

# **Working Gundog Association of Australia (SSAA)**

**A National Discipline of the Sporting Shooters Association of Australia**

**POINTER & SETTER FIELD TRIALS**

**RULES & REGULATIONS**



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# **POINTER & SETTER FIELD TRIALS**

## **Section 1 - PURPOSE AND JUDGING OF TRIALS (OVERVIEW)**

The purpose of a pointer and setter field trial is to find the best hunting dog in terms of the criteria that epitomise the bird dog - class, working style, finding ability, biddability, endurance and application to its task. Such a dog should find, quarter, range, back - if given a clear opportunity to do so, retrieve/seek dead, perform consistently in each round and not be gun-shy.

Pointers and setters use air scent to locate game, and accordingly the use of the wind in selecting beats is of paramount importance in allowing dogs to demonstrate their ability. Judges should arrange their beats to allow competing dogs to take advantage of the wind by running either directly upwind or, as a second best option, into a right or left cheek wind. Such a format will help ensure equality for all dogs, make best use of time terrain and game conditions, and most importantly, encourage correct pointer and setter ground coverage.

The judge shall ensure that every competitor is aware of the desired manner and direction of working. At the end of each round the judge will give a summation of the trial to that point, commenting on the performance of each dog and informing competitors of the reasons why dogs have been eliminated or retained.

After the first round the judge may work the dogs in any order, and shall ensure that a dominant game finder is given an adequate opportunity to back. Any dog may be called back for this purpose.

A dog shall receive credit for correct ranging and quartering and use of the wind, working with head high, with good action, pointing or setting game in a stylish manner, marking the fall of game and quickly acknowledging a brace mate's point if given a clear opportunity to do so. No dog can receive an award unless it has filled its card to the judge's satisfaction.

Factors which detract from a dog's performance are lack of working ability, unsteadiness, stickiness on point, pottering, foot scenting, working in creeping or crawling manner, repeatedly lying down on point, missing game, flushing upwind, incorrect ranging and quartering, failure to obey any command or to complete any aspect of its work.

Eliminating faults are blinking, breaking to shot or flush (unless brought under control within two metres), chasing fur or feather, deliberate stealing, lack of working ability, mouthing game (seeking dead)/severe hard mouth (retrieving), out of control, refusal to back if given a clear opportunity to do so and repeated false pointing.

## Section 2 - SCORE SHEET

The judge shall maintain a score sheet of each dog's performance in each round. Trials shall not be knock-out competitions, and a dog must be judged on its overall work, not merely on finds. At the end of the trial the judge shall place the top three dogs in order of merit. In the event of a tie, both dogs shall be given another run. The judge shall have discretion to withhold awards, and if a first is not awarded, there can be no second or third.

**No dog shall be entitled to a placing unless it hunts, points, retrieves or seeks dead, and has backed of its own accord if given a clear opportunity to do so. The winning dog must have had at least two finds and two retrieves or seek deads.**

<b>Dog No:</b> _____	<u>Round 1</u>	<u>Round 2</u>	<u>Round 3</u>
Action and Style			
Ranging & Quartering			
Finds			
Retrieves/Seek Deads			
Backs			
Obedience, Control			
Overall Performance			

### **Credits:**

Acknowledging flush  
Action and style  
Backing  
Drawing and roading  
Finds  
Marking  
Obedience and control  
Ranging and quartering  
Retrieves/Seek deads  
Staunchness  
Use of wind

### **Penalties:**

Boring  
Breaking  
Disobedience  
Failure to back  
False Pointing  
Flushing  
Following a  
bracemate  
Foot scenting  
Lying down on  
point  
Missing game  
Poor ranging &  
quartering  
Pottering  
Refusal to back  
Stickiness  
Unsteadiness

### **Eliminations:**

Blinking  
Chasing  
Deliberate  
flushing  
Deliberate  
stealing  
Gun shyness  
Lack of working  
ability  
Mouthing  
Out of control  
Repeated refusal  
to back  
Severe hard  
mouth

