



Australian National Kennel Council Ltd ABN 77 151 544 679 trading as Dogs Australia

# **Rules for the conduct of Field Trials for Spaniels and Retrievers**

(Effective from 1st January 2025)

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Australian National Kennel Council 27/9/1968**

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**Adopted by the Member Bodies of the  
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# SPANIEL & RETRIEVER TRIAL RULES

## PART 1 - INTRODUCTION

### 1. Breeds Eligible to Compete -

Breeds eligible to compete in Spaniel and Retriever Field Trials are Chesapeake Bay Retrievers, Clumber Spaniels, Cocker Spaniels, Cocker Spaniels (American), Curly Coated Retrievers, English Springer Spaniels, Field Spaniels, Flat Coated Retrievers, Golden Retrievers, Irish Water Spaniels, Labrador Retrievers, Lagotto Romagnolo's, Murray River Retrievers, Nova Scotia Duck Tolling Retrievers, Spanish Water Dogs, Sussex Spaniels and Welsh Springer Spaniels. Other applicable gundog breeds will be added as imported.  
*(Amended 11/24, 6.1 – effective 01/01/25)*

2. Registered (Main and Limited) desexed dogs as listed above shall be permitted to compete in Spaniel and Retriever Field Trials in all States and/or Territories of Australia.
3. The Shooting and Game Laws of each State or Territory must be observed and will govern the conduct of all Trials in conjunction with the Rules and Regulations of each State or Territory Canine Body.
4. Directives of a Member Body shall apply to Spaniel and Retriever Field Trials conducted by the Member Body and to any Affiliate conducting Spaniel and Retriever Field Trials, with the exception of National Trials. In the event of any inconsistency, the Rules of the ANKC Ltd shall apply. At a National Spaniel & Retriever Field Trial Championship, the only Rules that shall apply are the Rules for the Conduct of Spaniel and Retriever Field Trials as approved by the ANKC Ltd.
5. **“Field Trial”** is a meeting for the purpose of holding competitions for the work of dogs in the field. A Field Trial may be limited to a specific breed or breeds of gundog.
6. A **“Stake”** is a competition held at a Field Trial.
7. No Open/Championship Stake at any Field Trial can be conducted unless there are at least six (6) bona fide runners and at least four (4) different owners, No Novice Stake at any Field Trial can be conducted unless there are at least four (4) bona fide runners and at least three (3) different owners. Where there are less than 6 dogs in a stake then only one championship point will be awarded to first place and no further championship points awarded.
8. Subject to approval of the committee of the Member Body, an affiliated body may conduct Stakes limited to Spaniels or Retrievers, in which case championship points will be awarded.
9. No dog may be awarded championship status unless it has gained at least five (5) championship points in one Trial. Wins and other qualifications should count as from and including the date they were gained.  
*(Amended 11/24, 6.2 – effective 01/01/25)*
10. No Field Trial shall be held on incapacitated game.
11. In these Rules the word “dog” shall include both sexes.  
*(Amended 11/24, 6.3 – effective 01/01/25)*

**PART 2 - STAKES**

- 12. A “**Novice Stake**” is a Stake for dogs which have not won (4) championship points.
- 13. An “**Open Stake**” is a Stake open to all registered dogs of named breed or breeds, without restriction as to variety, age or previous performance, or to any membership qualification of the owner. The word “variety” in these Rules shall be taken as referring to the purebred gundog varieties, for which separate registers are kept by the Member Body at the date of the Trial at which Stakes are offered.
- 14. A “**Championship Stake**” is a Stake confined to dogs which have gained at least one championship point.
- 15. “**Championship Points**” may be awarded as follows:

