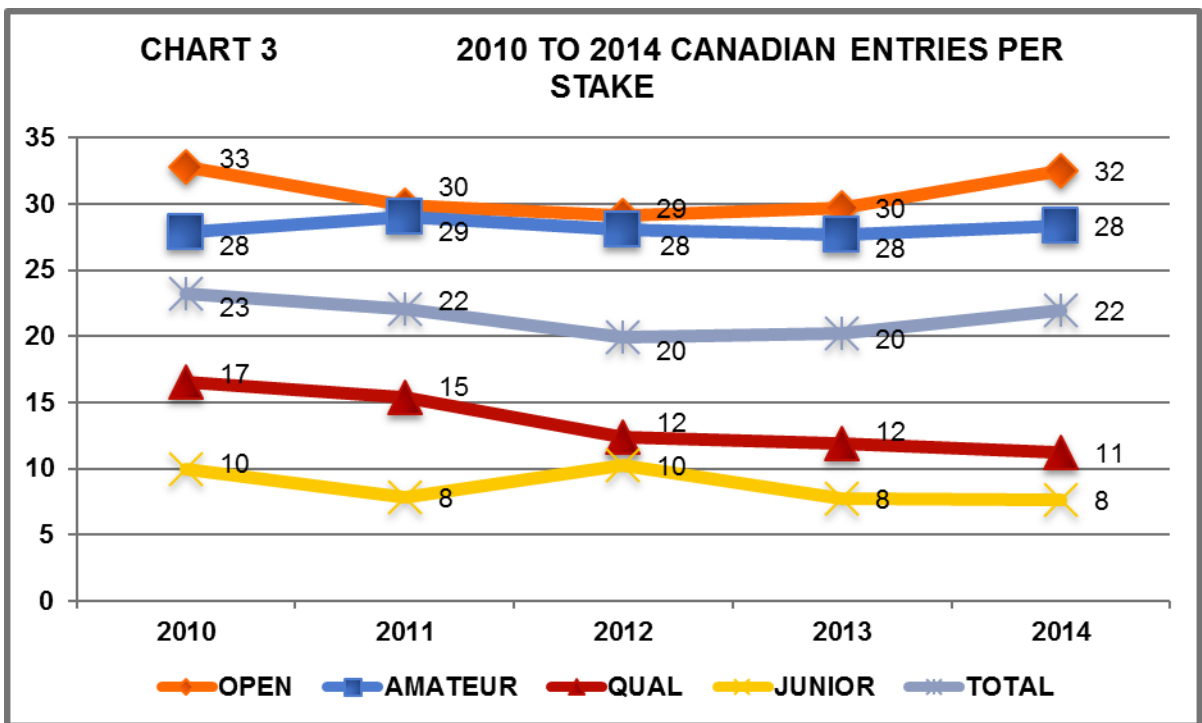
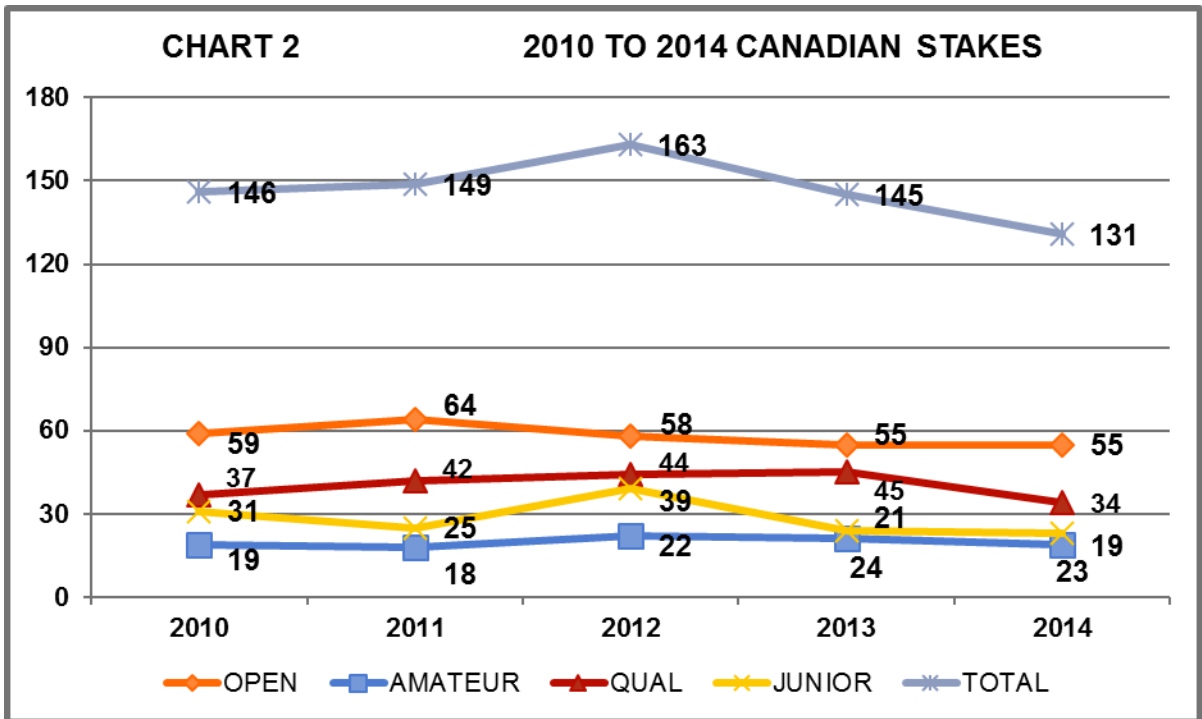
The most significant drop in CKC field trial entries and stakes was in qualifying and junior (Charts 1 and 2). While the number of qualifying stakes remained approx the same for the period entries dropped from a high of 611 in 2010 to 380 in 2014. This resulted in entries per stake dropping from 17 to 11 or a 35% drop. The qualifying stake as well as being an entry

level for new participants is the place where a lot of amateur choose to play and where hunt test people come to try field trialing.

It is unfortunate that some clubs because of economics, grounds etc have chosen not to hold Junior or Qualifying stakes as this limits the opportunities for new participants.

Junior entries went from a high of 310 in 2010 to 175 in 2014. There was a drop in junior stakes of 8 or a 10% drop. While this decrease in stakes caused some of the drop in entries, the entries per stake dropped by 24% reflecting few new people joining the sport. In addition, there has been a trend by more experienced trialers to focus on the all-age stake training and thus run fewer minor stakes with their young dogs. Some clubs had to cancel minor stakes when entries were very small.





Regional Comparisons

To give us a better understanding of the cross Canada trends we reviewed each region (Charts 4 and 5).

Alberta

Alberta experienced a overall 6% drop in entries while the number of stakes they held remained the same. But significantly they did have a 52% drop in qualifying and a 56 % drop in junior entries.

British Columbia

The British Columbia entries are down from a high of 600 in 2010 to 550 in 2014 a 8% drop. The loss of the BC Gun Dog Club, only one trial from the Okanagan Club and the Upper Island having only 2 trials during the last five years had an impact. In 2014 there were no amateur trials in British Columbia. Junior entries stayed the same over the period but the number of stakes dropped by 26% (80 in 2010 to 59 in 2014)

Maritimes

The Maritime Provinces had only one club that held a field trial in 2014. However, several clubs were prepared to offer events but entries were too low to allow. While some clubs did hold hunt tests, some have not been active recently (Moncton, PEI and Eastern Flyway).

Manitoba

Entries are up by 18% but stakes are also up by 31% resulting in entries per stake going from 18 to 16. This seems to indicate that entries are up only because there are more stakes and not necessarily more participants. Qualifying and junior entries and stakes were up in Manitoba.

Ontario

The Ontario entries were down by 169 or 13% (but note they were up for 3 of the past 4 years -chart 6) and stakes were down by 6 or 18%. . These numbers translate into entries per stake being down by 1.

One of the biggest drops in Ontario entries come from open where the entries were down by 13 % probably because stakes were down. The other big decline came from Junior and Qualifying. Qualifying entries dropped 215 to 141 a 34% drop while the number of stakes went from 11 to 8 a 27% drop. This resulted in entries per stake going from 20 to 18 an 18% drop. Junior entries dropped from 117 to 73 and the number of stakes from 11 to 8 or a 27% drop, which results in an entry per stake from 11 to 9, or a 14 % drop. In contrast, amateur stakes increased from 12 to 14 resulting in entries going from 374 to 403. Since entries per stake dropped from 31 to 29 over the 5-year period it suggest the increase in entries was because of the increase in stakes not an increase in new participants.

