



**WORKING GUNDOGS
SPANIEL FIELD TRIALS
OFFICIAL NATIONAL RULES**

Revised 2017

No. 4

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These Rules, for the conduct of National Championships, have been compiled by the Discipline Subcommittee, with amendments by the SSAA National Discipline Chairman's Conference and approved and ratified for printing by the SSAA Inc National Board.

SSAA WORKING GUNDOGS

SPANIEL FIELD TRIALS

NATIONAL RULES

REVISED 2017

No. 4

SECTION 1: AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

1.1 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

To conduct Spaniel Field Trials according to the Official Rules for Competition to make awards and issue certificates that recognise excellence in the field.

- 1.1.2** To conduct Spaniel field trials that are as near as possible to a normal day's shooting

SECTION 2: SSAA STANDARD RULES

Note: In this SSAA Working Gundogs Spaniel Field Trial Rule Book the term "Range Officer" shall refer to "Trial Manager; "firing range", "firing line" and "range" shall refer to "trial site"; "Target scorer" shall refer to "Judge"; and "shooting competitions" shall refer to "trials".

The SSAA Standard Rules cover common rules, including the protest and appeals process that apply to all disciplines.

The current edition of the Standard Rules is available on the SSAA website at www.ssaa.org.au/standard-rules

These Standard Rules should be used with each disciplines current rule book and they take precedence over any standard rule that may be in a discipline's rule book.

The Rules covered are shown as heading and subheadings in this Rule Book.

2.1 COMPETITOR'S ELIGIBILITY

2.2 JUNIOR COMPETITORS

2.3 PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

2.3.1 Authorisation

2.3.2 Substitute position

2.3.3 Awards, trophies, records, etc.

2.3.4 Protests

2.4 COMPETITOR'S RESPONSIBILITY

2.4.1 Competitors and Officials to be familiar with the Rules

2.4.2 Sportsmanship

2.4.3 Behaviour

2.4.4 Range Safety Rules

2.4.5 Safety Equipment

2.4.6 Clothing

2.5 STUCK LIVE ROUND: MANDATORY RULE

2.6 RULE INFRINGEMENTS

2.7 DISCIPLINE CHAIRMAN'S AUTHORITY

2.8 PROTEST AND APPEALS COMMITTEE

2.9 SUPPLEMENTARY EVENTS

SECTION 3: SPANIEL TRIALS: A GUIDE FOR JUDGES AND COMPETITORS

3.1 INTRODUCTION

3.1.1 A field trial should be run as nearly as possible to an ordinary day's shooting. The purpose of a Field Trial is to assess each dog on that day, previous performances should be disregarded.

Two Judges will officiate, and two dogs should run simultaneously, one dog under each Judge. Dogs should hunt separately, but ideally not too far apart, and only hunt the same ground (or right next to each other) during a run off. In the first round, odd numbers will run under the right-hand Judge and, unless eliminated, will run in the second round under the left-hand Judge, and vice versa.

- 3.1.2** Before starting a trial, Judges should ask the Trial Manager what the game situation is likely to be, and conduct the trial accordingly.
- 3.1.3** Handlers may shoot over their own dogs. Anyone nominated to shoot over a dog must conduct themselves in a safe manner. The Judges' decision regarding safety is final. A handler may be disqualified from the trial if, in the opinion of the Judges, the handler is not conducting themselves in a safe manner.
- 3.1.4** If supporting guns are deemed necessary, it is the responsibility of the Trial Manager to ensure the safe conduct of said guns. It should be noted that supporting guns might have to comply with Judges' requirements, which would override the Trial Manager's instructions.
- 3.1.5** Where handlers choose not to shoot over their dog, or the Judge feels it would improve the day if the handler has a nominated gun, the Judge may then approve a nominated gun to shoot for that handler.

3.2 HUNTING

- 3.2.1** A spaniel should at all times hunt within range of the handler (approx. 20 metres) with good ground treatment. A spaniel's first job is to find and flush game within range of the handler. The direction of the wind has a considerable influence on the way a dog will work ground. With a head-on wind, the dog should quarter the ground systematically left to right and vice versa, making good all likely game-holding cover, but keeping within gunshot of the handler. With a following wind the dog will usually wish to punch well out then work back into the wind towards the handler. Judges should regulate the pace of the line to allow the dog time to do this and make good its ground.
- 3.2.2** A spaniel should have drive and thrust and face cover well, and, at the same time, should be a pleasure to watch. It should show good treatment of ground with the minimum of help from its handler. Noisy handling should be penalised. All things being equal, the stylish dog should be given the credit. Judges should, however, be satisfied that the fast stylish dog is also the best game finder. A good game-finder should be given full credit.
- 3.2.3** Game moved by the presence of the competing dog may be shot and utilised by the Judge in assessing the dog's performance.

