

October 8, 2005

Sub Committee on Rules
Retriever Advisory Committee

Amended 2005 Report and Recommendations

The most important and difficult issue considered by the Rules Committee this year dealt with the management of large entries, primarily in Open All-Age Stakes, and to a lesser degree in Amateur All-Age Stakes.

A review of entries in the past three years disclosed 3 open stakes over 100 in 2002, 3 over 100 in 2003, and 9 over 100 in 2004. Inquiry at Field Trial News discloses 6 open entries out of 19 trials reported through March 11, '05 which exceeded 100. The problem is getting worse. The very best judges with the best mechanics and excellent grounds cannot put on fair tests with reasonable call backs when the numbers are too large. The negative effect of such large entries results from the dissatisfaction felt by the participants. We fear that these large entries will ultimately drive away current participants and chill whatever appetite newcomers may have to enter our sport.

We all have a responsibility for addressing and correcting the problems that come with overly large entries. The following proposals, if adopted, may help alleviate the problems. Other steps including new clubs, conflicting dates, better grounds, better mechanics and better judging all have a role to play.

Proposal 1. Amend Chapter 3 Section 8

This Section states the long established policy that the AKC Board will not approve applications for field trials on conflicting dates unless it can be shown that such a conflict will not be a detriment to either club. The amendment is intended to make clear that conflicts will be welcomed if they serve to reduce the entry size in the all age stakes of the conflicting trials.

Proposal 1. Vote

Amend Section 8 of Chapter 3 of the Rules by deleting the language in the first paragraph that follows the words "field trials" in line 3 and inserting the following language: "where dates conflict and the location of such conflicting trials are less than 200 miles apart."

Proposal 2. Introduction

This proposal is intended to encourage both the formation of new licensed retriever clubs and the scheduling of retriever trials on conflicting dates at reasonably close locations in order to divide and reduce the overly large entry.

Some years ago the AKC Board of Directors adopted a policy intended to extend certain protections from competition to a club that had been granted a particular date and location for its trial. This policy provided: "Generally, trial conflicts can occur at distances of up to 500 miles. Clubs are generally required to secure clearance from other clubs within a 350 mile radius." We believe this policy has become an obstacle to the formation of new clubs and to the scheduling of trials on conflicting dates with the goal of a reduction in the entry size of the all-age stakes.

Because this policy was adopted by the AKC Board, a change must come by vote of that Board. To secure such action by the Board we urge an affirmative vote on the following proposal:

Proposal 2. Vote

___To request that the Board of Directors of the American Kennel Club amend the current policy that protects a member or licensed retriever field trial club from competition on its assigned trial date, by replacing the 500 mile distance and the 350 mile radius with a 200 mile radius. The goal of this request is to encourage the formation of new retriever field trial clubs and the establishment of additional field trial events on conflicting dates within closer distances.

Proposal 2. Comment

We recognize that some field trial clubs have a very small number of members and are considering giving up trials they have run for many years. Proposal 2 may put a greater burden on these clubs. We regret the stress this proposal may be on such clubs, and we hope these affected clubs will find new resources to deal with their difficulties. Programs that attract new and younger members should be pursued including affiliation or merger with hunting test clubs, seminars, training sessions, and so forth. Obviously we can't enjoy our sport without trials. We need to make them good trials.

Proposal 3. Introduction

We originally believed that the existing provisions establishing a Restricted All-Age Stake as found in Chapter 14, Section 10 and treated in Paragraph 5 of the Standing Recommendations should be amended and adopted as a mandatory rule in Chapter 14 to address the problems created by the overly large Open All-Age Stake. After listening to discussions on this issue in the past several months we now believe that a mandatory Restricted All-Age Stake is an unwise step, at least at this stage. The Restricted Stake is in general not attractive or available to local club members who do not own qualified dogs. This meant that such local members will be expected to work at a stake in which they cannot compete. We have therefore withdrawn the proposal for a new Section 11 in Chapter 14 making a Restricted Stake mandatory when more than 80 dogs started in the preceding year.