An important factor affecting Ontario results is that there was no Temiskaming, Bancroft and Horseshoe Hunting Retriever Club trials in 2014 and Lab Owners ran 2 Opens when they usually have more stakes..

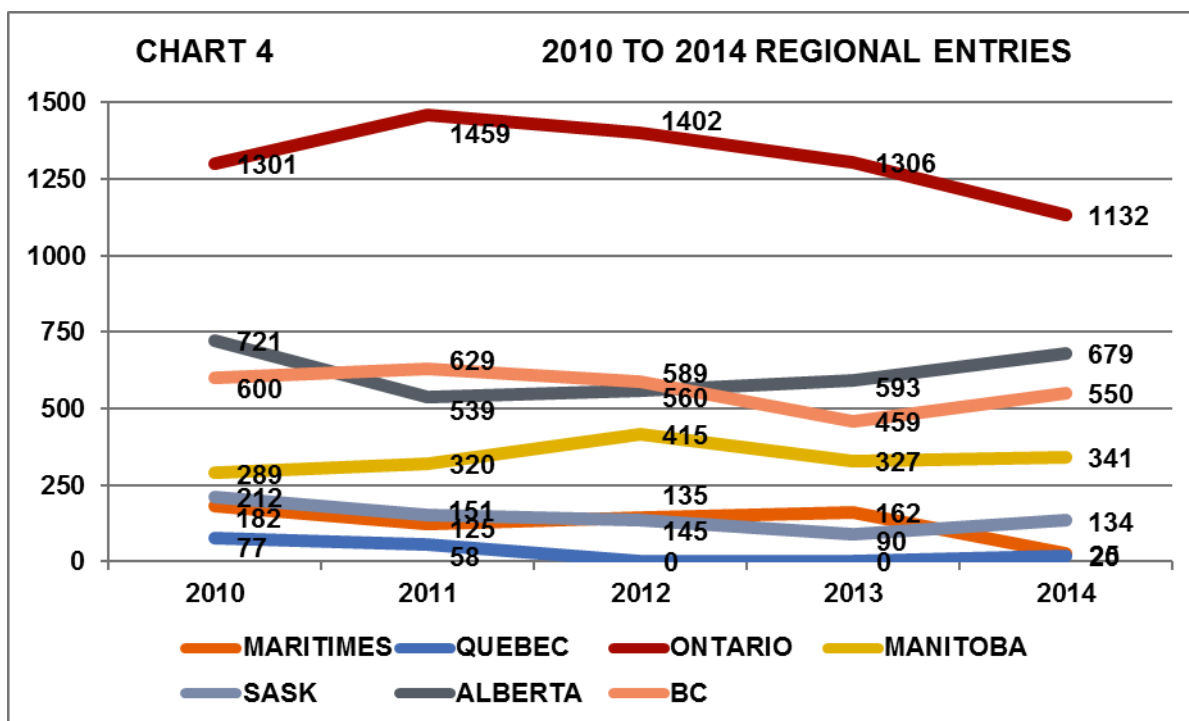
Quebec

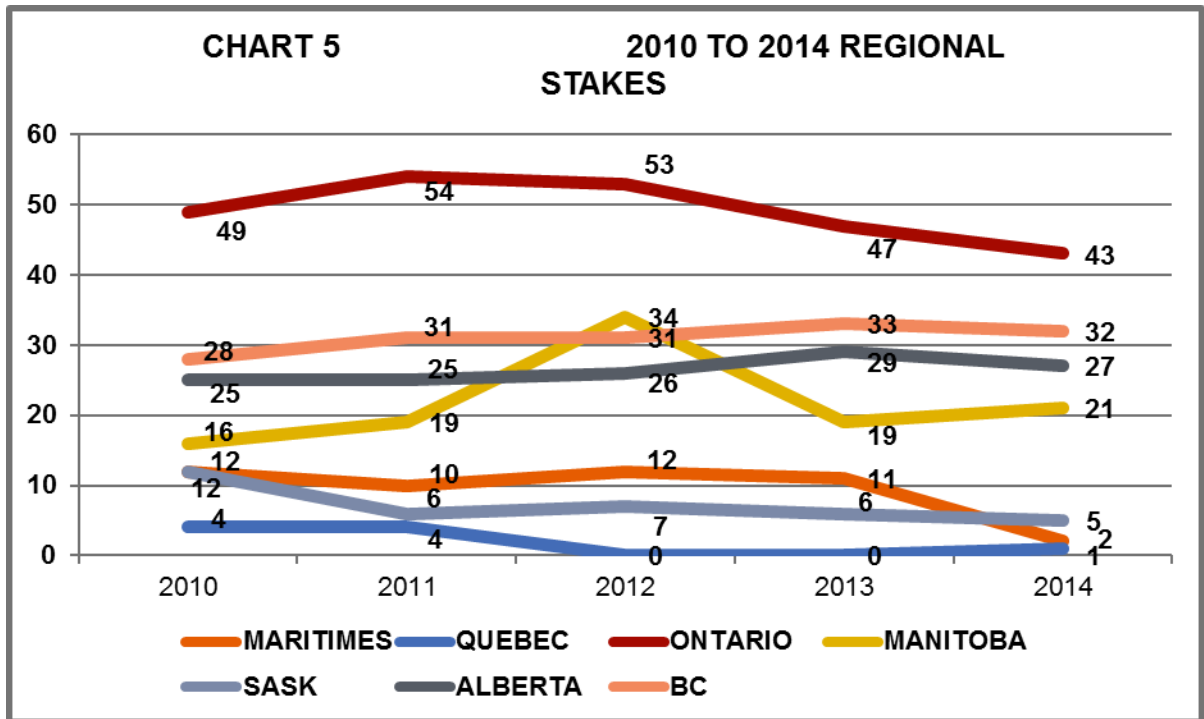
Montreal has not held any trials for two years except one amateur last year.

Saskatchewan

Saskatchewan had no amateur stakes in the past five years holding only open all-age stakes. The reason for no amateur stakes in Sask is it is uneconomical to hold an amateur event in Saskatchewan with very few dogs to compete.

The number of stakes they held went from 12 in 2010 to 5 in 2014 which resulted in entries dropping from 212 to 134 a 37% drop. Open stakes dropped from 6 to 3, Qualifying from 4 to 2 and Junior from 2 to none. Because the number of stakes dropped relative to the number of entries they were actually able to increase their entries per stake from 24 to 27. The other contributing factor is that the Regina Club is no longer active in hosting field trials but does offer hunt tests.

