

The following are some guidelines for review, consideration, and discussion with your co-judges. These points have been identified through input from a number of judges at previous Nationals and are designed to promote harmony and ensure a smoothly run event. They have been compiled by a Judge Selection Committee under the direction of the NRCC. **These guidelines are not an exhaustive list** and are not intended to dictate what tests are to be run or how the dogs should be evaluated.

**The overarching philosophy of these guidelines is to balance fair, high-level competition with sportsmanship, inclusion, and event continuity that reflect the standards of a National-calibre event.**

### *Guidelines*

**\*\*Understand the Judging Philosophy\*\***: It's essential to grasp the philosophy applied to Judging a National, as the standards differ from those in a weekend Open or Amateur Stake. Callbacks should be generous, and in cases of uncertainty, the dog and handler should benefit. This approach is preferable to reinstating dogs that were not included in the callbacks. Given that the National is a week-long event, efforts should be made to progress dogs well into the week, aiding social events and providing workers who contribute to the event's success.

**\*\*Resolve Differences with Co-Judges\*\***: It's important to discuss with co-judges how to handle differences in opinion regarding test setups and evaluations. Establishing guidelines beforehand can help resolve issues swiftly and amicably.

**\*\*Time Management\*\***: Aim to set tests that start and finish on the same day, adjusting as necessary after the test dog has been run and timed. Schedule finish times that allow for participation in social events, facilitating a smooth completion of the National.

**\*\*Gradual Increase in Test Difficulty\*\***: The difficulty of tests should increase gradually throughout the week, culminating in challenging tests. Reserve a significant final test for the last day, anticipating completion in the early afternoon to allow for proper celebrations for the finalists and winner(s). Consider booking an additional day when scheduling your return flight.

**\*\*Avoid "Fatal Tests" Early On\*\***: Refrain from including tests that could lead to elimination in the early days of the National. Examples to avoid include:

- Poison birds in conjunction with blinds or blinds set up in such a manner that the dog can round a corner and lose communication with the handler.
- Marks set up where a dog in trouble cannot be handled back to a fall.
- Avoiding setting marking tests with a "hot blind".

Given the duration of tests and the time taken for bird changes, "by-dogs" must be used on tests where there is an "honour"; and where retired gun stations are utilized, gunners must be concealed on all sides or be completely brushed-in to maintain fairness for all competitors.

These suggestions align with the national philosophy of providing everyone a chance to participate where possible. This does not imply that these tests cannot be utilized later when more challenging tests are anticipated.

**\*\*Variety in Test Concepts\*\***: When designing tests, utilize a variety of concepts to ensure that finalists are well-rounded and can handle different situations. Get creative with the terrain and maximize available grounds, and where possible, avoid setting tests on water or land where a previous test in the National has taken place to prevent any contamination or confusion for competitors. Utilize elevation to ensure visibility between handlers and dogs during tests; this applies to both blinds and marks. Handler movement should be allowed within reason, and handlers with mobility issues should be accommodated where possible.

**\*\*Consider Dog Welfare\*\***: Set tests with the dogs' well-being in mind, modifying demands based on weather and terrain conditions. Provide access to cooling ponds and fresh water, and in extreme heat, incorporate retrieves through water. Avoid hazards like foxtail, spear grass, or situations that could cause injury.

**\*\*Handling Complaints or Protests\*\***: In the event of complaints or protests, continue with the trial unless directed otherwise by the Field Trial Committee. These matters can take time to resolve, so it is important to continue the trial while the matter is being resolved.

**\*\*Consistency in Applying Faults\*\*** Co-judges are encouraged to discuss additional important items, such as reviewing minor and moderate faults as outlined in the Rule Book, to establish consistent evaluation standards. As the National tests progress, judges should apply standards expected of National-caliber work. This pre-planning should help foster a cooperative environment and ensure a successful, enjoyable experience for all.

**\*\*Upholding Event Integrity\*\*** Sponsor support, both financial and in-kind, is fundamental to the National. As representatives of this national event, judges play a key role in maintaining the event's high standards, and their conduct directly reflects the organization's integrity. Given the increased use of digital and social media, maintaining the highest standards of professionalism, both on and off the field, is crucial to upholding the NRCC's reputation and preserving vital sponsor relationships.

The NRCC is providing the links below, which include the philosophy and other reading material on Judging.

The NRCC sincerely thanks and appreciates your volunteer contributions of time, experience, and common sense. Working cooperatively with your co-judges will help create fair and engaging tests for both dogs and handlers, leading to the identification of a clear National winner and a rewarding experience for everyone involved.