3A. Vote

Amend Section 10. of Chapter 14 by deleting the seventh paragraph of this section in its entirety and substituting the following paragraph in place of thereof:

A Restricted All-Age Stake at a Retriever trial shall be for dogs that have been previously placed in an Open All-Age Stake, a Limited All-Age Stake, A Special All-Age Stake, a Restricted All-Age Stake, an Amateur All-Age Stake or an Owner-Handler Amateur All-Age Stake, in each case carrying championship points.

3B. Vote

Amend the Standing Recommendations of the Retriever Advisory Committee by deleting paragraph 5 in its entirety and substituting the following paragraph in place thereof:

"5. Any club which, in the preceding field trial year, held a trial in which there were more than 65 starters in the Open, Limited, Special or Restricted stakes may, at its option, apply to hold a Limited, Special or Restricted All-Age stake, the choice being governed by the club's view of the reduction needed."

Proposal 4. Introduction

A number of editorial changes need to be made in various paragraphs of Section 10 as well as in Section 9 and Paragraph 20 of the Standard Procedure to insure the correct identification of the various stakes involved. The changes are technical, not substantive.

4A. Vote

Amend Section 10 of Chapter 14 by inserting in paragraph 2 immediately after the words "Qualifying Stake" each time those words appear in that paragraph, the words "or an Owner-Handler Qualifying Stake".

4B. Vote

Amend Section 10 of Chapter 14 by inserting in paragraph 5, third line, immediately after the words, "Open All-Age Stake", the words "Limited All-Age Stake, Special All-Age Stake, Restricted All-Age Stake,"

4C. Vote

Amend Section 10 of Chapter 14 by inserting in paragraph 6, line six, immediately after the words "Special All-Age" the words "Restricted All-Age Stake"

4D. Vote

Amend Section 9 of Chapter 14 by inserting after the word "Qualifying" on line two the words "Owner-Handler Qualifying"

4E. Vote

Amend Paragraph 20 of Standard Procedure for Non-Slip Retriever Trials by inserting after words "Qualifying Stake" in line two the words "or an Owner-Handler Qualifying Stake".

Proposal 5. Introduction

Since the distribution of the Sub-Committee's initial report dated March 25, 2005 it has come to the attention of the committee that, at least, a few clubs who now put on two licensed trials per year have expressed the opinion that they could run a third licensed trial within a year, as a possible approach to reduce the overly large size of entries in all-age stakes. To permit this would require an amendment to Section 14 of Chapter 14.

Proposal 5. Vote to Revise Section 11.

Section 11. At any field trial, there shall not be more than one of the following stakes: Open All-Age, Limited All-Age, Special All-Age, or Restricted All-Age Stake.

In a two day trial, when one of the above stakes is held, not more than two other stakes shall be held unless more than one stake is run at the same time under different Judges.

No more than one Amateur All-Age or Owner-Handler Amateur All-Age may be offered at any one field trial.

No club may hold more than two stakes open to professional handlers, or two stakes open to amateur handlers in any calendar year, provided, however, that a club may apply to the AKC to run a third all age trial within a calendar year consisting of an Open All-Age, Limited All-Age, Special All-Age, or Restricted All-Age, and an Amateur All-Age or Owner-Handler Amateur All-Age, together with minor stakes, which application will be approved by the AKC provided it appears that this third all-age trial will conflict with another trial within 300 miles, and will reduce the entry size of the all-age stakes.

Proposal 6. Introduction

This proposal deals with the issue of overly large entries in an Amateur All-Age Stake or an Owner-Handler Amateur All-Age Stake, and is intended to provide authorization for an earlier start and therefore additional time to complete the stake.

