**JUDGES’ CORNER**

**RETRIEVER FIELD TRIAL JUDGING FUNDAMENTALS AND CHECKLIST**

*by Dennis R. Voigt*

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udging retriever field trials has always been challenging. Most judges take their assignments seriously and do the best they can under the circumstances. Entry size, competition, weather, changing conditions, grounds, mechanics, time, test design and evaluation are factors which affect the success of all judging assignments. Given all these factors and the resultant variation in judging trials, there has always been much discussion about how to improve judging. A variety of solutions have been offered but it is clear the issues are complex and there is no simple solution.

Recently, a series of articles have discussed judging in the *Retriever News* and *Retrievers ONLINE*. Both magazines surveyed professionals and amateurs active in the game with a series of questions on how to improve judging. Articles discussed many of the things that could be done to improve judging. Despite the diversity of opinions and variability across the country, a relatively short list of fundamentals, important for judging a sound field trial, emerged.

As part of continuing dialogue and articles, those fundamentals were discussed by a diverse group of experienced field trialers from both the USA and Canada. That group involved judges with collectively thousands of assignments, as well as much experience running trials. Through a series of e-mails, personal discussions and blogging, a checklist of considerations for the fundamentals was developed. The idea was to provide every field trial judge with a copy for their consideration during each assignment. The checklist, based on the key fundamentals, was designed as a concise reminder that could be carried with a judging book during setup and testing.

In the current issues of *Retriever News* and *Retrievers ONLINE*, you will find a one page (two-sided) checklist. This page can be copied or torn out. It is designed for both large and small judge’s books – just hole-punch as required.

For the future, we are investigating a more weather-proof version of the Checklist and an appropriate Sponsor. Copies could then be delivered to every field trial and, thus, every future judge by Entry Express club packages, as well as other avenues.

Meanwhile, have a look and try it out. Discuss it with your colleagues. In the interest of continuing to improve, feedback is welcome. Please direct your comments to the editors of *Retriever News* and *Retrievers ONLINE*.

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