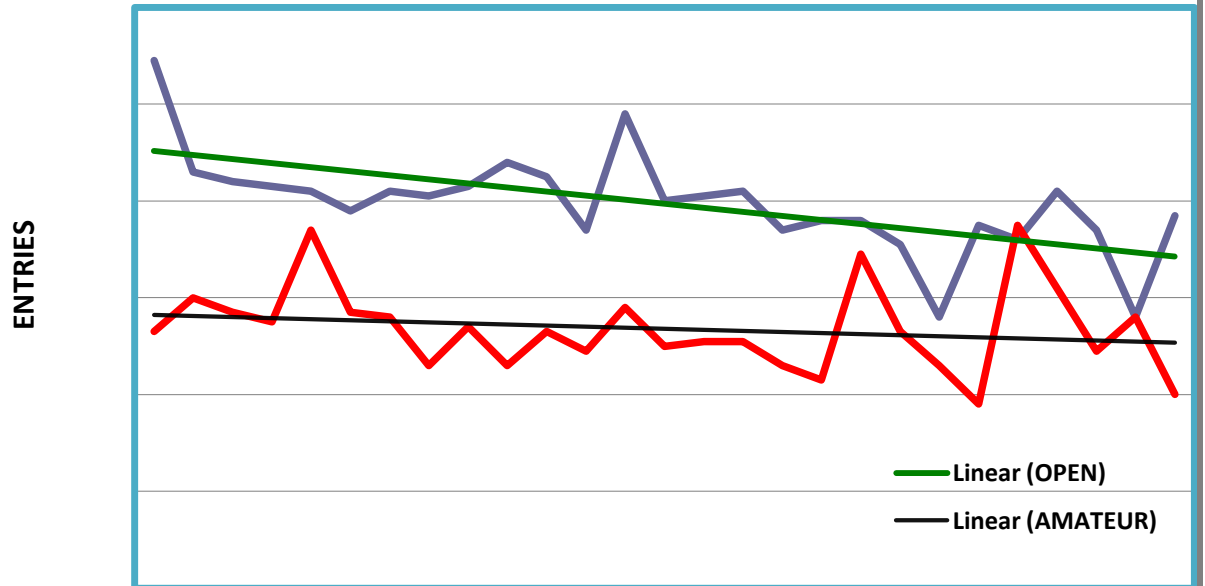




Canadian National and National Amateur Entries

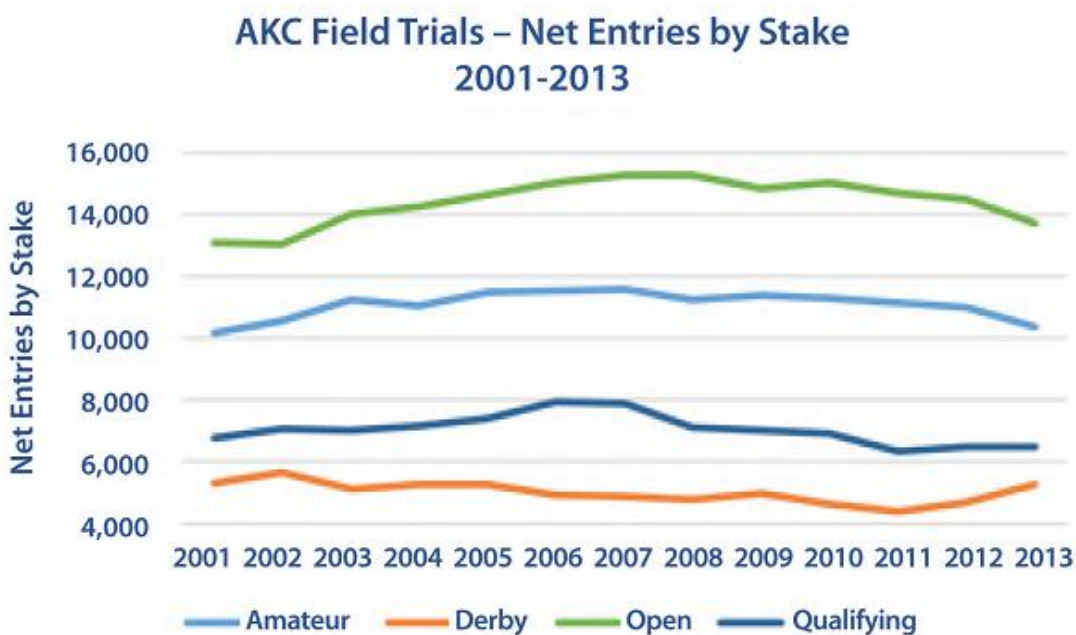
We have reported entries for both Nationals only since 1988 when the first National Amateur occurred. The trend lines indicate that over the past 26 years National entries are trending down from the 90's to the mid 70's while National Amateur entries are dropping slightly but holding their own. Of course, location is a contributing factor (i.e. the cost and time of travel) on entries but if the number of new contestants is not increasing then by simple attrition the number of entries will decrease. This is particularly true in the National Amateur where data suggest a slow decrease. In the National where the professionals are a significant proportion, we suspect that when an Amateur considers the cost of entering a National vs. their odds of being a finalist or staying in for a few series some are choosing not to enter. Instead they will enter the National Amateur if it is reasonably close by. We noted relatively few Amateurs chose to travel across the country to attend a National. We did not see a significant pattern in eastern versus western nationals although several of the lowest entries have been in the East. We also noted that in most years only about 1/3 of those that qualify enter a National Amateur. In comparison in AKC Nationals where qualifications are much more difficult, about 90% of qualifiers enter.

1988 to 2014 CANADIAN NATIONAL & NATIONAL AMATEUR ENTRIES



	88	89	90	91	92	93	94	95	96	97	98	99	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
— OPEN	109	86	84	83	82	78	82	81	83	88	85	74	98	80	81	82	74	76	76	71	56	75	72	82	74	56	77
— AMATEUR	53	60	57	55	74	57	56	46	54	46	53	49	58	50	51	51	46	43	69	53	46	38	75	62	49	56	40

The chart below illustrates that Open and Amateur entries in the United States are down by 10%. A full discussion of the reasons can be found in Retriever News. The relevance is that entries in the United States are also slipping but sometimes for different reasons.

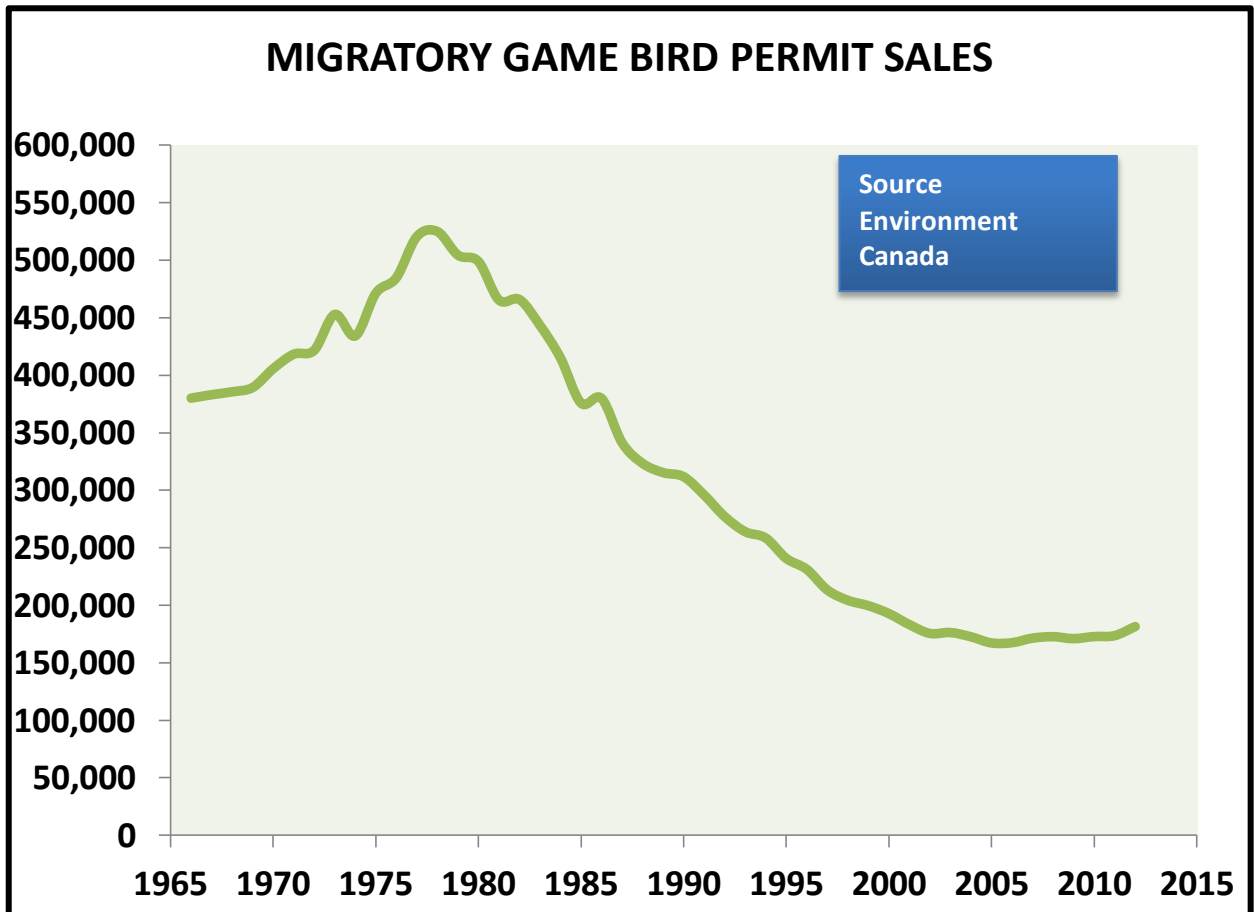


Finally, we want to note that in 2014, some regions in the USA experienced significant drops in trial entries while other regions (notably in the southern winter training circuits) remain problematically high. We also noted that some hunt test venues showed lower numbers but that the AKC Master National and Master stakes reached recorded highs. In comparison Hunt test entries were lower in parts of Canada in 2014 and Master National entries remain quite low. We received reports of declines also in HRC Hunt tests entries and number of stakes.

Changes in Society

We considered the changes in society that are having an impact on our sport and that should be considered in our recommendations. Some of these are also reflected in the answers we received from the survey.

First, the number of people wildfowl hunting, a big source historically for new members is down over the past 30 years by over 65% although the trend seems to be leveling off.



