

Český Fousek North America



Natural Ability Test

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for pricing and order information
Email: info@ceskyfousekna.org <http://ceskyfousekna.org>

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Official Rules and Regulations

Hereditary characteristics that are essential for a dog to become a truly versatile hunting dog have been selected for many generations. As a breed club we want to continue to maintain these heritable traits in our dogs. In order to assess whether our breeding program is creating the desired results, we require that every puppy in our program be tested in both the Natural Ability Test (NAT) and the Intermediate Hunting Dog Test (IHDT).

The Judges' job is to evaluate each dog for the desired heritable traits and the degree to which these traits are exhibited in a "hunt like" scenario. These traits include pointing instinct, desire for game contact, cooperation, ability to discern various scents on the ground and in the air, and willingness to work in both land and water environments. These traits are the "potential" of the dog to become a satisfactory hunting dog. This "potential" can be extinguished over time if it is not nurtured, supported, developed through training, and "on the ground" experience.

Dogs are eligible for the NAT from the day they reach six months of age until and including the day they reach 16 months of age. Dogs older than 16 months may be entered for evaluation and are not eligible for any prize classification. Dogs of all versatile hunting breeds are eligible, as long as the dog is eligible for registration in a recognized breed club or registry.

Three Judges should officiate the test, with one of them being designated Senior Judge. A Judge may not evaluate their own dog, a dog trained by them, or first generation offspring of their stud dog or female.

Throughout the day, Judges have the prerogative of recalling any dog for a retest in any discipline. Usually this is done after all other dogs have been tested.

Dogs that are not under evaluation must be on a leash and should walk quietly with their handler behind the gallery so as not to interfere with the dogs that are under evaluation.

Only a single flat collar is allowed during the tests (e.g., no pinch or electronic collars).

Females in season need specific approval from the Field Test Chair to be admitted. The Field Test Chair and Judges are responsible to ensure that the performance of other dogs being tested will not suffer due to the presence of a female in season. Typically, that female will be kept off of the testing grounds while other dogs are being evaluated and run last in the day.

Causes for exclusion or disqualification from the test, and forfeit of entry fees are:

1. Deliberately falsifying statements on entry forms or other related documents.
2. Letting a dog run loose except in designated exercise areas or when directed by the Judges.
3. Handlers leading females in season in areas not conforming to the Field Test Chair or Judges' instructions.
4. Severe punishment inflicted on a dog in a test or on the test grounds.

Exterior

All dogs will have their exterior evaluated for correct conformation, including dentition and eyes. Exterior includes both coat and conformation. Each dog will be given a score of 1 to 4 for each of those two categories, with "4" being closest to the breed standard.

Handlers should prepare their dogs to be handled by Judges. The dogs should be accustomed to having their faces, mouths, and paws touched by others. In addition, the dog needs to be trained to move at a trot beside the handler while on a loose leash.

Temperament

All dogs will be evaluated for temperament and placed in one of the following categories:

Shy – fearful and spooky. These dogs may be skittish when approached and may not want to be touched by strangers. They may be extremely upset by new surroundings, may bite if pushed, and are untrustworthy.

Calm– demeanor is relaxed and easy going, taking things in stride. Not easily upset or disturbed by noise, activity, new people or animals. They are very easy to approach and examine. They have a very steady, quiet, and unruffled disposition.

Lively– friendly, animated and high-energy. These dogs are very excitable when approached, but with a happy disposition. They can be somewhat difficult to examine only because they don't like to hold still.

Aggressive– a dog that attacks or tries to attack another dog or human. These dogs will bite and draw blood. They are very unpredictable and are not to be trusted.

Aggression is NOT growling or pulling back when examined, although this should be noted on the scorecard.

Aggression is NOT growling or posturing if another dog runs up to it.

The majority of dogs will fall under “Calm” or “Lively”

Dogs that are “difficult to handle” while under exterior examination should not be faulted unless they are shy or aggressive.

Additional notes on temperament should be made on the scorecards, if Judges deem appropriate.