Championship Stake	1 <sup>st</sup> -10 points	2 <sup>nd</sup> - 5 points
Open Stake	1 <sup>st</sup> - 5 points	2 <sup>nd</sup> - 3 points
Novice Stake	1 <sup>st</sup> - 2 points	2 <sup>nd</sup> - 1 point
- 16. Completion of the Trial will not necessarily mean automatic Championship Points, as they will be allotted at the discretion of the Judge, based on merit of the dog’s performance. No dog shall be entitled to Championship Points unless it hunts, finds and retrieves in the field. Where no first place is awarded, no minor placings may be made.
- 17. On application, the Member Body may, at its discretion, grant the title “Field Trial Champion” to any dog winning a total of ten (10) Championship Points in Field Trials. At least five (5) Championship Points must be won in one Stake. The dog should have worked on live game, been shot over, and retrieved warm game in that Stake. A dog which has won a National Championship Field Trial may be awarded the title National Field Trial Champion.  
*Amended 11/24, 6.4 – effective 01/01/25*
- 18. In each year there shall be held not more than one Championship Field Trial Stake for Spaniels and Retrievers within each State or Territory, excepting that with the approval of the ANKC Ltd, a National Championship Stake for Spaniels and Retrievers may be conducted. Such National Championship Stake may be in addition to, or instead of the State or Territory Championship. Entry qualifications and points awarded for a National Stake are as for a Championship Stake.
- 19. No other Spaniel and Retriever Field Trial carrying Championship Points may be conducted throughout Australia on the same day as a National Spaniel and Retriever Field Trial.

**PART 3 - AWARDS**

- 20. A “**Diploma of Merit**” is not a prize, but in a Championship Stake may be awarded at the discretion of the Judge to any dog(s), including prize winners, for outstanding work during the Trial, and the letters “D.M.” will be added after the registered name of the dog.
- 21. A “**Certificate of Merit**” – A dog may be awarded a Certificate of Merit (COM) in a Field Trial at the discretion of the Judge of the Trial, if it has shown all aspects required, and worked in a creditable manner. The dog should have worked on live game, been shot over, and tenderly retrieved warm game in that Stake. This is not a title but an accreditation as to the dog’s work. Dogs that place and are awarded Championship points are not eligible for a COM.  
*(Amended 11/24, 6.6 – effective 01/01/25)*

22. A **“Qualifying Certificate”** – A dog may be awarded a Qualifying Certificate (QC) in a Field Trial at the discretion of the Judge of the Trial, if it has shown that it is not gun-shy, that it will hunt, and face cover, steadiness not being essential. The dog should have worked on live game, been shot over, and tenderly retrieved game in that Stake. Once a dog has been awarded a Qualifying Certificate, they are not eligible for a Qualifying Certificate at a subsequent trial.  
*(Amended 11/24, 6.8 – effective 01/01/25)*
23. No Diploma of Merit, Certificate of Merit or Qualifying Certificate other than those of the Member Body, shall be awarded at a Field Trial held under the Rules of the Member Body.
24. The title of Novice Field Dog (NFD) may be awarded to any dog(s) that are no longer eligible to compete in Novice Stakes, because of wins in Novice or wins or placings in higher Stakes.
25. The title of Grand Field Trial Champion (Gr.F.T.Ch.) may be awarded to any dog that is awarded a total of 50 Championship points aggregated from 1<sup>st</sup> Place awards in National, Championship and Open Stakes and/or 2<sup>nd</sup> Place awards in National or Championship Stakes.
26. On application, the Committee of the Member Body may at its discretion grant the title of “Dual Champion” to a dog which has been awarded the title of Champion in breed judging and one of the following titles:

Field Trial Champion  
Retrieving Trial Champion  
Obedience Trial Champion

Such titles must be indexed as:

for - Ch. and F.T. Champ. (F)  
for - Ch. and R.T. Champ. (R)  
for - Ch. and Ob.T. Champ. (O)

27. On application the Committee of the Member Body may at its discretion grant the title “Tri Champion” to any dog which is awarded the title Champion in breed judging and Champion for any two of the canine activities as referred to above.

**NOTE:** Certificates will be issued for the titles of “Champion”, “Field Trial Champion”, “Dual Champion”, “Tri Champion”, “National Field Trial Champion”, “Grand Field Trial Champion” and “Novice Field Dog” granted by the Member Body. Not more than one of the following titles may be used as part of the registered name of a dog: NFD, FT Ch, Nat FT Ch, Dual Ch, Tri Ch., Gr FT Ch, DM or CM may be used regardless of other titles gained. QC and COM are not to be used as part of the dog’s name.