- 3.2.4** A dog which catches unshot game may be discarded, unless in the opinion of the Judges there are extenuating circumstances (i.e. kittens, milky does or wounded game).
- 3.2.5** A dog should not be run for an excessive length of time whilst under a Judge. If game is scarce, the Judge may, at their discretion, recall the dog at any time to look at any aspect of its work before moving on to the next round or stage of the competition. A dog may be called back as often as required by the Judge.
- 3.2.6** If a Judge wishes to change over their dog the Trial Manager should discretely inform the co-judge so their competing dog can be halted whilst the changeover takes place.
- 3.2.7** A dog must have completed a minimum of one find and retrieve during any round before it can be considered for the awards.

3.3 RETRIEVING

- 3.3.1** A spaniel should stop to game and shot, but if a dog moves a little in order to mark the fall, if this is obscured, the dog should not necessarily be penalised. The dog should remain steady to flush until the Judge instructs the handler to send their dog.
- 3.3.2** Good marking should always be looked for and given credit.
- 3.3.3** If a dog shows ability by acknowledging the fall, or line, and makes a workman-like job of the line, it should not automatically be disqualified from the awards by failing to produce the quarry, provided the Judges have satisfied themselves that the quarry is no longer in the area.
- 3.3.4** A dog should pick up cleanly, return quickly and deliver well up to hand, but if the dog has had a long gruelling hunt up to the time of flushing, this must be taken into consideration. A good game finding dog should not have to rely on the handler to find the game. It should, however, be obedient and should respond to its handler's signals where necessary. Dogs showing ability and initiative in retrieving the quarry should be placed above those that have to be handled to their quarry. If a dog fails on a retrieve it should not necessarily be downgraded. Circumstances such as game going to ground or being lightly pricked need to be taken into consideration when making an assessment of the dog.
- 3.3.5** Once one dog has had game shot over it, the other should wait and remain steady until the first dog has completed its work. If it is the case that game is found and shot simultaneously, then the Judges will instruct which dog will complete the retrieve first; wounded game should be tried for first. No game should be shot whilst dogs are out on a retrieve.

- 3.3.6** If game is shot too close to a dog the retrieve would be of no value to that dog and may be offered to a dog under the other Judge. During the first round of a stake dogs should, whenever possible, have the opportunity to retrieve game shot by their own handler.
- 3.3.7** It is unwise to try more than two dogs on any one retrieve. If both dogs are tried and fail to complete the retrieve, and the Judges are satisfied that the quarry is no longer in the area, the line should continue to move forward. Should any subsequent dog find dead or wounded game, this cannot be considered to be an 'eye-wipe', thus the two dogs should not necessarily be eliminated, but Judges should make a note of their failure.
- 3.3.8** In the case of a blind retrieve, the dog should be taken to within a reasonable distance of the fall, conditions being borne in mind.
- 3.3.9** All game should be examined for 'hard mouth'. There is seldom visible evidence of hardness. One side, or both sides, of the ribs will be crushed. Blowing up the feathers on a bird will not disclose the damage. Place the game on the palm of the hand, breast upwards, head forward, and feel the ribs with finger and thumb, they should be round and firm. If they are caved in or flat this is evidence of 'hard mouth'. Judges must always satisfy themselves that the damage done has been caused by the dog, not by the shot or fall. If there is a suspicion of 'hard mouth' the co-judge must be consulted before a decision is taken, and in cases of doubt, the benefit should be given to the dog. At times the rump of a strong runner may be gashed and care should be taken here, as it may be the result of a difficult capture.

3.4 SCORING

- 3.4.1** When a dog has been under two Judges and they both agree, and feel certain that this is their best dog, they are quite in order in putting it on one side and running off for the remaining places.
- 3.4.2** Judges are advised to place each dog in a category such as a points system, or A, B & C according to the work done at the end of each run, and usually they will have little difficulty in getting down to the placings. It is advisable to take short notes and not rely on memory.
- 3.4.3** In the case of a run-off, dogs can be divided by running them as a pair. The main consideration should now be style, pace, ground treatment and the dog's response to its handler. The Judges should walk side by side and confer.
- 3.4.4** A Judge should refrain from talking to anyone while the dog is actively competing under him, other than to instruct the handler. From the moment the dog commences its run the Judge should make every effort to keep that dog in view and so place himself when the dog is sent out for a retrieve to enable him to observe every move of the dog until the game is delivered to hand.