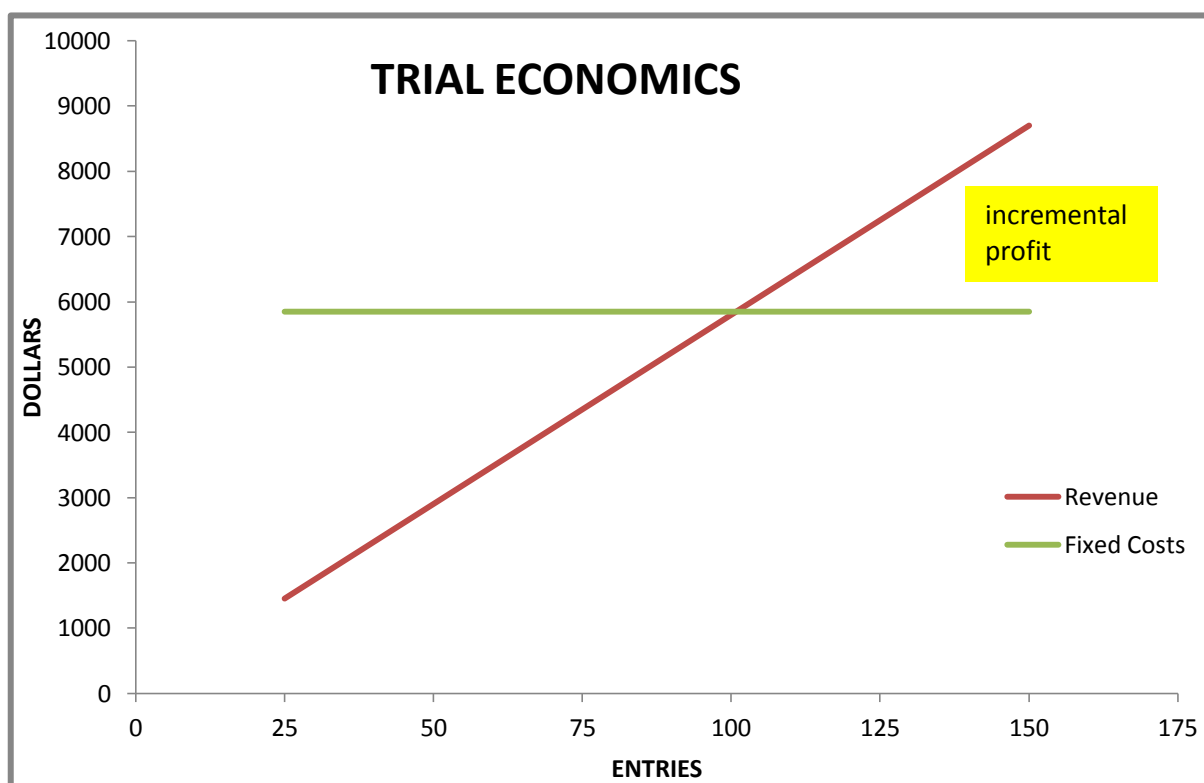
Secondly, the cost (fuel, accommodation) of trialing has increased dramatically. This is very relevant to those who have young families and who can't afford to send their dogs to a pro. Today vs. 30 years ago both spouses are working and if they can't afford to send their dog to a pro don't have the time to spend training. Both of these concerns were reflected in the responses to the survey.

The demographics of Canada reflect an aging population that could in some cases help increase participation. This group will have an impact on how the game is played. In 2011 visible minorities made up 19% of the Canadian population and this figure continues to grow. They represent a significant percentage of the large metropolitan areas of the lower mainland of British Columbia, Calgary, Winnipeg and southern Ontario but are not represented in the field trial and hunt test communities. Is this an untapped market?

We have to be aware that society's view of pets has changed over the past 30 years. Most dog owners today have a very anthropomorphic view of their dogs resulting in deeper attachment and owners viewing their dogs as family members. Some field dog trainers have become desensitized to the issues around the use of e-collars and forget that the general public view them as cruel and would challenge the necessity of their use, i.e. does the end justify the means Remember that emotion usually trumps facts. This issue will result in some people not wanting to be involved and continues to be a public relations risk for the sport.

Trial Economics

Since participation has a big impact on trial economics we decided that it would be helpful to review the economics. See the chart and discussion below.



A field trial has two cost components—fixed and variable and one revenue component (excluding incidental revenue from draws etc). Fixed costs are those costs that in the short term i.e. the two or three days of a trial are fixed and don't vary with the number of entries. Included in fixed are birds, ribbons, gunners, judges expenses, food and beverages, insurance, programs and ammunition. For the purpose of this illustration assume \$6500 of fixed costs.

Variable costs are those that vary with the number of entries. The primary one is a CKC fee.

The above chart illustrates the relationship between each. Revenue numbers are net of CKC fees (Entries @ entry fees minus CKC fees). As the chart shows once a club has covered

their fixed costs and moved past their breakeven point—where the revenue line crosses the fixed cost line, each additional entry minus CKC fees adds almost 100% profit to the bottom line. Therefore, up to the point that a club has to add additional fixed costs such as more birds they should maximize entries if their goal is a profit.

In the past, most clubs could make a profit on their trial because they were able to reduce their fixed costs. For example if you had a club with a sizable membership then you didn't have to hire gunners as the club members did the gunning and throwing.

As we mentioned earlier, entry fees have not kept pace with inflation but given the financial constraints indicated by the survey, an increase in entry fees for weekend trials may not be warranted despite this finding.

Status of Clubs

We also found that a number of clubs no longer hold any or hold very few trials. We did not determine the reasons although there was some evidence it was lack of members or the retirement of some key folks from active trialing. It also appears that we could be facing a situation where there will be few or no clubs east of Ontario holding trials in some years.

1. Moncton (not enough entries to meet CKC requirements but holding hunt tests)
2. PEI (not enough entries to meet CKC requirements but holding hunt tests)
3. Eastern Flyway (not enough entries to meet CKC requirements but holding hunt tests- with a trial planned for 2015)
4. Regina
5. Portage La Prairie
6. BC Gun Dog
7. Okanagan (1)
8. Horseshoe (1)
9. Montreal (only 2 full trials and 1 Amateur in the last five years)

Conclusions

Participation in field trials and by association hunt tests is still good but needs some changes to continue to stay that way. There is a trend to holding fewer minor stakes resulting in entries declining at a significant rate. This limits the entry points for new and also opportunities for the hunt testers to try the sport as well as those who don't aspire to Open or Amateur. These are in effect our farm system where the future Open, Amateur and National entries will come from. It is also where we will get the workers of the future. The Junior and Qualifying have to be considered the canneries of our sport. These results tell us that our sport is not attracting enough new people to replenish our ranks. We also have to be cognizant of the societal factors that are and will continue to impact our sport.

Part 2 - Review and Recommendations to Improve Field Trials and their Support

The results of the Survey and data on entries clearly identified some of the trends and the nature and issues of the field trial sport in Canada. We also gained much insight from further discussions with individuals as well as extensive discussions amongst ourselves. We looked at the situation in both field trials and hunt tests in both the USA and Canada to see continent wide trends. We noted much regional variation and differences between minor stakes and major stakes, between AKC and CKC and between HRC, NAHRA and CKC/AKC hunt tests.

While the sport can be improved, the cries of doom are neither new nor entirely justified. Nonetheless, the trends should not be ignored but must be carefully considered even though ups and downs and changes are part of many endeavors. Many areas were identified where things could be improved.

Some issues such as the cost of fuel and accommodation appear to be mostly above our control but, even there, some helpful suggestions can be made.

It became very obvious that the problems are complex and the solutions equally so. There is no simple single solution to increasing participation. Instead, we soon realized that the entire sport has to be considered. Thus, our Recommendations address many aspects of the sport, not just increasing Participation and Sponsorship. Consequently, our Recommendations go far beyond the NRCC and they extend to Retriever Clubs, all individuals (Amateurs and Professionals), The NRCC, the CKC and Retriever Council, and the Sponsors.

We believe that if we can improve the sport overall, all will benefit-the participants new and old, owners, the trainers, the volunteers, the NRCC, the CKC, the Supporters and our beloved dogs.

We can't forget that ultimately it is about our dogs!

One of the original intents of forming the Task Force was to investigate how to maintain and even increase participation. During the course of investigation, many reasons for doing this were identified as well as methods of doing it. Some of the reasons to increase participation were:

Bring new energy to the sport

Bring new ideas

Develop new leadership

Help support sponsors in their contributions

Compliment and increase social aspect of game

Make other club activities i.e. picnic trials more viable

Bring expertise not currently available in the sport

Increase profit on trials because they increase the number of club members who can replace paid workers

Provide more and bigger training groups

Introduce new people to volunteerism to eventually take some of the burden off the veterans who are getting tired

Our recommendations address not just new and prospective participation but maintaining current by improving the field trial experience for all. We have grouped our Recommendations into major topics but it is obvious many are inter-related. Part 2 is organized into the following topics.