*(Amended 11/24, 6.9 – effective 01/01/25)*

#### **PART 4 - TRIAL PROCEDURE**

28. Dogs shall be tested in pairs. The “Draw” is the selection of the order in which dogs in a Stake are required to compete. The initial “Draw” must be made in public, at the Trial Site or meeting place on the morning of the Trial. The position on the card shall be drawn for in each Round immediately prior to that Round and each dog shall be required to be tried in the order of that Draw.
29. Only dogs actually present and/or remaining in competition shall be included in the draw. Wherever possible, dogs of the same handler shall not be drawn together, except at the conclusion of a Trial when a Judge may wish to see them together.

30. No person, other than the Judge and the Stewards, shall be permitted to accompany the handlers of the dogs competing in any Trial, unless the permission of the Stewards has been previously obtained. Spectators shall not be allowed to encroach on the Trial ground.  
*(Amended 11/24, 6.10 – effective 01/01/25)*
31. For the duration of any Stake, a dog may be handled by either an owner or by a handler approved by the Judge or Judges Stewards, but it must be one or the other. When dogs are working, an owner may not interfere with his dog if another person has been deputed to handle it.  
*(Amended 11/24, 6.11 – effective 01/01/25)*
32. All dogs must be under the control of the Judges Stewards and must be brought on leads to participate without delay in their proper turn. If absent when called, a dog may be debarred by the Stewards from participating in the Stake.  
*(Amended 11/24, 6.12 – effective 01/01/25)*
33. All dogs, when required, shall wear collars – red for the first dog drawn, white for the second dog drawn for each brace. Generally, whilst handlers are together in competition the handler of the red dog will walk on the left and handler of the white dog will walk on the right.
34. To prevent any unfair advantage, the Judge and Judges Stewards shall keep the competitors at an even pace and in as near a line as possible. The handlers of the dogs shall go together as if it were a brace of dogs and hunt said brace in the Stake as in ordinary shooting, so that the dogs shall have equal opportunity as to ground, opportunities for finding etc.  
*(Amended 11/24, 6.13 – effective 01/01/25)*
35. The Judge shall give the direction in which dogs shall work and each direction shall be obeyed.
36. Each handler must keep to his own ground and not cross to his opponent's ground unless directed to do so by the Judge.
37. The handler of a dog in competition shall not be allowed to go to their dog when it indicates or finds game, but shall proceed to shoot only when under instructions from the Judge, who may require them to shoot over the dog, or may direct a Steward to shoot for them.  
*(Amended 11/24, 6.14 – effective 01/01/25)*
38. A handler or Game Steward must not shoot game in a manner to deliberately disadvantage a competing dog.  
*(Amended 11/24, 6.16 – effective 01/01/25)*
39. The use of blank cartridges shall be at the discretion of the Judge.
40. The privilege is granted handlers of asking the Judge for information or explanation that has direct bearing upon any point at issue, but it shall be at the discretion of the Judge as to when and to whether or not the information or explanation is given.
41. The person handling and hunting a dog may speak, whistle and work it by hand as he may deem proper, but he may be called to order by the Judge for making any unnecessary noise or for disorderly conduct, and if after being cautioned, he persists in such noise or disorderly conduct, the Judge may order the dog to be taken up and it then shall be regarded as disqualified from the Stake. An opponent's dog must not be interfered with.
42. No correction, intimidation or punishment by instrument, physical or verbal means shall be permitted while the dog is in competition or within the precincts of the Trial.  
*(Amended 11/24, 6.17 – effective 01/01/25)*