3.5 SUMMARY OF POINTS

3.5.1 Credit Points: Natural game-finding ability – Nose – Drive – Marking ability – Style – Control – Quickness in gathering game – Quietness – Retrieving & delivery.

Major Faults: Missing game – Blinking – Stealing – Not quartering and making ground good – Not stopping to shot and game – Disturbing ground – Noisy handling – Poor control – Failing to retrieve.

Eliminating Faults: Hard mouth – Whining or barking – Running in and chasing – Out of control – Failing to enter water – Deliberately catching.

SECTION 4: CONDUCT OF TRIALS

4.1 GENERAL

4.1.1 A field trial is a meeting for the purpose of holding competitions to assess the work of spaniels in the field, working on live game that may be shot. Trials shall comply with the shooting and game laws of the relevant State or Territory of Australia.

4.2 ELIGIBILITY

4.2.1 Trials shall be open to any variety of sporting spaniel, of either sex, other than Irish Water Spaniel and Epagneul Breton (Brittany Spaniel) registered with the (SSAA) Working Gundog Association of Australia.

4.3 TYPES OF TRIALS

4.3.1 The WGAA may conduct the following events for Spaniel Field trials.

4.3.1.1 National Stake: (to be held not more than once a year)
A stake in which competing dogs may gain the title of National Field Champion. Dogs may also gain qualifications towards the title of Field Champion.

4.3.1.2 Open Stake: A Stake in which dogs have the opportunity of gaining qualification towards the title of Field Champion.

4.3.1.3 Non-Qualifier: A stake open to all spaniels but which does not give qualification towards Field Champion.

4.4 SCHEDULES

4.4.1 A Branch holding a field trial must issue a schedule which must contain the following, and be sent to interested members.

4.4.2 The definition of the stake to be held.

4.4.3 The date and venue of the field trial and details of the time and place of meeting.

4.4.4 The names of the Judges.

4.4.5 The details of entry fees and of awards offered.

4.4.6 The latest date for receiving applications for entry.

4.4.7 The date, time and place of the draw.

4.4.8 Veterinary support, i.e. the name and telephone number of the nearest veterinary surgeon to the trial venue.

4.5 CARDS

4.5.1 A Branch holding a field trial must publish a card that must include the following:

- The name of the Branch.
- The type of stake.
- The date of the trial.
- The names of the judges.
- The name of the trial manager.
- The venue of the trial.
- The awards offered.
- Entries numbered according to the draw and listed as follows:
 - Registered name of dog.
 - Sex of dog.
 - Date of birth of dog.
 - Registered name of sire and dam.
 - Name and address of owner (s).
 - Name of breeder.
 - A statement that the field trial is held under the SSAA and WGAA regulations.
 - A statement that no person shall revisit the trial venue without express permission from the property owner and the Trial Manager.

4.6 AWARDS AND TITLES

4.6.1 Championship points awarded for a placing at WGAA National Field Trials shall be 10 points for first place, 5 points for second place and 3 points for third place. Points awarded for a placing at WGAA Open Field Trials shall be 5 points for first place, 3 points for second place and 1 point for third place. Points are only awarded at the Judge's discretion.

4.6.2 A dog that obtains a total of 10 points including one first place award with points in WGAA Open Field Trials, or one first place award with points in a WGAA Open Field Trial in conjunction with one second place

award in a WGAA National Field Trial, or wins a National Field Trial, shall be awarded the title "WGAA Field Champion". F.Ch. shall be added as a prefix to the dog's registered name.

- 4.6.3** A dog that wins a national trial shall be entitled to have the initials NFTW (National Field Trial Winner) added as a suffix to its registered name.
- 4.6.4** A dog competing in its first two seasons shall be known as a novice dog. An award for Best Novice Dog shall be made at each trial to a novice dog that fills its card to the Judges' satisfaction. If a novice dog wins a trial it shall cease to be a novice dog for future trials.
- 4.6.5** Before a dog can be awarded its field trial title it must have successfully completed a water test. The object of the test is to prove that the dog will swim and retrieve from water. The retrieve must be a simple marked retrieve of approximately 20 metres, and cold game may be utilised. A qualified Judge will oversee a water test, which will be at a chosen venue during the year. Dogs that have successfully completed the exercise shall receive a certificate. If a dog retrieves from water during a trial it can be credited with its water test at the Judges' discretion.