Gun Shyness or Sensitivity

All dogs will be evaluated for gun reactivity during the search discipline. Blank shots will be discharged at two different times when the dog is actively working, while away from the handler. Dogs that are deemed gun sensitive or gun shy will not qualify for a prize but may complete the test.

Gun Sensitivity is present if the dog reacts to a shot with signs of fright so that it interrupts its work rhythm, returns to the handler and regains its natural work rhythm only after a while.

Gun Shyness is present if the dog reacts to a shot with signs of extreme fright or even panic, looks to the handler or others for protection, or runs away, making further testing difficult or impossible.

Other types of shyness, such as fear of game, should be noted on the judging card. Any such sign of mental instability that is unmistakably noticed must be recorded on the scorecard.

Scoring in the NAT

Pointing will be scored as “Yes” = 4 or “No” = 0 in the NAT. The performance for each dog in the search, tracking, affinity for water disciplines, as well as the judged throughout categories, will be scored as follow:

Very Good	4 points
Good	3 points
Satisfactory	2 points
Poor	1 point
Failure	0 points

The test results are entered into the dog's official record. If the dog has, or is eligible to have, a certified pedigree from the C.F.N.A., the test results can be entered on the pedigree and signed by the Senior Judge.

Field Disciplines

Searching

The primary purpose for using a dog in hunting is the dogs' superior mobility over that of its handler. How well the dog uses this superior mobility; how well the mobility is attuned to scenting capabilities so as to thoroughly search the traversed cover; how well this mobility is geared to the quality of nose so as not to miss any spots where game has recently been by indication of its presence, are all indicative of the quality of the search.

Judging this discipline begins when the Senior Judge tells the handler to begin and ends when the Senior Judge tells the handler the discipline has ended or after a minimum of 20 minutes of searching.

Throughout the search the dog should show interest in finding game. The dog should adapt its pace and range to suit the conditions. Ideally, the Judges should direct the handler so that the search encompasses as many terrains as practicable (e.g., field vs. woodland).

The search should be efficient, purposeful, productive, and should give the feeling that no game has been missed. The search should be active and forward and the dog should quarter the cover, turning into the wind and crossing it to best advantage. During downwind searching the dog should go out and work in a quartering fashion back toward the handler. Style of running, great speed, or excessive range should not be rewarded in judging the search. Slow, methodical, purposeful searching should not be faulted. The dog that shows joy and enthusiasm with controlled purpose should receive the highest score.

The wild running dog that repeatedly passes likely cover and is not searching with purpose should be penalized. Similarly, the dog that stays at its handler's feet and does not actively work into cover likely to hold game should be penalized. If the dog does not have a good initial search the Judges can consider giving additional time for searching after bird contact from the pointing section.

Each dog will be tested for gun reactivity during their search. A gun of conventional gauge is discharged at two different times by a gunner on the signal from one of the Judges. The firing of the gun will be done ONLY when the dog is actively searching away from the handler, or when in pursuit of a flying bird. Blank shells must be used.

Pointing

In judging a young dog, the Judges must look for the *pointing instinct*. The point, along with the search, are the two most important aspects of a dog's work "before the shot". A strong point allows the handler to approach and flush the game, thus providing a cleaner and safer shot.

Judging this discipline begins when the dog establishes a point and ends when the bird is flushed, or the dog leaves the point.

The key ingredients in defining the "point" are 1) a full stop, 2) focused attention to scent (no sight pointing) and 3) productivity (the *bird or other game* must be there). The point must last long enough to be convincing. A quick flash point is not acceptable. Style of pointing plays no role in scoring (e.g., head up, tail out or up, etc.).

Wild birds or raised birds can be utilized. Whenever possible the planted birds should be set out in a location where the dog will move directly from the search portion of the test into an opportunity for a point without slowing the test. If the dog points the bird at the end of the track this can be counted. Points on any game throughout the test, including fur, will be acceptable as a point. If a young dog has several opportunities to point game and has done so, the Judges should score the dog on its best performance. A dog that points, and then flushes and chases the bird, should not be faulted. Steadiness is not required in NAT.