Improving the Field trial Experience

Increasing Values and Rewards

Improving Judging

Communication and the Events

Promoting the Sport

NRCC and Its Operation

Sponsors and Sponsorship

Corporate Support

Beyond the Corporations

Implementation - A Task for All

Improving the Field trial Experience

Our Task Force mandate was directed at Field Trials. However, it should be obvious that field trial, hunt test and hunting retriever activities are strongly inter-connected. Even though we focused on field trials issues and needs, in the end it became apparent that solutions to improve the retriever sports of trials, hunt test and hunting were often the same. We think that many of the Recommendations are applicable to support and promote the use of working retrievers in all their activities and not just field trials. We had some conversations with the hunt test community but more is needed now that we understand the field trial situation better.

Recommendation 1: This Task Force report be distributed to the hunt test community by the NRCC and foster a dialogue on how to improve both venues in a coordinated way.

There is clearly a wide diversity of views about how people want to play the game and about the field trial experience. While some are passionate about the dogs and the competition, others are more weekend warriors. Some were negative about the nature of the game. We believe there are still many misconceptions about the sport, including the people, the dogs, the judging. Consistent success in field trials does not come easily nor cheaply. As one said, "*Field trials have a brutal learning curve!*" It is costly, humiliating and at times self-defeating. While people from all walks of life have enjoyed the sport and achieved success, it is challenging endeavour to be competitive. It takes finances, time, and commitment. Access to grounds, winter training trips, and training with an experienced group or a professional can help some but not be possible for others. For many, the dedication required is often difficult because of other life commitments. We need to recognize that field trialing will never be for the majority. We need to recognize the reality of the nature of field trials when promoting the sport. And, while competition is at the heart of field trials, it is important to remember that the social aspect was an important part of the game to many.

Increasing Values and Rewards

In any endeavour people need to feel they are getting value for their time, hard work and dollars. People want to be rewarded for their effort and their dog's performance. The field trial experience has to be worth it. Many believe that increasing the values and rewards associated with the field trial sport is the single greatest thing we can do to improve the sport!

Field trials have the potential to send you home on Day 1 despite your spending hundreds of dollars, driving all day, and training hard for weeks or months. Or you can play until the end on Sunday night and still take home nothing. Unlike Hunt tests that compare your dog against standards, field trials are a competition against other dogs. You can do well and not get a prize. For some the performance alone is the value. For others it is the journey there-the

training of a retriever to be the best it can be. Most are driven by success or its' potential. Without success some lose interest quickly.

The survey showed many are driven by the social nature of the game and the opportunity to fraternize with competitive and like-minded individuals. Every individual has different goals but all desire value and reward.

Just as there is no single, simple solution, there is no single group that can solve all the issues. We recognized key roles for many. It is not clear what the future success will be unless ALL contribute. Key roles need to be played by Retriever Clubs, Individuals (both Amateurs and Professionals), Judges, the NRCC, CKC, Supporters (Corporate Sponsors and others). Volunteerism will play a major role but at the same time, we need to become much better at recognizing and thanking all efforts at volunteerism.

Retriever Clubs

A review of the many recommendations and suggestions that the Task Force considered, made it very obvious that:

Retriever Clubs are not only the backbone of the sport in Canada but that they have the best potential to shape the sport and implement a lot of recommendations.

Yes, clubs are made of individuals that play a key individual role but the retriever clubs have capabilities beyond the individuals. The whole is greater than the sum of the parts! This is the T.E.A.M. acronym—**Together Everyone Achieves More!**

We received a long list of things that clubs could do to increase participation, involvement, values and rewards. Some of these are more feasible for certain clubs than others. Many clubs offer little to their members except the opportunity to work at a field trial! Clubs could play a larger role in attracting new and retaining participants by offering other events and benefits to membership. We noted many levels of involvement as clubs varied from 4 people to dozens.

Recommendation 2: Develop a FT Retriever Club Best Practices Manual

It would be very valuable for clubs to have a best practices manual developed by the NRCC and its member clubs. This would basically be a description of various club activities and how to best conduct them based on input from successful clubs. Activities that we identified to include:

Club Activities

Make your club a social activity for all-not just run a trial
Plan fun days in public parks
Have tailgate dinner at each trial
Plan Junior and Qualy days only. Encourage Hunt Test folks
Post Sponsor advertising
Put sponsor advertising in Program.
Plan fun days for members and newbies ...Super singles. Picnic trials
Have media attend trials and fun days.
Organize training groups so newbies benefit.
Host Judges seminar
Host training seminars for train the trainer
Coordinate Trial schedules with Hunt Tests and with neighboring regions
Document how to run a trial
Document how to raise revenue
Reasons and guidelines for Volunteerism
Document how to conduct non-trial Club activities-picnic trials, banquets

In general, we identified that clubs need to make the weekends fun to attend. Lots of people bring their families or spouse. They need to feel a part of what is going on or they get bored and then they lose interest. Pretty soon they want other time with their family which means less time for dogs.

It's important to keep everything moving on schedule, nothing worse than running until dark to finish the day and trying to get meals and airing done before 10:00 pm. A timely schedule allows for socializing, which develop friendships with common interests. Good for the game.

Picnic or "fun" trials were identified as a critical need for new-comers. They have declined in popularity as more experienced trainers head south for the winter. Many of those trainers got hooked at picnic trials or club days when they were starting.

Clubs can play a key role in encouraging new comers. Make them feel welcome. Offer good training opportunities as an overall organization whether it is hunt test or field trial. Help them develop good handling skills, will make their life easier. Work new people up slowly so they are not over whelmed Encourage people by giving them honest feedback on both their capability and their dog's capability.

Some clubs or associations offer annual rewards for various accomplishments or efforts. We need to recognize the new but also the old-timers who have contributed for many years. Contributions occur at local, provincial and national levels. For example, Ontario has the "Charlie Howard Award" presented on occasion for long-term service and accomplishments at a variety of levels.

We strongly suggest that clubs make a concerted effort to host a tailgate at on each event weekend. Encourage all: including, workers, landowners and Professionals and their clients to attend. The emphasis should be on camaraderie in a party atmosphere.

Tailgates to feature:

A meal less expensive than typical restaurant (ie value)

Recognition and thanks to all judges, club workers, land owners and local and NRCC Sponsors.

Identify new members and new .

Awarding of prizes as known including recognition of new Champions and qualifiers for National.

Free give-away of some products and raffle or silent auction items

Callbacks and notices

Individuals

Individuals have a huge role to play as it is usually a few key people that do most at an event or contribute to a cause. But, these individuals need to be better recognized for their volunteerism and their competition successes. We need to foster volunteerism.

Recommendation 3: All individual field trialers attempt to volunteer at least 3 person-days per year. (We are not suggesting those superb efforts of 20 days of volunteerism cease—simply that ALL step up to the plate!)

All individual field trialers make an effort to thank personally at least 3 persons at each event for their volunteerism.

Recommendation 4: All levels of trialers (club/local, provincial and national) develop rewards or acknowledgements to individuals for long-term contributions.

Recommendation 5: All competitors recognize and appreciate good work by fellow competitors. Gallery applause should be commonplace. Competitors should discourage gallery criticism of dogs, judges and tests. Experienced competitors should go out of their way to welcome and talk with inexperienced.

Recommendation 6: Celebrate achievements like titles, qualifying for nationals; first finish etc. to help people feel good about their accomplishments.

It was noted that there is often a “policy” in Canada of being secretive about placing’s until the official award presentation. Often it means the only people that are there are the winners and sometimes not even them! In the USA everybody often knows much earlier and the whole gallery is involved in congratulating everybody. Something to think about.

Recommendation 7: Professionals and experienced Amateurs be alert to step up and be more helpful to beginners. Encourage them and make them feel welcome. Do not wait to be asked go and offer help when you see someone struggling with their dog.

Recommendation 8: Be supportive of all who want to be a part of the game, whether it is running a dog or just helping to train their best friend to be a better hunter etc.

Recommendation 9: Professionals and the experienced Amateurs need to be open to new ideas, even when they challenge traditional aspects of the game. The experienced can lead the way in fostering an “attitude change” in the game.

