

North of the Border

Field Events in Canada

by Anne Everett

Ever thought of traveling to Canada to run field events with your dog? The following article summarizes the types of field events available to you and your Golden north of the border. You will see Golden Retrievers participating in all of these programs. If you would like to find out more, please contact the Canadian Kennel Club, the United Kennel Club or a local breed club in the area you are interested in visiting to find out when events are being run in that area. Then go out and have a look. You will have a lot of fun, meet some wonderful people and see some truly inspiring dog work.

United Kennel Club Field Events

The United Kennel Club (UKC Inc.) is the parent club of the Hunting Retriever Club's (HRC) highly successful hunt program. The HRC is made up of a network of clubs throughout North America that hold UKC licensed field events. In addition to the regular hunts, there are two Grand Hunts a year (a similar idea to the AKC Master National and CKC National Master events). Although the basic training for UKC hunts is similar to what is required to compete in the CKC hunt test program, there are some differences between the two events.

The HRC offers a Started Hunting Retriever title (SHR), a Hunting Retriever title (HR), a Hunting Retriever Champion title (HRCH), an Upland Hunter title (UH) and a Grand Hunting Retriever Champion title (GRHRCH). In addition to the dog's work being evaluated, knowledge of gun handling and safety by the handler is also judged. Titles are awarded by points earned at the various levels. For example, each started pass is worth 5 points, each seasoned pass is worth 10 points and each finished pass is worth 15 points. A dog does not need a title at a lower level to enter higher level tests.

The SHR title requires four passes at the Started level. These tests are similar to Junior Hunter tests (back to back singles on land and water) except that a shotgun is always fired from the line. Some club's use primer loads, some use poppers. Whatever the case, the shot can be loud and is something that needs to be trained for. At the Started level handlers do not carry or handle a gun. A shooter at the line will shoot for them. Dogs do not need to deliver to hand at the Started level.

The Seasoned level is the next step. In Seasoned, dogs are expected to do doubles, handle a diversion bird, run short blinds, honor, do a walk up and be shot over. At this level the handler is required to carry, load and fire the gun. Violations of

safe gun handling will disqualify a handler. A HR title is earned by a dog that accumulates a total of 40 points, at least 30 of which must be at the Seasoned level.

Finished tests are for the fully trained gun dog. At this level you can expect just about anything. Marks are generally multiple marks (two or more) and blinds are tight to the marks. A HRCH title is earned by a dog that earns 100 points, at least 60 of which must be at the Finished level.

A dog may be designated as a UH if he/she earns 40 points in Upland Hunts. Each pass is worth 10 points towards a title. To earn a GRHRCH a dog must earn an additional 200 points after achieving a HRCH title. Eighty of those points must be earned from the Grand category i.e. by passing two Grand Hunts at 40 points each.

The main differences between CKC hunt tests and HRC hunts have to do with gun handling and the excitement level. The HRC hunts are as close to real hunting as you can get in a test situation. Shooting is from the line, your dog must follow the gun to mark the birds and birds often come out of the throwing station without a locator sounds such as a duck call. Things happen *fast* in Seasoned and Finished hunts. I've seen mellow dogs become ballistic at a HRC hunt when their han-



*In HRC tests, gun safety is judged along with dog work. The author is pictured with UH HRCH Heads Up Maximum Steam Heat Can MH WCX***.
(Photo credit Alexis Pearson)*



*Realistic hunting scenarios are a feature of HRC tests. The dog being judged is running a simulated duck hunt. The handler is in a coffin or layout blind with the dog beside her. Pictured is UH HRCH Heads Up Running Man Can QFTR MH WCX***. (Photo credit Sheila Kenny)*

handler is firing a 12-gauge shotgun over their heads. Another difference is that you can talk to your dogs throughout a HRC test. This can help immensely in bringing a dog around on a wide multiple set up, as well as stabilizing your dog during the honor, particularly if you are running a “high roller.”

There are currently more than 160 HRC clubs in North America. A nice feature of the program is that it does not recognize borders. Points earned in Canada and the US can be applied towards earning the same title

Canadian Kennel Club Field Events

CKC Working Certificate Program

The CKC working certificate program was developed as an alternative to field trials long before the advent of hunt tests in Canada. There are three titles that a dog can earn in the program. They are Working Certificate (WC), Working Certificate Intermediate (WCI) and Working Certificate Excellent (WCX). Only one test has to be passed at each level to complete each title.