4.7 JUDGES

- 4.7.1** The Branch Committee holding the trial shall appoint two judges. The committee must be satisfied that those persons being invited to judge have a good practical knowledge of spaniel work.
- 4.7.2** Judges may not enter their own dogs in a trial that they are judging.
- 4.7.3** Judges shall sign the award placings on the card at the end of the trial.
- 4.7.4** Judges are empowered to withhold any awards if, in their opinion, the dogs competing do not show sufficient merit.
- 4.7.5** The judges' decision is final.

4.8 DRAW

- 4.8.1** The draw shall take place at a selected venue a week prior to the trial.
- 4.8.2** A WGAA representative must be present and any paid up member has the right to be present.
- 4.8.3** A competition card will then be printed, and the numbers will stand throughout the trial.
- 4.8.4** If a person is handling more than one dog, and that handler's dogs are drawn consecutively, the second dog drawn will automatically go to the next number, thus eliminating a handler from being put in the position of handling two dogs simultaneously.

4.8.5 Odd numbers shall run under the right-hand Judge in the first round of the trial, and, unless eliminated, shall run under the left-hand Judge in the second round, and vice versa.

4.9 CONTROL OF DOGS, HANDLERS AND GALLERY

4.9.1 A Trial Manager shall be appointed who shall be responsible for the organisation of the trial on the day. The Manager must have with them on the day of the trial a copy of the W.G.A.A. Spaniel Field Trials Rules & Regulations.

4.9.2 The Trial Manager shall be responsible for the administration and safety of supporting guns. It must be noted that supporting guns shall comply with the Judges' requirements, which may override the Trial Manager's instructions.

4.9.3 The Trial Manager shall inspect any dog for sexual or other causes that may interfere with the safety or performance of its opponents.

4.9.4 Dogs may be assessed at different rates by each of the Judges during a trial. The Trial Manager should be positioned so they can inform the co-judge to halt their competing dog during the changeover.

4.9.5 No bitches in season may be on the trial ground.

4.9.6 Vicious dogs will be asked to leave the trial ground.

4.9.7 If any dog is unfit by reason of contagious disease or physical condition, such a dog will be required to be removed immediately from the ground, and from the trial.

4.9.8 No competitor may withdraw their dog without permission of the Judges or the Trial Manager.

4.9.9 No person shall carry out punitive or harsh handling whilst within the boundaries of the trial.

4.9.10 Competitors and spectators attend a field trial at their own risk. The Association takes no responsibility for damage to persons or their property.

4.9.11 Current Firearms Licences and Hunting Permits must be shown to the Trial Manager by all those handling firearms.

4.9.12 An opponent's dog must not be interfered with in any way. If, after being cautioned, a handler persists in any such behaviour, the Judge may eliminate the offending handler and that handler's dog.

SECTION 5: JUDGING TRIALS

5.1 SUMMARY

- 5.1.1** A Judge must at all times and in all circumstances be capable of making decisions without reference to any other person, other than their co-judge. The Judge should be capable of assessing the overall work of the dog and handler, arriving at a mark that reflects a balanced overview, and which takes into account both good and bad aspects of the work. The Judge should not mark a dog down harshly for some small infringement, nor mark it well up on one aspect of the run.
- 5.1.2** All aspects must be weighed and balanced and a considered view expressed. The view should be recorded in reasonable notes in the Judge's book.
- 5.1.3** Judges should be honest and unbiased, acting at all times with equality and integrity. Judges should clear their minds of all previous knowledge of the dogs or the handlers, making decisions purely on the work performed on the day. Judges should be courteous to host, handlers and spectators at all times. They should assist the handlers to show their dogs to the best advantage, and they should be positive in their decisions and instructions to the handler. If eliminating a handler, Judges should be capable of stating the reason to the handler without giving offence. Each Judge should, as far as possible, try to keep aware of everything that is happening with their co-judge on the other side of the line.
- 5.1.4** The Judge should be aware of the quantity of game produced by the dog, and, in particular, should mark the fall of game in order to ensure a speedy recovery. Judges should be knowledgeable enough to know if game is dead, and, if not dead, should make every effort to assist in the speedy retrieval of such game. Once the Judges take control of the day, they are in total charge of events; the Trial Manager's responsibilities lie elsewhere.