Improving Judging

Judging was clearly identified as a major aspect of field trials that should be addressed to improve the game overall and thus participation. We recognize that judging can be a thankless volunteer activity. It requires a sacrifice of time and acceptance of considerable challenge as dogs and handlers get better. We do not believe many judges are intentionally setting up poor tests or making poor decisions. We believe most are doing their best on each assignment. That does not preclude improvement and many suggestions were received. Some of our Recommendations will require consideration by the Field Council before proposal as amendments for discussion to CKC field trialers.

There seems to be serious concern in some areas that some judges lack education and knowledge with respect to setting tests, judging dog work and familiarity with the rule book.

Recommendations 10: New and old judges adopt the following suggestions:

Attend judging seminars/workshops. If you are a new judge, it is an opportunity to learn the many skills required to become a good judge. If you are a seasoned judge it is an opportunity to join in group discussions, hone your skills as a judge and share your experience with novice judges.

Some judges are not enforcing rules or are applying them improperly. Take the time to review the rule book or at least parts of it from time to time.

Some judges are setting tests designed to eliminate dogs rather than adequately measure a dog’s performance. Judging is an art and some of the best judges are able to do this effectively. Study how to do this-it takes effort.

Some judges are lacking attention to the details leading to unfair situations and unnecessary variations in testing conditions. ie. bird visibility, gun visibility, failing to call “no bird” on poor throws, gallery interference etc. Study how to do this-it takes effort.

There is the perception in some areas by field trialers that there is a lack of impartiality and fairness in the judging. It is the Clubs duty to make every effort to select judges that will act fairly and impartially and furthermore, the appearance of the same is equally important. There is also the feeling that there is a lack of experience and ability on the judging slate and all too often we are seeing the same judges on the circuit. There seems to be serious concern in some areas, that some judges lack education and knowledge with respect to setting tests, judging dog work and familiarity with the rule book.

Note: One of the Rulebook suggestions that is often ignored is the role of the Field Trial Committee. The FTC has great responsibility over the nature of the test and the conduct of the trial. There are strong movements On both sides of the border to improve judging through the use of the FTC.

Recommendation 11: Rule Books knowledge and adherence be strongly promoted and also enhanced by increased availability. Profile a downloadable pdf on NRCC website and Facebook page. Ensure all judges have a copy when judging. Clubs to supply if not. A copy on a smartphone can use a search function and find a section in seconds!

Recommendation 12: The Retriever Council evaluate feasibility of an improved accreditation system and regular testing for all judges, perhaps every 5 years. Review the HRC judging improvement system.

Recommendation 13: The Retriever Council evaluate an apprenticeship program as practiced for AKC field trials.

Recommendation 14: NRCC in concert with clubs and Retriever Council develop a judging seminar package. Regional judging seminars be offered every 3 years.

Note: As we prepared this report, the Professional Retriever Trainers Association was preparing a judging seminar package. While, the focus may be on AKC events, the package will be transferable and useable for CKC field trials. A Canadian Rep (Voigt) is working with the PRTA development group and was assured that a Canadian delivery would be encouraged.

Recommendation 15: Clubs selecting judges should attempt to develop new judges and also attempt to procure at least one out of territory judge for each all age stake, whenever possible.

We received input requesting consideration of improving the point system to increase rewards. Some felt that today's work was so demanding that additional recognition was warranted. We also received suggestions to ensure that all 4 stakes are held. The CKC Field Council now has a process to amend the Rule Book with the input of field trial clubs from all across Canada. This process could be very valuable to get buy-in to changes.

Note: we are not recommending yay or nay to these changes but that the Council determine the wishes of the field trial community and act accordingly.

Recommendation 16: The Field Council consider the following suggestions and propose amendments and rational to the Rule book for vote by CKC field trialers for adoption.

Evaluate ½ or ¼ point for certificate of merit. This would add a realized value beyond simple recognition for the individual who receives a CM and further validates the individual's efforts to continue to train their dog and compete in the sport.

Evaluate recognizing 2nd, 3rd, and 4th placements at Nationals,
Evaluate awarding point(s) for National Finalists.

Assess the adoption of a policy that all 4 stakes be held at one field trial but each club. Additional stakes could be offered at the same time or at other times.

We also recommend that the NRCC invite a Retriever Council rep to EACH National to provide Council updates as well as receive input for Rule Book changes.

Recommendation 17: Judges carry as many dogs as time and work will permit. Minor stake judges especially should carry as many dogs as possible. Minor stake judges can also **invite Amateurs not called back to run the test for experience, if they wish, and if time allows.**

Note: The Task Force promoted an experiment this summer to increase the generosity of Callbacks in the minor stakes AND allow those not called back to continue to run tests as much as time management of the stake allowed. This would increase handling experience and knowledge of new participants. In general, the small entries in minor stakes allowed this option in 2014. Several clubs and Amateurs considered this policy a success. We would support its routine adoption.

Communication within the Sport

Improving communication within the sport as well as about the sport was identified as a major need to improve participation and foster sponsorship and support.

Recommendation 18: Establish a website dedicated solely to marketing the sport of retriever field trials and providing the newbie with all of the basics. An alternative would be to establish a section on the current NRCC website devoted to new participants. Either should be search engine optimized!

The content should be geared to people who have very little knowledge of what training and trialing retrievers is about. It should contain the essentials. It should avoid the use of “insider speak” and use words that someone who is unfamiliar with the sport can attach meaning to. Website tags need to be well thought out, designed not only to make it easy for the person who is looking for us to find us but also easy for the person who isn't looking for us specifically to stumble on us.

highlights of the sport itself... a first glance, who we are, what we're about and what we do (pictures and statements which intrigue the visitor and give them insight)

*highlights of what the sport can offer the individual and their dog, links to YouTube videos
what to expect... when you go to an event, when you attend a training session, when you compete
how do I get started... getting a dog, getting my dog started, finding a training group, locating a club nearby, contacting someone who can help me get started, links to schedules of events,
resources... sources of training information, professional trainers, periodicals, links to other sites, rule books, equipment, etc
Links to clubs, contacts and resource people in each area.*

Recommendation 19: Create and distribute a pamphlet about working retrievers and activities.

Envision a single page, tri-fold glossy color pamphlet with attractive scenes from the field trialers on both sides or the field trial and hunt test sports. The pictures would be accompanied by well thought out statements which intrigue the viewer and give them a little insight into the sport. Additional information would be contained in the pamphlet... a link to a website designed specifically to attract new people to the sport with more photos, more snippets of info, YouTube videos which highlight the sport, links to resources and the information needed to contact local retriever clubs or individuals who can help newcomers get started.

Getting this pamphlet into the hands of new retriever owners is essential and distributing the pamphlet requires the assistance of the CKC and breeders. NRCC could work with the CKC by asking them to send copies of the pamphlet with every new litter registration issued by the CKC to retriever breeders. Retriever breeders would then pass them along to new owners. It costs the CKC nothing to put the pamphlet in the envelope with the registration other than the time it takes. It allows us to let every new retriever owner know that our game is out there for them and their dog; tells them how to access more information about the sport and allows us to control the message. The pamphlet could also be a marketing item to distribute at event and post in appropriate places. The expense for us is the website and the pamphlet; however, it should not be hard to entice sponsors.

Recommendation 20: NRCC work with CKC to improve their website description of CKC retriever field events. *The current content is cursory with little information.*

Recommendation 21: *Provide a source of educational material such as an annotated video/book/magazine/workshop list. Easy access to basic information through a website dedicated to people curious about the sport and potential newcomers.*

Recommendation 22: Clubs and regional associations have regional dialogue between HT and FT on schedules. Not just within province but also total west and total east. Communication between all venues can enhance opportunities and provide best travel schedules.

Recommendation 23: Clubs develop both websites and a FaceBook page to foster communication for their club members and for the information of new local participants (see the NRCC note on FaceBook and suggestions re promoting Sponsors.

Mechanics at Events

We received suggestions to improve the ease of entry and the mechanics of attending and participating in trials.

Recommendation 24: NRCC evaluate the use of an online entry system to ease the hassle of entering trials. We found 1 company in Ontario doing entries for shows (The Entry Line Ltd). Perhaps, a country-wide service for field trials is possible despite relatively low numbers.

We also determined an interest of trialers in the development of a simpler entry system.

One process proposed is:

Create a master data base of entries.

Entries received by email from participants 10 days before closing.

Entries made by FT secretary in standardized template by using master and new dog data.

A software merge program would produce a standard catalog.

That catalog would include all of the NRCC items that we want to include including our Sponsor ads and new messages and national promotion.

Clubs could add their own advertising as long as not in conflict

Club would have to arrange their own printing.