43. Each Trial will consist of a minimum of two (2) rounds and subject to any elimination (*see Rule 51*) each dog shall have a minimum of two runs.
44. The dogs shall be tested in pairs with, if possible, two finds being made between the brace of dogs in the heat. Dogs shall only be discarded if they have eliminated themselves and not for any other reason.  
(Amended 11/24, 6.18 – effective 01/01/25)
45. No owner or handler shall be permitted to withdraw a dog from a Stake on the field or at any time during the progress of the Stake, without the consent of the Judge or the Judges Steward. Any owner or handler withdrawing his dog without such consent may be debarred from any future Trials.  
(Amended 11/24, 6.19 – effective 01/01/25)
46. On finding game a dog shall follow up scent and flush the game, immediately remaining steady by standing, sitting or dropping, and the flushed game must be shot at, if possible. A dog may push game until it leaves cover but should on reaching open ground remain steady. Dogs must display steadiness to game and shot before being sent to retrieve.
47. A dog shall be deemed to be chasing if when it breaks it continues to chase against the orders of its handler.
48. Every competing dog must be shot over and retrieve before it can gain a prize or Certificate of Merit, Diploma of Merit or Qualifying Certificate, and must satisfy the Judge that it is not gun-shy. These certificates may only be awarded to dogs in actual competition.
49. For the purpose of proving a dog's ability to perform any aspect of its work, a Judge may call up any other dog as a new brace mate, whether or not such dog is still in competition.
50. (a) A dog will not be penalised for pointing game, providing that it subsequently pushes out the game.
- (b) No competitor will have more than two (2) cartridges in his gun at any time during a Trial.
- (c) Only the handlers or appointed gun Stewards are permitted to shoot over the dogs during the running of the Trial.
- (d) Spaniels and Retrievers are not expected to back, but must be penalised for stealing.
- (e) A dog catching game before it has been shot at, may lose points according to the seriousness of the offence. Discretion should be used especially where non-indigenous game birds are used.  
(Amended 11/24, 6.20 – effective 01/01/25)
- (f) Dogs that fail to go out to retrieve after being ordered or directed shall be eliminated.
- (g) Dogs that fail to pick up fallen game that they have located shall be eliminated.
- (h) Dogs that fail to locate fallen game shall be penalised under major fault.
51. **“Grounds for Elimination”**
- The following shall constitute grounds for elimination:
- Whining and barking (repeated).  
Chasing (*to be read in conjunction with Rule 48*).  
Out of control.  
Failure to go out to retrieve or pick up found game.



Hard mouth.  
Repeated blinking of game.  
Lacking in general working ability.  
Deliberate stealing.

Judges should exercise discretion when judging Novice dogs.

52. **"Major Faults"**

Judges are reminded that dogs should be penalised for faults as listed hereunder:

**"GENERAL"**

Breaking to shot.  
Poor treatment of ground.  
Working excessively beyond gunshot range.  
Missing game.  
Poor control.  
Excessive handling.  
Unsteadiness to flush or fall.  
Running in to fall of game with obvious intent and in spite of being brought under control.  
Failure to face cover.  
Failure to flush located game.

**"RETRIEVING"**

Failure to find shot game.  
Slow and unbusinesslike work – poor delivery.  
Continuous rolling / mouthing of game.

53. **"Major Credits"**

The following are major credits:

Thorough and substantial ranging and quartering.  
Acknowledgement of flushed game.  
Intelligent and economical work-out of game to flush.  
Marking ability and speed in gathering shot game.  
Polished delivery.  
Tracking of wounded game.  
Finding game behind the opponent's dog.  
Locating blind unmarked retrieves.  
Game finding and game handling ability.  
Style and enthusiasm.  
Good control.  
Quiet handling.  
Decisive and positive flushing of game.  
Bold and decisive entry to cover.  
Steadiness to flush, shot and fall of game.

54. At delivery, game should not be grabbed from the dog's mouth, noisy or ineffective handling should be penalised. Failure to control is also marked under this heading.

55. All game retrieved should be examined for hard mouth. Superficial damage is not acceptable evidence, nor is the apparent mouthing or rolling of game by the dog.