The WC tests consist of back-to-back singles on land and water. Retrieves are generally straightforward. Dogs can be brought to line on leash and should deliver to hand. The WCI test consists of a double on land and a double on water. There is also an honor on land. Retrieve distances in these tests are generally around 75 yards. Distances on water are 40-50 yards. A 90-degree angle is required between falls. The WCX tests consist of a walk up with an honour on a land double, a water double, a land and a water blind. Mark lengths on land are 100 yards (memory bird) and 50 yards (go bird) with a minimum 45-degree angle between falls. On water the falls are about 50 yards from the line separated by 90 degrees. Water

CKC Hunt Test Program

The CKC hunt test program began in 1996, and is based on its highly successful AKC counterpart. Like the WC program, CKC hunt tests were originally designed to provide retriever



Shown is a walk-up in the WCX. The working dog is on the left, the honor dog on the right. Notice how the honor dog is slightly behind the working dog. Heads Up Red Baron Can JH WCX and Heads Up Away We Go Can CD TD SH WCX. (Photo credit Anne Everett)

owners with a non-competitive alternative to field trials. The main purpose of the program is to “test the merits of and evaluate the abilities of retrievers in the field in order to determine their suitability and ability as hunting companions” (CKC Hunt Test Rules and Regulations).

Five hunt test titles can be earned by Golden Retrievers in Canada: Junior Hunter, Senior Hunter, Master Hunter, Grand Master Hunter and National Master Hunter. Local CKC clubs host tests where dogs can earn Junior, Senior, Master and Grand Master titles. The CKC National Master Club also hosts a National Master Hunt test each year in different parts of the country. Dogs that pass the National Master are awarded the title NMH. Only dogs with a CKC Master Hunter title and two passes in the National Master year, or dogs with a GMH title are qualified to run the National Master event.

Junior dogs must be able to do back-to-back singles on land and water. Although most distances are about 75 yards or so, retrieves up to 100 yards can be seen at some tests. You are



At the line in Junior tests, dogs may be lightly restrained on leash. Heads Up Red Baron Can JH WCX (Photo credit Wendy Tisdale)



The quartering test in Senior allows judges to evaluate the hunting ability in the dogs being tested. Heads Up Red Baron Can JH WCX. (Photo credit Sheila Kenny)

allowed to handle your dog if necessary on one mark only. Dogs running Junior must deliver to hand, but need not be steady; i.e. can be held on a leash until sent to retrieve. It does help if a dog walks reasonably well to line on leash. A dog that is on line and continually jumps around while the guns are going off probably won't see where the birds fall. Once a dog has passed three Junior tests they receive the title of Junior Hunter.

Senior dogs are expected to do a land blind and a water blind, quarter in an upland test, complete double marks on land and water, as well as be steady and honor a working dog. Senior dogs need to be trained to deal with a diversion shot and a diversion bird. Senior marks and blinds are generally no longer than 100 yards. A Senior dog is off leash and under judgment the moment it leaves the last holding blind. If a dog has a Junior title, it requires four Senior passes for a title. A dog without a Junior title requires five Senior passes for a title.

A Master dog is a finished gun dog. Master tests consist of a minimum of three series which include multiple land and water marks, land and water blinds, an upland test with a flush, diversion shots and diversion birds. Delayed marks are common and blinds are tight to marks. Distances are generally

equivalent to Senior. If a dog has a Senior title, five Master passes are required for a title. A dog without a Senior title will require six Master passes to earn a MH title. Once a dog has achieved a Master title, 10 additional passes are needed for the GMH title.

The major differences between CKC hunt tests and UKC hunts are gun handling and test set up. In CKC hunt tests handlers are not required to shoot a gun, although they will be required in the upper level tests to carry and shoulder a replica gun. Gun handling and safety is not judged. Duck calls are used as locator devices for marks thrown and shots are generally fired from the throwing stations. If a shot originates from the line, it is generally fired by the judge. The major difference between AKC and CKC hunt tests is that in Canada we do not use flyers in our set ups.

