

THE FLATCOATED RETRIEVER SOCIETY

SHOOTING DOG CERTIFICATE INFORMATION

Prior to the introduction of the SDC, the only way of assessing the inherited characteristics (good game finding, temperament, biddability, quietness and a soft mouth) essential for a dog working in the shooting field was Field Trials. However, historically there had been few Flatcoats at any one time with FT awards and therefore people wanting to breed a working dog were limited by the very small proven gene pool and had to rely on the recommendation of owners as to their dog's prowess in the shooting field. The SDC was set up in 1981/82 by the late Hon Mrs Amelia Jessel to address this shortfall by encouraging people who had working dogs with the above qualities but not trialled, to have them assessed in a non-competitive arena. Mrs. Jessel's blueprint for Judges was "they should imagine they are looking for a good working dog to buy that is going to be a useful shooting companion for the rest of its life". She summed up the aim of the SDC as being "designed to find and to register those flatcoats that are most likely to pass on the right inheritable characteristics to their progeny and **to eliminate from the breeding programme those that display the major faults of whining, hard mouth, stubbornness or lack of desire to please**".

Guide to Handlers

Dogs will be required to:

1. Retrieve tenderly to hand a minimum of FOUR head of game, live or dead, although the Judges will determine the final number of retrieves required on the day. (Note 1)
2. Be able to hunt and pick game from open ground or any cover normally encountered on a shoot. (Note 2)
3. Retrieve fur or feather.
4. Be steady and quiet whilst sitting in line at a drive/drives. (Note 3)
5. Walk reasonably to heel.
6. Readily enter water and swim. (Note 5)
7. Be under reasonable control throughout the day. (Note 6)

Explanatory Notes

Dogs that, in the opinion of the Judges, whine, squeak, bark or have a hard mouth will be eliminated immediately. If you are unsure how to check for the damage caused by a hard mouth, please ask someone on your shoot who knows how to examine a bird properly to advise you.

1. Where possible, dogs will be asked to retrieve at least one head of live (wounded) game. The Judges may want to move the dogs back at a subsequent drive/s in order to test them on live birds and in cover.
2. Dogs that generally lack confidence or the inclination to hunt and/or retrieve game may not be awarded a Certificate.
3. To be considered steady, a dog should sit calmly and quietly, on or off the lead, and without any interference from its handler.
4. Dogs that are OFF the lead during drives could achieve an "A" certificate and dogs ON the lead a "B" certificate. A dog trying for an "A" that proves unsteady, may continue to try for a "B".
5. When no suitable water is available on the day to assess the dogs on game or dummies, a special water test must be completed before the Certificate can be awarded.
6. Handlers will be required to keep their dogs under control all the time and not just for the short periods when in line. To be considered under reasonable control, the dog must be able to walk to heel, take basic directions and be responsive enough to the whistle so that it is deemed safe to take out in the shooting field; the Judges will not be looking for or expect Field Trial standards.

General Information

1. Normally not more than 2, 4 or 6 dogs will be assessed per day as this ensures the Shoot is not disrupted in any way. Days organised specifically for the S.D.C. may have more.
2. The Organiser will co-operate with the Shoot Manager, Keeper and Pickers-Up so that the dogs are tested fully making sure that all birds are picked as usual on a shooting day. Guns will be requested to refrain from using their dogs whilst the test dogs are being worked.
3. It should be remembered that as SDC participants are only at the Shoot by kind permission of the Host and Gamekeeper, there will be some aspects of the day outside the Society's control, e.g. availability of game.
4. There will be two Judges – a KC FT Panel Judge and one from the FT Sub Committee (or their nominee).
5. Completing the day does not necessarily guarantee a Certificate. To achieve a Certificate, a dog must have satisfied the Judges that it would be an asset to the working gene pool and a useful companion in the shooting field.
6. In order to assist the handlers whose dogs have not achieved a Certificate, the Judges will explain what went wrong and therefore why they have not passed.
7. Out of courtesy to the Shoot and Judges, together with rising costs, dogs must have had sufficient experience of picking up in the shooting field, sitting quietly in line at a drive and be able to pick warm game competently prior to undertaking a Shooting Dog Certificate day. Applicants are therefore asked to read thoroughly ALL the information, then send a completed application form and cheque to the FT Secretary. Your name will be entered on a list and when a reasonable opportunity to take your SDC arises, you will be contacted by the FT Secretary.

*If you would like to apply for a Shooting Dog Certificate but do not have regular access to a shoot or are unsure as to whether your dog is ready, please contact any member of the FT Sub-Committee who will be able to help you.

**Anyone that is able to organise a SDC day, MUST contact the FT Secretary in good time. Dogs attending any SDC day will be determined only by the FT Secretary.

NB: Although the SDC is not a KC licensed event, their code of conduct governing Field Trials shall apply; in particular, competitors shall not openly impugn the decision of the Judge or Judges or criticise the host, ground or guns. The Judges' decision is final and must not be challenged although it is perfectly acceptable for the participant concerned, not a third party, to seek clarification if their dog fails.

For safety reasons, and in accordance with shooting field etiquette, please do not leave without permission from the Gamekeeper or Shoot Captain.

Dogs/Handlers may be requested to continue to pick-up after the completion of their S.D.C.

Extract from the FCRS Newsletter Autumn 1997 by the late Hon Mrs. A. Jessel

"To give a resume of the standard required for the Shooting Dog Certificate: dogs should be steady and quiet during a drive which may include many falling birds. Even if the dog is on a lead, it should not be restless or tugging at the lead. It should be steady at heel as it will be required to walk at heel between drives. After the drive is over the Judge will ask the handler to work his dog, either in the open or in cover, so the dog must be obedient enough to go in more or less the direction required, to hunt its ground and to return when called. It should pick up cleanly either live (wounded) or dead game and deliver it to hand. Game may be pheasant, partridge, duck, rabbit, hare, pigeon, woodcock, snipe or any other legitimate game. We cannot guarantee only pheasants and partridges.

The dog should be capable of hunting for game that it hasn't seen fall. It should also enter water and swim although very often this test will be artificial. There is nothing in the above that a picking up dog should not be required to do. In fact it should not be used for picking up if it is not capable of the above".