56. The Judge should be familiar with the feel of normal and uncrushed ribs. The dog should be given the benefit of the doubt, but the Judge may order a further retrieve for the dog.
57. The Judge is empowered to turn out of the Stake any dog whose handler does not obey them, or wilfully interferes with another competitor or their dog.  
*(Amended 11/24, 6.21 – effective 01/01/25)*
58. Any person who openly impugns the actions or decisions of the Judge may be debarred from further participation in the Trial, and may be ordered from the ground and further dealt with at the discretion of the committee.
59. Nothing whatsoever may be administered to a dog whilst it is in the hands of the Judge or Stewards, except water. A handler whilst in competition may request to give their dog water during the course of a run. This request shall not be refused by the Judge or Steward, providing this request is not made at a crucial time that may disadvantage their opponent.

## **PART 5 - JUDGES**

60.
  - (a) No person shall be entitled to Judge a Field Trial for Spaniels and Retrievers until he has supplied acceptable credentials to the Member Body and has been placed on a list of Approved Judges by the Member Body.
  - (b) Applications for listing as an approved Judge must be lodged each year with the Member Body in the State or Territory in which the applicant resides and in accordance with the Rules of such Body.  
The Member Body will consider, and where applicable, approve the listing of approved Judges for the ensuing year.
  - (c) Judges should be aware of the responsibility entrusted in them when awarding championship points.
  - (d) Judges should withhold any prize or award, if in their opinion the dogs competing do not show sufficient merit.
  - (e) Judges may show their Judging Sheets to any person. The Judging Sheets must be retained by the Judge.
  - (f) Before being eligible to judge an Open Stake, a Judge must have completed to the satisfaction of the Member Body at least two (2) Novice Stake judging appointments.
  - (g) Before being eligible to judge a Championship Stake, a Judge must have completed, to the satisfaction of the Member Body at least four (4) Open Stake judging appointments.
  - (h) All matters in connection with dogs actually under trial shall be in the hands of the Judge, but he may call the Steward to his assistance if he thinks fit.
  - (i) A Judge or Steward may debar a gun if he considers it to be faulty.
  - (j) The Judge shall report to the Stewards if he considers a dog unfit to compete by reason of sexual causes or any other cause which interferes with the safety or chance of winning of its opponents, and he may call upon the Stewards to decide whether such a dog shall continue to compete or shall immediately be removed from the ground.
  - (k)** After the awards have been announced, the Judge should take the opportunity to explain to those present how his decisions were reached and how he came to his

conclusions. He should give his impressions, whether good or bad, on the day's work and may profitably say something to newcomers by way of advice or encouragement.

## **PART 6 - DUTIES OF FIELD TRIAL STEWARDS**

### **Judges Steward:**

61. (a) The Judges Steward shall be required to assist the Judge in all duties in connection with the Trial.
- (b) When instructed by the Judge, a Judges Steward shall take the place of the Judge and make a report to them.
- (c) The Judges Steward shall, at the Judge's request, inspect any dog for sexual causes or any other causes which interferes with the safety or performance of its opponents.
- (d) The Stewards shall assemble and control all dogs and also be responsible to see that all dogs participate without delay in their proper heats.
- (e) Judges Stewards officiating at the Trial shall control and make all draws of the eligible dogs in attendance.
- (f) Where possible the Judges Steward should be a Spaniel and Retriever Field Trial Judge, a person aspiring to be a Judge, or a seasoned competitor.  
*(Added 11/24, 6.24 – effective 01/01/25)*

### **Game Steward:**

- (g) At the Judge's request, a Game Steward shall shoot for any handler. In such circumstances, the safety of dogs and people is of paramount importance. The Judge may position the Game Steward to advantage the handler for whom he is shooting, providing it is within the bounds of safety. A Game Steward must not shoot game in a manner to deliberately disadvantage any competing dog.
- (h) A Game Steward shall not be required to carry game shot by the handler.

*(Amended 11/24, 6.23 – effective 01/01/25)*

## **PART 7 - DEFINITION OF TERMS**

62. **Blinking:** Any dog that finds and deliberately passes by the find either through nervousness or bad training, is a "blinker". But the dog that finds and then moves on or backwards or forwards looking for the game that has moved on, must not be confused with the abovementioned types. Dogs can also be "blinkers" on the retrieve.