Proposal 6. Vote

Insert in existing Section 11 as a new paragraph at the end of the existing language, the following:

“Anytime a trial giving club finds that the probable number of starters in its Amateur All-Age Stake or its Owner-Handler Amateur All-Age Stake is likely to exceed 65 in number, the club may elect, at its option, to move the starting time of the stake to not earlier than 9:00 AM of the first day of the trial, provided that any handler who cannot for whatever reason be present at the trial until the starting time announced in the original premium shall be permitted to run after the starting time stated in the premium. Notice of the decision to begin the Amateur All-Age Stake or the Owner-Handler Amateur All-Age Stake at the earlier time shall be given to all entrants as soon as possible by the most expeditious practical way available. To the extent that utilization of this procedure will require departures from the run in order to mandate of Section 4 of Chapter 14, such departures shall be treated as “a reasonable or desirable saving of time in the conduct of the trial...”. The earliest numbered dog available, (whether by draw or by Dow Jones), will run first at the earlier starting time, and all dogs available for the earlier start will run in order to the extent possible, provided that obvious unfairness, due to the overlapping running of a first series in two All-Age Stakes, should be avoided.

Proposal 7. Introduction

Two years ago the Rules Committee was asked to consider including special provisions that would enable junior handlers, defined as persons under 18 years of age, to handle retrievers in licensed field trials under special conditions that would provide both experience and encouragement for interested young persons. We propose that the following provisions governing junior handlers be added as a new Section 19 to Chapter 14 - Rules for Retriever Trials.

Proposal 7. Vote

___Adopt a new Section 18 to Chapter 14 of the Rules.

SECTION 18 - Provisions Governing Junior Handlers

___A junior handler is defined as any person who has not reached 18 years of age as of the first day of the licensed trial in issue. Such junior handler may, with proper authority, enter and handle a non-competing retriever over six months of age in a Derby and/or a Qualifying stake regardless of the age or level of ability of the dog or other restrictions on entry that may be set forth in other provisions of these Rules. Such a junior handler entry shall be tested in the same manner and under the same provisions governing performance that apply to all other competing dogs and handlers in the stake. Any dog handled by a junior handler under these provisions, who completes all tests in the stake in a manner satisfactory to the judges shall be awarded a JHE, (Junior Handled Excellent), applying the general standards of performance that would result in a Judges' Award of Merit for a dog not competing under these junior handler provisions. A JHE ribbon shall be given to the successful junior handler and the award shall be certified by the judges and reported to the AKC as part of the official results of the trial.

Proposal 8. Introduction - Use of Decoys

Some concern has been expressed that the availability of electronic, mechanically operated, or wind activated decoys may lead to the use of such decoys in field trial tests. While the "Robo Duck" may provide the duck hunter with increased ability to decoy birds, the use of such devices in field trial tests will very likely distract the running dog from marking and interfere with control in a blind. The Rules Committee believes that the use of such devices should not be viewed as a condition met in an ordinary day of shooting and should be precluded by the rules.

Proposal 8. Vote

Amend paragraph 17 of the Standard Procedure for Non-Slip Retriever Trials so that said paragraph would read:

17. During at least one water test in all stakes, dogs should be worked over artificial decoys, anchored separately. The use of electronic, mechanically operated, or wind powered decoys is not permitted.

Proposal 9. Introduction

___The AKC has had a policy that requires a club to run a Qualifying or an Owner-Handler Qualifying only in conjunction with a Derby stake. The Committee believes that allowing the Owner-Handler Qualifying Stake to be run by a licensed or member club in conjunction with a hunt test that includes a Master Hunter Stake without requiring that a Derby Stake also be run, will encourage interested hunting test competitors to enter and compete in licensed field trials.

Proposal 9. Vote

Insert at the end of the third paragraph of Section 10 of the Rules the following:

"At the election of the trial giving club an Owner-Handler Qualifying Stake may be run without a companion Derby Stake when it is run in conjunction with a Hunting Test event that includes a Master Hunter Stake."

Submitted by the Sub Committee on Rules

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