

Test Descriptions from NAVHDA International

Natural Ability Test

The three-part Natural Ability Test is designed to test the inherited hunting instinct of pups up to 16 months of age. In the field work, the pup must search for, find and point game. The pup need not be steady. Two blank shots are fired while the pup is in the field to test for gun sensitivity. In the water segment of the test, the pup is expected to enter the water and swim twice. A retrieving dummy is thrown to encourage the pup to enter the water, but a retrieve is not required. The third part of the test is the track of a running bird, which tests the pup's ability to concentrate, as is necessary in retrieving a crippled bird. Throughout the entire test, the young dog is scored on use of nose, cooperation and hunting desire.

Utility Preparatory Test

The Utility Preparatory Test was created to evaluate the versatile dog at the mid-point of its training. It is the logical bridge from Natural Ability Testing to the Utility Testing of a finished gun dog. In the field portion of this test, the intermediate dog is required to find and point birds. The dog is expected to allow the gunner to flush the bird and to remain steady until the gun is fired. The dog is expected to retrieve within one step of the handler. The water portion of the test consists of a short heeling segment followed by a 40-yard retrieve of a thrown duck. Also included in the water portion of this test is an independent water search for a dead duck that has been concealed in vegetation. The last portion of the Utility Preparatory Test involves the tracking and retrieving of a dead bird that has been dragged 50 yards out of sight of the dog. This portion of the test is a test of the dog's cooperation and obedience. Throughout the entire Utility Preparatory Test, the dog is being evaluated for nose, desire, obedience and cooperation.

Utility Test

The Utility Test is designed to test the finished hunting dog. In field work, the dog is required to search for, find and point game and to retrieve shot birds to hand. It is expected to be steady to wing, shot and fall. It is required to track and retrieve a 100-200 yard drag. In the water sequence, the dog demonstrates heeling through a serpentine course to a blind and then remains by the blind while the handler leaves, goes out of sight and fires two blank shots. After the handler returns to the blind, the dog must remain steady through a sequence of shots and then retrieve a thrown duck from the water. The final test involves a blind search for a live duck across water with emerging vegetation. During the entire Utility Test, the dog is scored on use of nose, desire, stamina, cooperation and obedience.

Invitational Test

The Invitational Test is the flagship of NAVHDA tests. Only those exceptional animals that have demonstrated superior skill and obedience in a NAVHDA Utility Test are eligible to participate.

This is a pass or fail test. Participating dogs are run in braces for one hour in the field. Each dog is expected to find and point game, to back (honor a point) the other dog, be steady to wing and shot and to retrieve shot birds to hand. The water work involves heeling off lead, honoring another dog making a water retrieve, retrieving a winged duck and accomplishing a 100-yard blind water retrieve of a dead duck.

Dogs achieving a passing score in the NAVHDA Invitational are awarded the title "Versatile Champion."