SECTION 6: SCORE SHEET

Dog No

	Round one	Round two	Round three
Ground Treatment			
Locating Game			
Flushing Game			
Steadiness			
Style & Action			
Location of Shot Game			
Portage & Delivery			
Handling			
Overall performance			

Comments

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Credit Points	Major Faults	Elimination
Faults		
Natural game finding ability	Missing game	Whining or barking
Nose	Not quartering and not	Running in and chasing
Drive	making ground good	Out of control
Marking ability	Noisy handling	Failing to enter water
Style	Poor control	Deliberately catching game
Control	Not stopping to shot and	Hard mouth
Quickness of gathering	game	
game	Blinking game	
Quietness	Stealing	
Retrieving and delivery	Failing to retrieve	

A score sheet or notes on each dog's performance shall be maintained by the Judge, and an overall score recorded at the end of each round. A Judge must be consistent with whichever scoring method is selected.

SECTION 7: RULEBOOK REVIEW

- 7.1** A rulebook review shall be conducted in accordance with the requirements set by SSAA Inc. Participation in the rulebook review shall be open to spaniel owners who have been actively involved in WGAA spaniel trials.
- 7.2** "Actively involved" means the owner of a spaniel who has competed in or officiated at a WGAA National Discipline spaniel field trial in their home State in the 5 years prior to the review taking place.
- 7.3** An attendance register shall be kept at all WGAA National Discipline spaniel events. This register shall be the responsibility of the host State and shall record all details, including a copy of the catalogue.

SECTION 8: DEFINITIONS

8.1. ACTION & STYLE

These are seen in a fast moving and lively dog, which must also have courage when entering cover. It is an outward sign of keenness and game finding capacity. It should be exciting and a pleasure to watch at all times. Any lethargic movement is contrary to good action and style.

8.2. BLIND RETRIEVE

See Retrieving (8.19)

8.3 BLINKING

A dog that finds and then shows hesitancy or complete refusal to flush or retrieve game. A dog that ignores scents which should be acknowledged.

8.4. COVER

White grass, tussock grass, sword grass, bracken and any thick vegetation likely to hold game.

8.5 DELIVERY

Presentation of retrieved game to the hand.

8.6 DOG

Dog refers to dogs and bitches.

8.7 DRIVE & THRUST

See Action & Style (8.1)

8.8 EYE WIPE

When a dog fails to retrieve the shot quarry and a second dog is tried on the same retrieve and is successful this is an 'eye wipe'.

8.9. FIND

The locating of game by a dog.

8.10. FLUSH

The pushing of game out of cover by a dog. Dogs should remain steady to the flush.

8.11. GAME

Rabbit, hares and any game bird complying with the shooting and game laws of the relevant State or Territory of Australia.

8.12. GROUND TREATMENT

Hunting by a dog with method and thoroughness on the ground selected by the Judge.

8.13. HARD MOUTH

Where there is unmistakable evidence of crushing or biting of retrieved game by a dog. (See Section 3 – A Guide to Judges and Competitors).

8.14. LINE

Scent left by wounded game. A dog should locate the fall when sent for a retrieve and track the blood-scent to the quarry, ignoring all other unshot game scents.

8.15. MISSING GAME

When game is present on the selected ground and a dog fails to find and flush it.

8.16. NOSE

Keeness of scenting power combined with the sense to apply it correctly.

8.17. QUARTERING

A dog should cover the ground in front of the handler in a traditional spaniel quartering pattern. It should be noted that under actual field conditions dogs are not always able to quarter in copybook fashion due to the direction of the wind. (See Section 3 – A Guide to Judges and Competitors)

8.18. RANGE

(See Section 3 – A Guide to Judges and Competitors)

8.19. RETRIEVING

Retrieving covers the performance of a dog from when it is ordered to retrieve until it delivers the game to the handler. A dog should pick up cleanly, return quickly and deliver well up to hand. Dogs that come across dead or wounded game while working shall not be penalised for

retrieving it. A marked retrieve is when a dog sees the fall of shot game and is ordered to retrieve. A blind retrieve is when the fall of shot game is obscured from the dog's view, and the dog may have to be handled onto the fall. The dog should then make a workmanlike job of the line. (See Section 3 – A Guide to Judges and Competitors Retrieving)

8.20 RUNNING IN & CHASING

If a dog breaks to Flush or Shot but is brought under control within two metres, it shall be penalised for unsteadiness. If it continues and makes a deliberate attempt to catch game that is on the move, whether or not it has been shot at, this will be deemed to be chasing, and the dog should be eliminated.

8.21 STEALING

When a dog deliberately takes game from another dog whilst hunting or retrieving, or deliberately moves across onto the other dog's beat when it sees the other dog making game (i.e. about to flush). This should be penalised.

8.22 VETTING

See Section 4 – Conduct of Trials – 4.9. Control of Dogs, Handlers and Gallery.