The dog that repeatedly points unproductively and must be commanded to leave unproductive points may either lack experience or show poor use and quality of nose. This nose and use of nose is scored under the search discipline on the scorecard not the pointing section.

Tracking Live Game Bird

This discipline tests a dog's usefulness as a tracker of crippled game. Use of nose, cooperation, perseverance, and concentration are all brought together to track down a crippled bird. *The crucial task for the dog is to progress along the track efficiently, always carrying it forward.*

Judging this discipline begins when the dog is released on the track and ends when the bird is located, or when the Senior Judge tells the handler that the Judges have seen enough, whichever comes first.

A live, healthy, pheasant or chukar partridge has seven outer primary feathers pulled from one wing. If the handler desires, the young dog may be shown the bird before it is released. The dog is then hidden behind a blind, or some obstruction, so that the dog does not see the course taken by the released bird.

Some of the soft feathers are pulled from the bird to mark the release spot. Only a few feathers should be laid down at the starting point. The bird “releaser” (usually a Judge or Apprentice Judge) should NOT rub the bird on the ground at the starting point, as this creates an unnatural hot spot. The live bird is then released at the starting point so it can run crosswind or downwind, never into the wind. When the bird has run far enough to satisfy the Judges, and is out of sight, the dog is brought to the starting spot. A Judge will instruct the handler to remove the leash, take hold of the dog’s collar and bring the dog slowly up to the feathers. A slip lead can be used as a release. The handler may guide the dog along the drag for approximately 6-7 steps, to encourage the dog and to help the dog concentrate on the track. Once the dog is focused, the handler should then quietly and calmly release the dog and command it to track the bird. Further assistance may lower the score.

The dog should track with deliberate concentration. If the scent is lost, the dog should attempt to relocate the track and move forward along it. The Judges should take into consideration the wind conditions, humidity, topography, etc. Some conditions may give dogs more challenging tracks than others, even on the same day in the same location. Often dogs will use the scent from a track that is somewhat downwind of where the bird actually ran. These dogs should not be faulted.

The highest scores are awarded for efficient use of the track, leading the dog toward the bird. In scoring this tracking test, the dog is NOT required to locate or retrieve the bird, simply to follow the track and *demonstrate that it has tracking ability*. The dog that finds the bird by wide searching, but not using the track at all, cannot receive a score for tracking. How fast the dog tracks or whether the dog holds its head high or low should NOT be considered in the score. The number of times a dog has crossed the track should not be of major consideration as long as the movement continues forward.

Water Discipline

Affinity for Water

The truly versatile hunting dog should show no fear of water and no hesitancy when entering water. In normal hunting situations, the dog will be expected to retrieve shot birds that have fallen into water or onto the far side of a stream or ditch. The dog that fears water will cause the hunter a cold swim or a very long walk around, if the game is to be retrieved.

Judging this discipline begins when the Senior Judge brings the handler to the water and ends when the Handler is told that the Judges have seen enough.

The test is set up beside a body of water in a place that permits the dog easy entry into water that gradually deepens to swimming depth. Sudden drop-offs into deep water are not desirable.

The handler will bring the dog to the edge of the water and remove the leash. A plain dummy or other object (excluding any game bird or mammal or feather or fur adornments on a dummy) is thrown into water of minimum swimming depth by the handler or a Judge. The tossed object is just an inducement to the dog to enter the water as soon as the object is tossed, with or without a command. The dog is not required to retrieve the object.

If the dog enters the water willingly and swims on its first attempt, the process is repeated. The second toss is usually a little farther and into deeper water than the first. Again, the dog must enter the water willingly, without hesitation, and must swim.

Should the dog show hesitancy on either entry, a third entry might be required by the Judges. The dog that shows hesitancy on the first but not on the second or third can receive the highest score. A dog that shows no hesitancy on the first entry but shows increasing hesitancy on the second and third will be scored lower depending on the severity of the hesitancy or amount of coaxing required.

In order to receive a qualifying score a dog must swim at least two times, or more if the Judges require it.