A BONUS would be to include a central entry website where VISA/MC could be collected. There would be a \$5 plus visa merchant charge. A Webmaster would have to send entry \$\$ to club-a delay). Note: Entry Express gets their VISA merchant charge back plus charges club to get package. Once built and paid for NRCC would need a devoted person to maintain, trouble shoot and do banking. Some process like this is feasible as we determined that some clubs are already capable of receiving entries by VISA or direct bank deposits.

Attending Events

Our dialogue with field trial clubs and hunt test clubs suggested that clubs need to coordinate schedules better to reduce travel by coordinating events. While we can't change the price of fuel and motels, we can coordinate travel by having nearby events back-to-back. It was noted that entry fees have not kept pace with inflation i.e. \$25 entry in 1970 would be \$150 today. We are not recommending an increase in weekend trial fees. However, an increase in National entry fees needs to be considered (see NRCC section)

Newer participants have suggested new and better signage for getting to sites (both FT and HT).

Among the limitations to participation, finances and time were dominant. While we cannot change the personal finances or time constraints of participants, we can increase values and rewards as recommended above. When people think something is worth pursuing, they often find a way to do it. Thus, the need to offer a “good value” event is paramount. We noted declines or at least little growth in CKC and HRC hunt tests during recent years. This suggests that competition of field trials is not the major detriment to participating in field trials. Indeed, few listed lack of knowledge or an adequate dog as a detriment. Deficiencies may not be recognized by many since a majority of success occurs from a minority of participants. We also observed many who dropped out after a few failures.

Recommendation 25: Clubs consider hosting more training and handling information workshops to improve competitiveness of members. Increased success is an important part of retaining participants.

Promoting the Sport

In general, the field trial sport does relatively little to promote or market itself or the training of retrievers. Indeed, given the nature of the sport and the values of much of an increasingly urban society, marketing can be problematic. Media coverage which could be so valuable to increase participation and recognize sponsorship can back-fire if certain aspects of the sport are falsely high-lighted. Indeed, retriever trials are not a great spectator sport although some events such as the Super Retriever Series have had some good coverage in the US. The Gold Whistle Sportsman Show was at one time a top attraction but it has dwindled with changing venues.

Nonetheless, there is much we could do to promote the sport and to provide information to new and current participants

Recommendation 26: The NRCC, Host Clubs and retriever clubs routinely consider TV, radio and local newspaper coverage of their events. To encourage a positive and newsworthy report, a key contact person with good communication skills should be used.

Recommendation 27: Develop Ads and articles on the sport for key trade magazines Articles in trade magazines eg. Outdoors Canada, Out of Doors, DUC Conservator

For fostering marketing that would attract and promote interest in field trials, see out recommendations about a pamphlet, a new website, FaceBook pages and Websites.

An important note about the Public Profile of our Sport

Use of birds, hunting, training of dogs and methods employed (eg e-collars and various other collars) are under attack by some individuals and groups in today's society such as PETA and HSUS. Recent experiences such as the e-collar ban in Quebec (now reversed) and other proposals for bans are lessons we need to consider. It's important not to forget that the general public views e-collars as unnecessary and mis-guided. The NRCC can be a lead organization in being pro-active in defending our activities.

The NRCC and their web site have been silent on Ethical Training Methods except under the Guidelines for Ethical Training at Nationals. Statements there may raise further questions. We need to be pro-active and prepared. The question is not whether our sport will be subject to further attacks but when. That's not to say we shouldn't promote our sport, we just need to be prepared and be pro-active.

Some examples follow:

1. Be prepared for the questions.

-Why do you have to use collars?

-Why won't more humane methods work?

-Do you know the impact on the dog?

2. Post on our web site an Ethical Code of Training Methods (include something like "Standards for pre National training" and clarify the role of corrections and reinforcements). This could include:

-a list of the training methods we condone or don't condone

- quote from the rules on unsportsmanlike conduct related to dogs.

3. Educate new on the proper use of collars.

The NRCC and its Operation

We believe that the NRCC has made many important changes and improvements in recent years. Despite that, many individuals still have little idea what the NRCC actually does and how it operates. The NRCC has greatly expanded communication, developed a somewhat more active Board of Directors, developed a Corporate Sponsorship Program and begun to take on some leadership roles. We identified the key role that Retriever Clubs play in controlling the backbone of the Sport. But, it is the NRCC that can uniquely take on a Nation-wide leadership role in improving our Sport. The NRCC is in a position to coordinate new initiatives and communicate across the country like no other. It should also be the source of first defense on threats to our sport.

The NRCC also provides unique opportunities to promote field trials and the field trial experience through its two annual Nationals. These are outstanding opportunities to interact with from across the country, to travel and see our country, to watch and compete against top dogs. For some, Nationals provide the best experiences our sport offers.

The NRCC Website - a Key focus of NRCC and Field trial activities

The website continues to grow and expand its functionality to the point where it is now considered the go to website for information relating to Field Trials and Nationals in Canada. Field trialers have one site where they can find field trial schedules, contact information, premium lists, and results. Clubs no longer have to spend time and money mailing premium lists and can now reach more perspective participants. Early on, clubs were reluctant to send in their results to be posted. It usually took a few weeks/months with reminders. A standardized results form was created so that clubs could use one form to send to the webmaster for posting and to the NRCC Statistician to maintain the database used to report the Top Retrievers in Canada and dogs qualified to run the Nationals. Now results are usually posted within a week of the event and the Statistician gets the information at the same time.

With the NRCC taking ownership of reporting the National and National Amateur Retriever Championships, the field trial community has access to timely and consistent reporting. Information posted regarding National events enable those interested, early access to specifics regarding, judges, location, dates, host club information, schedule of events, camping and accommodations. Reports are viewed across North America giving our Sponsors access to a greater audience and it is now possible to obtain measurable feedback through statistics relating to site visits. As well, an online historical record of previous Nationals and winners was added to the NRCC website.

An Official Business section was created to offer member clubs access to the NRCC By-Laws, Minutes from Annual General Meetings, Rulebooks, CKC and NRCC forms. As suggestions are made, more information is added to the website. For example, the NRCC now provides a platform for the CKC Retriever Council to report upcoming changes to the Field Trial Rules and Regulations. Feedback on the website has been very positive and it appears that the field trial community is most appreciative of the information provided.

Recommendation 28: The NRCC ensure that the NRCC website is maintained and continue to grow. The Webmaster and Official reporter positions established in 2010 require continuity and skilled appointment such as the incumbent Dona Martin.

NRCC Facebook

When the task force set to work, it didn't have a method of communicating directly with many members of the field trial community and other retriever enthusiasts. The National Retriever Club of Canada's Facebook page arose from a need to get important, time sensitive information of interest in front of people in a way that would engage them. Our first indication of how effective Facebook could be, came with the response to our first post, a survey designed to identify ways to improve field trials and nationals and increase participation. Although Facebook wasn't the only method of letting people know about the survey, it would in the end help us receive well over 200 survey responses.

Since then the NRCC Facebook page has included National championship coverage with pictures and videos, alerts to hot topic information affecting our sport and our dogs, updates from the board of directors, links to trial schedules, premiums and new information coming from our website, additional visibility for our sponsor partners, and opportunities to hear and see what's going on with our members from across the country.

Interest in our page is contagious and growth is multiplying. We now have over 600 followers and our posts have reached over 2000 people and that is growing weekly.. It has proven to be so much more than what we originally thought it would be. Social media has given us access to not only existing field trialers but potential field trialers as well. We have dramatically increased US interest in our sport in Canada. People who are interested in what we do, who didn't know that we existed are finding us. They're reaching out to us, they want to know more about the sport, they want access to the sport and they want to know where they can find resources. Existing field trialers are staying connected and informed. They're feeling less isolated and part of a greater community. Our Facebook page is the start of something new that we hope will continue to provide the type of content and interest that it has so far and grow to be so much more.

Recommendation 29: The NRCC ensure the continuance of the NRCC Facebook. In consultation with the current developer, Kevin Cheff. The NRCC should assess the need for a person devoted to maintaining the Facebook and other social media sites and growing this avenue of communication further over time.

Corporate Sponsorship Program

This program has been underway in one form or another for almost 15 years. It has ensured the continuance of two Nationals each year while virtually reducing financial risk by host clubs to zero. At the same time it has greatly enhanced the quality of Nationals. More information about Sponsorship follows later. At present all of the products and dollars go to host clubs except for about 7% going to the NRCC.

Recommendation 30: The NRCC maintain the current Corporate Sponsorship program as much as possible without a reduction in the current products and cash to the host clubs. Funds for the NRCC operations should be developed from new and increased sponsorship devoted to that purpose.

