

working Gundogs of Australia



Working Gundogs Association of Australia

Owning an efficient gundog doesn't just happen by chance. An intensive training program is normally undertaken from puppy stage, often with the help of a club. The national gundog discipline of the SSAA is the Working Gundog Association of Australia (WGAA). It is generally made up of members with similar interests, in so far as they enjoy shooting over a well-trained gundog.



Labrador



Golden Retriever



German Shorthaired Pointer



Pointer



English Setter



Weimaraner

WGAA Training

WGAA is committed to providing training for its members and regularly conducts training days to improve dogs for hunting and retrieving in the field. The dog's skills are also honed for trials.

The club has established a number of sites around Australia on which it is able to conduct its trials. The main training day in Victoria is the third Sunday in the month, generally in the Melton area. Victoria is fortunate to have negotiated the use of a park where dogs can be worked off lead in an environment that is similar to field conditions. Victoria WGAA has used this area for a number of years and many national trials winners have been trained here.

WGAA is structured to facilitate all levels of dogs, from young beginners to mature champions and is fortunate to have some of Australia's leading trainers and handlers acting as instructors.

WGAA Disciplines

Retrieving Discipline

Handlers are encouraged to work closely with their dogs to ensure the dog will retrieve any item of game on command. The dogs are trained to be steady to the fall of game and to shot. All of the popular retrieving dogs are showcased in this discipline, but don't be surprised to see a well-trained utility dog or even a spaniel do very well in this field.

Dogs seen in this discipline:

- Labrador
- Golden retriever
- German shorthaired pointer
- Weimaraner
- Large munsterlander
- Wirehaired pointer
- Breton
- English springer spaniel



Hunt Point and Retrieve Discipline (HPR)

This is the discipline that caters for utility gundogs. Handlers are required to quarter their dogs across paddocks and dogs are expected to find and point game, back and honour another dog that has pointed game, and generally work through a paddock in a thorough manner. Some of the dogs that perform creditably in HPR will often bob up and do well in retrieving.

Dogs seen in this discipline:

- German shorthaired pointer
- Breton
- Large munsterlander
- Wirehaired pointer
- Weimaraner

Spaniel Discipline

This discipline is dominated by English springer spaniels. The dogs are trained to work closely to their handlers and to flush game from very thick cover. The dogs are trained to be steady to shot and game and are required to retrieve shot game on command. These little dogs are generally full of enthusiasm and a pleasure to watch.

Pointer and Setter Discipline

Pointers and setters have been bred for the task of working with speed and style in the quest for game birds. In Australia they excel in the pointing of our great game bird, the stubble quail. The dogs are expected to work under their handler's instructions, to be steady to wing and shot, to back another dog on point and to retrieve or point shot game.

Dogs seen in this discipline:

- Pointer
- Irish setter
- English setter
- Gordon setter
- Irish red and white setter



Competition/Trials

Retrieving trials run by the WGAA are generally run at four different levels: beginners, intermediate, advanced and open. They are open to all breeds of retrieving gundog as well as 'associate' or 'true to type' gundogs, which are dogs that are in all probability pure-bred, but the owner may not have purchased the pedigree papers. A retrieving trial usually consists of three separately judged 'runs', but this may vary from time to time.

Beginners and intermediate trials are conducted over two or three 'runs', usually one in water, one over water and one on land. These are all 'sighted' retrieves, meaning that the dog gets to see the item to be retrieved being thrown and occasionally to see it land. At advanced levels, the dog will be asked to retrieve 'double sighted' items as well as starting to retrieve 'blind' birds. 'Blinds' are items of game that have been placed out by a game steward and fired at by the handler, but are unseen to the dog. These retrieves require the handler to direct the dog onto the game. At open level the dog may be asked to retrieve any of several combinations of multiple sighted and blind birds, all at distances ranging up to about 200m.

Before and after firing at the game and sending the dog to retrieve, the dog and handler must also demonstrate several obedience skills, such as sitting, heeling, staying, dropping and being steady to the cast of game and firing of the gun. The dog must also correctly 'deliver' the game to the handler. The items to be retrieved generally consist of simulated forms of both feathered and furred game.

Judging

When judging a trial run, a judge may award up to 55 points per run: ten points for obedience, ten for 'marking' (use of eyes) and 35 for the retrieve itself. Up to 55 points can be deducted for infractions, which can include such things as 'hard mouth' (crunching of the game by the dog), the handler not firing from the shoulder or the dog dropping the game.

When a judge selects his 'runs' he will look for varying qualities in the dog and handler team. Qualities such as courage facing cover, willingness to enter water, style, eagerness and action in making his retrieves all score well. Judges take full advantage of the natural 'lay of the land' to fully test the co-operation between dog and handler.

WGAA Dog Registrations

All dogs registered with WGAA have been issued with a WGAA registration/pedigree certificate. WGAA is also able to maintain a record of each dog's trial wins, together with the wins accumulated by that dog's progeny.



Participation

Participation is open to anyone. Contact your local SSAA range, the SSAA office in your state or the Working Gundogs National Discipline Chairman to see if they conduct trials near you.