The dog that refuses to enter the water entirely or refuses to swim will be recalled and tested with a dead game bird used as the tossed object. Dogs requiring game to be tossed before entering water cannot be given a score of more than a "2". Dogs that won't swim, but willingly enter the water up to their bellies, can receive a score of "1", which is not a qualifying score, but does indicate that the dog would at least enter the water.

Judged Throughout

The **Judged Throughout** section of evaluation for NAT dogs assesses the behavior and innate qualities of each dog across all the individual disciplines. Those innate qualities include Nose and Use of Nose, Desire to Work, and Cooperation. In their evaluations, Judges will only be scoring performances that occur within the Start/Stop of each actual discipline.

Behaviors observed outside of the start/stop of a particular discipline will be detailed in the **Observed Throughout** section. These notes provide important information that the Breeding Committee can use for future breeding decisions. Examples to be noted may include, but are not limited to; unusual or inefficient movement in the field, exhibition of fearful or aggressive behaviors, examples

of good or poor cooperation (e.g. stellar or egregious behavior when handling a bird). Any bird contact or voluntary retrieving will be noted as will playing extensive “keep away” with a bird.

Burying or eating game will result in elimination from a prize

Nose and Use of Nose

The dog’s nose and how it is used is the most important attribute of the hunting dog. This aspect of a hunting dog is tested during *searching and during tracking a live game bird*. The quality and use of the nose, to a great extent, determines the quality and usefulness of the hunting dog. The use of nose is partly an estimate of the quality of the nose. How well a dog can detect scent is dependent on many features of the environment as well as the dog’s innate scenting ability. Quality of the nose can be judged in a relative sense. How well the dog uses its nose can be judged in a more absolute sense.

The dog that repeatedly overruns its nose and bumps birds with favorable wind conditions shows poor use of its nose. Overrunning the nose can be particularly evident in tracking the live game bird. The distance at which the **dog acknowledges, not points**, the scent of a bird in the field and the accuracy of locating the bird demonstrates quality of the nose. Also, the dog that acknowledges spots where game has been, and moves on without undue sniffing at the spot, shows a good nose. However, the young dog should not be penalized for a flash point at a spot where game has been, if not overdone, as this may simply indicate lack of experience.

The final score is a composite score arrived at by nose and use of the nose demonstrated in the searching and tracking disciplines.

Desire to Work

At all times during all tasks, the dog should show happiness and enthusiasm for its work, and a desire for pursuit of game as well as for making game contact. The dog should demonstrate that it wants to find game and is willing to work hard to that end. The dog that searches with enthusiasm shows good desire, as is the dog that perseveres on the track of the bird.

Wild running should not be confused with a good desire or with purposeful hunting. Wide ranging speed without purpose is not hunting and does not add to the dog’s score in desire.

Cooperation

Cooperation can be best described as teamwork between the dog and its handler. The dog that continually shows its willingness to please its handler without being commanded to do so is showing good cooperation. During the search the dog should always be aware of its handler’s location without

demonstrating over dependence. The need for the handler to “hack” the dog in, or the need for excessive handling to keep the desired contact shows poor cooperation. Both excessive dependence and excessive independence are indications of poor cooperation.

A young dog that retrieves the dummy during the water test or finds and retrieves a cripple during the search, shows good cooperation. If the dog does not find and retrieve the game bird during the tracking discipline they should *not* be faulted for lack of cooperation. Retrieving is NOT required in the NAT.

Scoring the Natural Ability Test

Minimum Number of Points Required for:

Discipline	Prize I	Prize II	Prize III
Searching	4	3	2
Pointing	4	4	4
Tracking Live Game Bird	4	3	2
Affinity for Water	3	3	2
Nose and Use of Nose	4	3	3
Desire to Work	3	2	2
Cooperation	3	2	2

Dogs that bury or eat game will not qualify for a prize.

Dogs that are deemed gun sensitive or gun shy will not qualify for a prize.

Dogs older than 16 months are not eligible for prize classification.

Notes