**Breaking Fence:** Is the act on the part of a dog of going through, over or under a fence, without order. All dogs should remain steady at both sides of the fence through or over which their handlers are crossing.

**Breaking to Shot:** If a dog makes a forward movement which in the opinion of the Judge indicates a deliberate attempt to retrieve without being ordered to do so, that dog shall be deemed to have broken. If a dog makes a slight break and is immediately brought under control it shall be penalised for unsteadiness but if a dog moves to mark the fall, if this is obscured, this shows intelligence and should be credited.

**Catching Game:** Is where a dog makes a deliberate lunge at live game in an attempt to pick it up. This does not include picking up incapacitated or juvenile game.

**Chasing:** This is a deliberate attempt to catch game that is on the move, whether or not it has been shot at. A dog that runs in at any speed may be deemed to be chasing.

**Entering Cover:** A dog should show fearless determination and drive in all types of cover in order to locate game.

**Finding:** A dog shall be credited with a find when it locates and flushes game. When the game is found it is flushed at once by the dog. A dog stands, sits or drops, the game is shot and the dog remains steady for a short period, and then is sent to retrieve. It is desirable that the game be flushed at once, but a dog will not be penalised for pointing, providing that it immediately pushes out the game.

**Flushing:** A dog should boldly and decisively follow up the scent of located game until that game breaks cover.

**Game:** Definition for Spaniels and Retrievers: Quail, Duck, Snipe, Rabbits, Hares, Native Hen (Tasmania), Pigeon, Pheasant, Partridge, and any species that can legally be taken under current State Legislation that is deemed suitable for use at a trial by the judge and able to be retrieved.

*(Amended 11/24, 6.26 – effective 01/01/25)*

**Game Sense:** Some dogs very apparently use a lot of sense in locating game: in working running game and marking/finding dead and/or wounded game. These dogs have “game sense”.

**Hard Mouth:** When there is unmistakable evidence of any markings on game retrieved due to biting or crunching by the dog. All retrieves must be inspected by the Judge.

**Obedience:** The spontaneous action of obeying all commands. Dogs should act readily and not cower or cringe at their handler’s signs, sounds or commands.

**Out of Control:** A dog is deemed to be out of control when it continuously disobeys orders or hunts out of range.

**Pottering:** A dog that hunts around in confined space covering ground that it has already worked or one that lingers on an old scent, leaves it and then comes to it, is “pottering”.

**Quartering:** All well-trained dogs should cover the ground over which they are hunting in front of their handlers in a methodical and orderly manner, according to the wind and country over which they are working. Whilst quartering, dogs should be thoroughly under command.

**Ranging:** A dog may seek game either fast or slow, and will work differently under the varying conditions of wind, cover and abundance or scarcity of game.

**Ranging for Spaniels and Retrievers:** Spaniels and Retrievers should range at a distance of not more than about 30 metres from the handler.

**Retrieving:** The gathering of shot game which should be carried out with a minimum disturbance to ground and game. The dog should take a direct line to fallen game, return directly to the handler and deliver to hand.

**Steadiness:** A well trained dog should stay on command, stay to shot, wing or running fur. To stay means to stop instantly and remain in position without creeping or crawling. A dog may stand, sit or drop in position but must not move from position until ordered.

**Stealing:** A dog is stealing if it repeatedly watches its opponent and moves in on the opponent when the latter indicates it is working game.

**Style and Eagerness:** Account must be taken as to the characteristics of each breed. This can be determined by the dog's ease of movement, drive and intensity. Any lethargic movement is contrary to both style and eagerness.

**Walking to Heel:** Dog's head to be close to the side of heel or immediately behind the heel of the handler, preferably on the left for a right-handed shooter, e.g. away from the gun.

# JUDGES SHEET

## SPANIEL AND RETRIEVER TRIAL

Club.....

Competitors No. ....

Field Work	Maximum Points	Round 1	Round 2
Ranging Quartering Ground Treatment	25		
Style Eagerness and Action	10		
Facing Cover	10		
Game Finding and Flushing	25		
Steadiness	10		
Handling and Control	10		
Retrieving	10		
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100</b>		