



## FLATCOATED RETRIEVER SOCIETY SHOOTING DOG CERTIFICATE GUIDANCE AND RULES

### Background and history:

Prior to the introduction of the SDC (Shooting Dog Certificate), 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 Assessors 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 participating in a SDC will be required to:

- i) Retrieve freshly shot game, either live ie. wounded or dead, tenderly to hand. The Assessors will determine the final number of retrieves according to conditions on the day. Handlers should expect a minimum of FOUR retrieves to include at least one wounded bird, which wherever possible should be picked immediately. (The Assessors may want to move the dogs back at a drive(s) in order to test them on wounded birds and in cover.)
- ii) Be able to hunt and pick game from open ground or any cover normally encountered on a shoot. Dogs that generally lack confidence or the inclination to hunt and/or retrieve game may not be awarded a Certificate.
- iii) Retrieve fur or feather.
- iv) Be steady and quiet whilst sitting in line at a drive/drives. To be considered steady, a dog should sit calmly and quietly, on or off the lead, and without any interference from its handler.
- v) Walk reasonably to heel. 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".
- vi) Readily enter water and swim. 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.
- vii) Be under reasonable control throughout the day. 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 Assessors will not be looking for or expect Field Trial standards.

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 Assessor 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".*

In summary, if you wish to enter a SDC you need to be able to **answer Yes to the nine questions** below:

1. Will your dog retrieve tenderly to hand, both live and dead game?
2. Will your dog readily enter cover to work?
3. Will your dog pick both fur & feather?
4. Is your dog reasonably steady at drives, whether on or off the lead?
5. Is your dog quiet at all times whilst working?
6. Will your dog walk reasonably to heel throughout the day?
- 7 Will your dog enter water, swim and retrieve?
8. Will your dog remain under reasonable control throughout the day?
9. Will your dog go in the general direction of where you send it?

Your signature on a SDC application is your confirmation that your dog is capable of performing all of these required tasks.

### **Not ready yet?**

If your dog is currently unable to complete the above tasks, or you are unsure, then please contact a member of the FT Sub-Committee who will be able to help you. We may also be able to assist if you do not have regular access to a shoot.

### **Want to help organise a SDC?**

Firstly, please read the Rules at the end of this document.

If you know of a shoot where an SDC could be organised and have the agreement of the venue owner or keeper, contact a Member of the FT Sub-Committee and provide them with the contact information. They will discuss the proposed venue with the FT Secretary and a decision will be taken on whether to proceed. We will notify you of our decision as quickly as possible.

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### **SHOOTING DOG CERTIFICATE RULES:**

- 1) The Flatcoated Retriever Society Field Trial Sub-Committee will be responsible for running all SDCs. Members of the Society may identify venues for SDC's but the running of the day will **ONLY** be by members of the Field Trial Sub-Committee.
- 2) Entries are to be on the SDC Application Form and accompanied by the appropriate fee.
- 3) The Field Trial Sub-Committee shall appoint TWO Assessors to undertake the SDC assessments one of which will be a KC Panel Judge, and the other will be a member of the Field Trial Sub-Committee.
- 4) SDC's are not competitions. They are an assessment of individual dogs against the criteria set out in i) to vii) above.
- 5) The assessment will be undertaken as part of a normal game shooting day and will not involve the use of cold game or dummies, with the exception of retrieves from water when this cannot be completed with freshly shot game.
- 6) A Certificate will be awarded by the Society to all handlers achieving an "A" or "B" pass. No title may be used to describe the award.
- 7) An "A" pass will only be achieved if the assessed dog performs to the requisite standard in all elements as set out in i) to vii) above whilst off a lead. If the assessed dog performs all elements but is held on a lead during drives or walk-ups, or at other times as instructed by the Assessor, then a "B" pass will be achieved.
- 8) The owner, competitor, handler or other person in charge of a dog at a SDC event must, at all times, ensure that the dog is kept under proper control whilst at the venue including its environs, car and caravan parks and approaches.
- 9) The code of Conduct is the same as that for Field Trials run in accordance with the KC "J" Regs.