“Retriever Results”

The Task Force Chair had some initial discussion with owners of **Retriever Results** in the US regarding the feasibility of a Canadian presence. In the US, Retriever Results produces weekly newsletters to thousands of individuals. Their reports include trial results and many statistics on top dogs, professionals and amateurs as well as news important to the sport. This is done for both field trials and hunt tests. Their reports have become key to promoting the success of individuals and increasing the value and recognition in the games. Their website has additional detail as well as much historical information (www.retrieverresults.com).

In the future we would like to see communication amongst all field trialers directly rather than just through member club. Retriever Results could be a start in making that happen. Regular e-mail newsletters could do much to unite our community in Canada as it does in the US.

Retriever Results has now made several proposals to the NRCC on packages that they could offer to Canada’s field trialers. Some of these proposals are quite inexpensive but require the NRCC to provide the data in a specified format on a timely basis. Entry of historical data would also be possible. The NRCC currently retains a Statistician to determine National qualifiers as well as compute Top Dogs and records of placing dogs in CKC field trials. Clearly there is some redundancy in the two requirements of the statistical and the retriever results needs. Although, the number of field trialers in Canada is relatively low compare to the US, we believe there would be great interest in the Retriever Results presence in Canada. We believe it would be a tremendous boost to profiling the sport as well as the success of those involved.

Incidentally, the USA has an approximately a ten-fold order of magnitude larger number of trialers but also a ten-fold larger population. Thus, per capita involvement in CKC trials in Canada is similar to that in AKC trials in the US.

Recommendation 31: The NRCC accept the most economical Retriever Results proposal for reporting CKC Field Trial statistics and develop funds for it through a combination of user-pay fees, special sponsorship funds and current NRCC finances.

This requires evaluation of the current NRCC statistician duties to avoid redundancy and determine any deficiencies in NRCC needs from Retriever Results statistics.

Changing the Role of NRCC

Historically, a major activity of the NRCC has been to foster two Nationals. Rightly or wrongly the NRCC remains a somewhat non-existent organization to many people who do not understand the NRCC purpose and operation. Some think that they do little for the member clubs which is a misperception especially when the NRCC website is considered.

We are suggesting an attitude change in the sport and believe NRCC can provide the leadership required. However, when you review all of the recommendations contained herein, it does not seem likely or feasible that the NRCC can implement all without organization changes. While our recommendations require a lot of effort by Retriever Clubs and individuals, they also require new leadership initiatives by the NRCC.

As it stands now we see two major hurdles. One is insufficient finances for some of the programs. The second is the current organization. The current organization has sought a President from the zone hosting the National. This requirement is out-dated and not as necessary as once thought given today's "easy-to-communicate" world. Instead, the Board with the aid of a nominating committee should elect the most capable and willing executive with options for re-election for multiple years.

The Board can continue to do its business with quarterly conference calls and several meeting a year at Nationals. Directors who are willing to contribute should be sought. In concert with quarterly Board conference calls we strongly suggest that the NRCC provide quarterly reports to its members on the activities of the Board with the idea of improving communication, transparency and the perception that everyone has the opportunity to be informed and involved. This will be particularly important as the NRCC takes on a bigger role within the sport.

Given the demands of all of the above, it seems unlikely based on the past track record that a President and Chair of the Board will always be able to commit to this NRCC leadership role and all of the new activities of our recommendations.

Without someone assuming these new duties, we see prospects for significant change in our sport reduced.

Recommendation 32: The NRCC appoint an Executive Director or CEO to conduct the business of the NRCC subject to the Board of Directors. This individual should be highly qualified and capable of conducting NRCC business but does not have to be a Director or a well-known field trialer. Terms of employment would require development.

This is one of our most challenging recommendations. Finding the right person, developing a terms of appointment and funding of the position including travel will be issues. Alternatives of several volunteer positions can be considered but issues of continuity, coordination and accountability limit that option.

Recommendation 33: The NRCC review all income and expenses and target improving current income by \$4000-5000 over the next 2-3 years. New Sponsorship money and increased user-fees (such as increased National entry fees could be major sources of income).

This is a general estimate based on the recent years which show variation from \$1000 losses to \$2000 profits. Some likely expenses are as much as \$2000 for Retriever Results and an unknown amount for an Executive Director (\$2-4000plus?)

Recommendation 34: The NRCC assume the responsibility of maintaining the historical and current records of the field trialing sport in Canada. This is critical to help manage the sport. It became evident that the CKC is not geared to do this role at present.

Recommendation 35: The NRCC assume the role of being the major national promoter of the sport in Canada as well as the lead defense on threats to the sport.

Sponsors and Sponsorship

Sponsorship has become key to maintaining Nationals in the last decade. This was self-evident to the Task Force. More importantly, it became evident that we have done a poor job of informing Sponsors of the coverage they receive and secondly an inadequate job of promoting their Sponsorship. While everybody appreciated their great contributions, this was often not evident to the Sponsors. Our recommendations are relatively straight-forward and relatively inexpensive to implement. They simply require a concerted effort by all. Indeed many of the recommendations were so self evident that the Task Force began to get some steps implemented this past summer. All require an enhanced effort however.

Recommendation 36: Encourage media coverage at events (as described earlier) but profile Corporate Sponsors also to the public.

Recommendation 37: Develop more public posters and direction signage that displays sponsorship to the public. An example is FT signage with their logo.

Recommendation 38: Provide free "video" and info spots on websites and on Facebook of both NRCC and Retriever Clubs across Canada.

Recommendation 39: Promote Sponsors by providing photos of banners and winners/gallery/ in magazines and websites and places where all will see.

Recommendation 40: Encourage participants to personally thank via letter, email, in person.

Recommendation 41: Encourage field trialers to support Sponsors and buy their products.

Recommendation 42: Display and wear their logos in public as well as events.

Recommendation 43: Improve outside world knowledge of their support by including descriptions in articles, Facebook, websites.

Recommendation 44: Request all Retriever Clubs their ads in every FT catalogue, Facebook and website.

Recommendation 45: Provide Sponsors data on size of followers of events-gallery, workers, web, forums-not just # dogs. Could include: # of hits to web pages, # of people (participants, spectators, family etc.) each weekend at a trial in Canada, # of Americans participating in Canada.

Recommendation 46: Actively promote Retriever Demonstrations at Sportsmen's shows and other venues with Sponsor advertising. Provide sponsor material to hand out.

Recommendation 47: Evaluate feasibility of Sponsor support for two National Trialers identified with sponsor logos that contains equipment which is usually only used at Nationals: canopies, Gallery rope and cover material, call back board, holding blinds, launchers, cooling pools, chairs, White throwers jackets, tool kits, Garbage pails, gloves, hearing protection for gunners, running mat, etc. One in east , one in west.

New Sponsors and Attracting financial Support

Sponsorship will be an on-going and increasingly difficult effort. We need to look beyond the sport-related sponsors that have helped so much. Many fund-raisers have found that private individuals with a like passion for the activity are the most important supporters. Never assume any will say NO.

Recommendation 48: Determine what federal and provincial government programs provide \$\$

Recommendation 49: Seek individuals who would be interested in major donations to the future of the Sport, perhaps as a trust fund or some targeted support of the sport.

Seek individuals from organizations or companies that already connected to retrievers or the sport in some way. Government programs vary widely and each province is different (eg. Alberta does not recognize dog clubs as organizations that will obtain a licence for a raffle). We must document a story that promotes youth, environment, conservation etc. This story if successful should be circulated between all regions so it is consistent. It would also help to align with organizations that have common interests such as National Veterinarian associations, Hunting groups and Breed associations

Recommendation 50: The NRCC appoint a committee to develop a timeline and implementation strategy for the Task Force recommendations after Board approval of recommendations.

Implementation - A Task for All

At times this task was over-whelming. You may feel over-whelmed when you read all of our recommendations. However, if everyone is involved the job will become much easier. Some of our recommendations are inexpensive and doable by simply changing how we act. As we have said several times, we need an “attitude change”. Other recommendations will require considerable effort to develop and implement but again the cost is mostly volunteerism.

Finally, we have recommendations that will cost dollars. We cannot be discouraged by this. Consider how important the sport is to you and your life style. All individuals have a role to play. We believe the Retriever Clubs are extremely valuable and the key to much. We believe the NRCC is the key to communication and leadership for the good of the sport.

We wish to thank all those individuals who contributed so many valuable suggestions, viewpoints, data, honest evaluation and critique. We learned from the positive and the negative but most importantly we learned that many of you really do care!

We hope you support many of our recommendations in the spirit of improving the sport. We can make a difference!