CKC Field Trial Program

Field trials originally evolved as a venue for testing hunting dogs during the off-season. They began as a sport for the very rich. Typical participants in the early days included families such as the Belmonts (of horse racing Belmont Stakes fame) and Eddie Bauer (the sporting goods store mogul). Today, participants in field trials come from all walks of life. However, successful participants in this game all have one thing in common, they either spend a lot of time training their own dogs or they send their dogs to professional trainers. Many use a combination of both strategies.



*A Master test is shown being run from a boat with a 180-degree swing. Two inline stations along the shore are on the right. This dog swung around towards the handler when the first bird went down (to the left) and then swung back to mark the two birds thrown from the stations in the photograph. She successfully completed the test. Practice sending out of a boat is necessary to be able to complete this type of marking scenario. UH HRCH Doublegold Spitfire OD; Can GMH MH WCX**. (Photo credit Alexis Pearson)*



Mark Isenberg is shown with Porjay's Vida Blue Streak JH WCX*, Can MH***. "Blue" competed in the Canadian National Amateur in 2010.**

There are four stakes in field trials in Canada, Junior (for dogs two years of age and younger), Qualifying, Amateur and Open. In addition, National Open and National Amateur Championship Stakes are run each year in different parts of the country. Junior stakes typically consist of doubles on land and water. The marks can range from wide open to very tight and technical. Angle entries and exits from bodies of water and cover are common, as well as precise lines through cover and water. Handling on marks is not permitted. Qualifying Stakes generally include double or triple land and water marks, plus land and water blinds. As in Junior Stakes, tests can range from relatively wide open to very tight and technical. A dog can earn a Junior Field Trial Retriever title (JFTR) by placing in three Junior Stakes and earning five points. Each Junior Stake must have at least five starters. A Qualifying Retriever title (QFTR) can be earned by a retriever that earns a total of 10 points in Qualifying Stakes together with a Qualifying Stake win.

Championship points are earned in the Amateur and Open Stakes. These stakes represent the very top levels of competition. Marks are very tight and technical (generally triples or quadruple marks; lengths of over 400 yards for marks and blinds are not unheard of. Amateur Stakes are restricted to Amateur handlers, while Open Stakes are open to both amateur and professional trainers. The titles Amateur Field Trial

Champion (AFTCH) and Field Trial Champion (FTCH) have been earned by a small number of talented Golden Retrievers in Canada. Dogs can also earn three star status (***) by placing in or earning a CM in Open or Amateur Stakes, as well as by placing first or second in a Qualifying Stake. Achieving three star status is a worthy accomplishment in itself.

There are a number of differences between field trials and hunt tests. The first is that in field trial competitions the gunners wear white coats. In addition, the guns are fired before the bird is thrown and the distances to the marks are generally longer than in CKC hunt tests and HRC hunts. When you come to line you are allowed to show your dog the location of the guns before signaling to the judges that you are ready. This procedure is called lining and is not allowed in CKC hunt tests and in UKC hunts.

To be successful in field trials you will need a high-powered, hard-going dog that is very trainable and able to take pressure. Field breedings are relatively common, but it may take a while to get a "good one" during your search for a top flight competitive partner. If you are looking for a puppy, focus on litters from ***, FTCH, AFTCH lineage. You will also need a mentor or two to get you started in the game, plus access to a good training group.

Are field trials fun? You bet they are, if you are competitive in nature and enjoy training technical concepts. The basic training required to produce a good Master dog and a dog that can be competitive in Qualifying Stakes is identical. The only difference is in the set ups and in the length of marks and blinds. It is a huge jump from Qualifying to Open/Amateur and it is here that a high-powered dog and access to experienced training help can make all the difference.

Contact Information

For more information on the Canadian Kennel Club Working Certificate program, as well as CKC hunt tests and field trials contact the Canadian Kennel Club at <http://www.ckc.ca/en/> and the National Retriever Club of Canada <http://www.nrcc-canada.com/>. Additional information on the United Kennel Club HRC program can be found at <http://www.hrc-ukc.com/>.

Anne Everett runs CKC and UKC events with her dogs. Her dogs have earned Open placements, QFTR titles, Qualifying stake wins, Junior Stakes placements, as well as Hunting Retriever Champion, Upland Hunter, Grand Master Hunter, Master Hunter and WCX titles. She lives on Vancouver Island in British Columbia and breeds golden retrievers under the Heads Up Prefix. Anne can be reached at www.headsupkennels.com

Presented by the FEC