- 10) Organisers and Assessors must be careful to ensure the safety of dogs and must not require them to negotiate dangerous obstacles. Whilst Assessors should take reasonable precautions for the safety of competing dogs, it is the duty of the handler to satisfy himself or herself that the dog is suitably trained, physically fit and prepared to undertake the work allocated by the Assessor before directing his or her dog to undertake any retrieve.
- 11) The organisers have the power to exclude dogs from the day and will have the right to refuse an entry.
- 12) The SDC is open to all fully paid up members of the Flatcoated Retriever Society. Non-members may participate should space allow however, members will always take priority. The organisers may restrict the numbers in a SDC, in which case the right to take part shall be decided by ballot.
- 13) All Assessors must have experience of dog-work under shooting field conditions.
- 14) All handlers must carry out the instructions of the Assessor. The Assessor is empowered to remove from the SDC any dog whose handler does not follow their instructions or whose handler wilfully interferes with another participant or his dog.
- 15) No person attending a SDC may allow a bitch in season to be on the event ground or foul any ground to be used by participating dogs.
- 16) If, after consultation with the Assessor, members of the Field-Trial Sub-Committee present consider a dog unfit to take part by reason of contagious disease or physical condition such a dog shall be required to be removed immediately from the ground.
- 17) No dog shall wear a collar whilst taking part.
- 18) No person shall carry out punitive correction or harsh handling at a SDC.
- 19) Although the SDC is not a KC licensed event, the code of conduct governing Field Trials shall apply; in particular, competitors shall not openly impugn the decision of the Assessor or Assessors or criticise the host, ground or guns. The Assessors' 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 is unsuccessful. Any cases of alleged misconduct will be reported to the Field Trial Sub-Committee.
- 20) For safety reasons, and in accordance with shooting field etiquette, please do not leave the venue without permission from the the Field Trial Sub-Committee representative.**

#### **SDC GENERAL INFORMATION:**

1. Normally not more than 6 dogs will be assessed per day as this ensures the Shoot is not disrupted in any way.
2. The Organiser, Steward and Assessors MUST 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 should be asked not to pick birds in the area of the shoot where dogs are being assessed.
3. It should be remembered that 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, including the availability of game, which may necessitate the event being cancelled or suspended.
4. Completing the day does not necessarily guarantee a Certificate. To achieve a Certificate, a dog must have satisfied the Assessors that it would be an asset to the working gene pool and a useful companion in the shooting field.
5. Although originally it was expected that dogs would be capable of retrieving any and all game as quoted above: '*Game may be pheasant, partridge, duck, rabbit, hare, pigeon, woodcock, snipe or any other legitimate game*', the Society understands that these days it is not always possible for dogs to gain sufficient experience on all such game, however it is expected that dogs should be able to retrieve at the very least, pheasant, partridge, pigeon, duck and rabbit.
6. In order to assist the handlers whose dogs have not achieved a Certificate, the Assessors will explain what went wrong and therefore, why they have not passed.
7. Out of courtesy to the Shoot and Assessors, 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.

8. Applicants are asked to read thoroughly ALL the information, then send a completed SDC Application form and payment to the FT Secretary who will enter your name on a list and when a reasonable opportunity to take your SDC arises, you will be contacted.
9. Dogs attending any SDC day will be determined ONLY by the FT Secretary.
10. Dogs/Handlers may be requested to continue to pick-up after the completion of their SDC.
11. It is expected that all participants should follow the dress code as expected at a Shoot/Field Trial.

#### **RULES FOR ORGANISING A SDC**

1. ONLY a member of the FT Sub-Committee can organise a SDC day.
2. Notice of the SDC day will be advertised on the Society website, Facebook and/or by email as soon as the date is confirmed. Therefore organisers must apply to the FT Secretary at the earliest opportunity.
3. If a Member of the Society identifies a suitable venue for a SDC day, that Member will be given preference. Application by a Society Member to use a venue for a SDC shall be made in writing to the FT Secretary giving sufficient time for the event to be organised.
4. The Field Trial Sub-Committee shall appoint TWO assessors to undertake the SDC assessments one of which will be a KC Panel Judge, the other will be a member of the Field Trial Sub-Committee.
5. The Organiser must not accept applications to take part in a SDC. These must be made directly to the FT Secretary as set out above.
6. The names and contact details of all participants will be passed from the FT Secretary to the Organiser not less than ONE WEEK prior to the event.
7. Organisers must send to each participant directions to the venue, instructions for the day and any other relevant information IN GOOD TIME.
8. Organisers and Stewards must communicate with landowners and/or gamekeepers regarding the running of the day.
9. Organisers will be responsible for any gratuities for landowners/gamekeepers.
10. Reimbursement of expenses or application for a petty cash fund must be made to the Treasurer of the Flatcoated Retriever Society, and accounts for the SDC must also be sent to the Treasurer.

Ends