## Section 3 - DEFINITIONS

- 3.1 Action and Style:** These are both seen in a fearless, well trained dog that covers its ground with good, free movement, head well held, tail swinging nicely from side to side. A dog that stands up well and very staunchly on point, with keen expression, and moves in decidedly on running birds, yet with great steal and caution, head and tail outstretched. Any lethargic movement is contrary to good action and style.
- 3.2 Backcasting:** This occurs when the dog turns downwind at the end of its cast.
- 3.3 Backing:** When a dog comes on point its brace mate must honour the point if it has a clear opportunity to do so and remain in that position until the pointing dog moves on. The backing dog must neither dash nor creep up behind the pointing dog, nor in any way interfere with the work of the dog on game. Handlers should, depending on circumstances, endeavour to bring their dog into a position where it is able to back. If, in the judge's opinion, handlers fail to do this their dog may be penalised with a refusal to back. Repeated refusal to back will result in elimination. Dogs which disobey handler's instructions to be brought around to back may be eliminated for out of control.
- 3.4 Beat:** The direction selected by the judge in which the handlers must proceed.
- 3.5 Bird Sense:** Some dogs very apparently use a lot of sense in locating game, in working running game in standing on point and in finding dead birds. These dogs have "bird sense".
- 3.6 Blinking:** A dog that finds and deliberately passes by the point, either through nervousness or bad training, is a "blinker". A dog that finds, stands for a few moments and then leaves the point is also a "blinker". But the dog that finds and then moves on or backwards and forwards looking for the bird that has moved on must not be confused with the abovementioned types. Dogs can also be blinkers on the Seek Dead or Retrieve
- 3.7 Boring:** Dogs should be cast off to the left (red dog) and right (blue dog) respectively, unless circumstances dictate otherwise, and run flat across the wind until they reach the end of their range before turning into the wind and quartering back towards their handler. A dog that runs straight out from its handler into the wind and misses ground is deemed to be boring.
- 3.8 Breaking Fence:** Is the act on the part of a dog of going through, over or under a fence, without order. All dogs should remain steady at both sides of the fence through or over which their handlers are crossing.
- 3.9 Breaking to Shot or Flush:** If a dog breaks but is brought under control within two metres, it shall be penalised for unsteadiness. If it continues beyond two metres, it shall be deemed to be out of control and thus eliminated.
- 3.10 Catching Game:** A dog catching game may be eliminated depending on circumstances. This does not apply to dead or wounded game - see Retrieving and Seek Dead definitions.

- 3.11 Chasing:** This is the deliberate attempt to catch game that is on the move, whether or not it has been shot at. A dog that runs in at any speed may be deemed to be chasing. A dog may seek dead or retrieve only on order from the handler.
- 3.12 Drawing On:** When a dog points and the game moves on, the dog, to retain contact, may at times also move on. This may be at the order or sign of the handler, and is generally a series of quick, careful, stealthy steps. A dog shall not be penalised for drawing on of its own accord, providing that it continues to point and that it does not flush the game.
- 3.13 Drop or Down:** A dog should drop at command, drop to shot, wing or running fur. To drop means to lie down instantly and to remain in position without creeping or crawling in. A dog may sit or stand in position, but not move from that position until ordered.
- 3.14 False Point:** When a dog points and there is no game at the place where it points, this is regarded as a false point. However, care must be taken to make sure that there is no game or that the game has not just moved on before deciding that the point is false. A dog that points and then moves on of its own accord shall not be penalised.
- 3.15 Finding:** A dog is credited with a find when it points and game is located from the point.
- 3.16 Flushing on Command:** A dog on point should flush on command to enable the handler to shoot. A handler must not move in front of a pointing dog in an attempt to flush game unless instructed to do so by the judge.
- 3.17 Flushing - Other:** A dog that finds and gets too close to game, forcing it to fly, may be accused of flushing. A dog working upwind has little excuse for flushing. If a circumstance arises where a dog does not have the advantage of an upwind situation, for example when being recalled, it should not be penalised for flushing. A dog should remain steady to flushed game. Dogs that deliberately flush game shall be eliminated.
- 3.18 Foot scenting:** See under Roading
- 3.19 Game - definition for Pointers and Setters:** Any game-bird, rabbit or hare. A dog should be credited with a find on any game, even though the handler must not shoot game for which no open season exists at the time. It is recommended that wherever possible trials be conducted on quail.
- 3.20 Hard Mouth:** Where there is unmistakable evidence of any markings on game retrieved due to biting or crunching by the dog. (This is an elimination fault).
- 3.21 Marking:** Dogs are expected to mark the fall of game.
- 3.22 Mouthing:** A dog performing a seek dead that takes game in its mouth shall be deemed to be mouthing. (This is an elimination fault).
- 3.23 Obedience:** The spontaneous action of obeying all commands. Dogs should act readily and not cower or cringe at their handler's signs, sounds or commands.
- 3.24 Pointer & Setter Field Trial:** A pointer and setter field trial in which game is shot.

- 3.25 Pointer & Setter Closed Season Field Trial:** A pointer and setter field trial in which no game is shot.
- 3.26 Pointing/Setting:** A dog seeking game should, upon finding, immediately become rigid and retain this rigid pose until either the game has moved on or until ordered by the handler to move forward. A dog may come to a point/set in practically any natural attitude or position, but an upright stance is preferable.
- 3.27 Pottering:** A dog that hunts around in a confined space covering ground that it has already worked or one that lingers on an old scent, leaves it, and then comes back to it is “pottering”.
- 3.28 Quartering:** A well trained pointer or setter should cover the ground in front of the handler in a traditional pointer and setter quartering pattern. Fast, correct quartering, has always been one of the distinguishing features of pointer and setter work, and when judging it should be rewarded. It should also be noted that under actual field conditions dogs are sometimes not able to quarter in copybook fashion, and occasional backcasting, re-checking etc can be expected, depending on natural conditions. In light, flukey breezes, judges should be particularly scrupulous in selecting beats that enable dogs to make best use of what wind there is. Whilst quartering dogs should always be under control and must not chase or follow a brace mate, but work their own beat.

**3.28.1 Quartering upwind:** The dog should cross in front of the handler, running at right angles to the wind. The range (distance) of its right and left casts will be determined by natural factors such as cover and the abundance or scarcity of game. The distance between each cast should not be so great that game is missed. At the end of each cast the well-trained dog should turn into the wind. (See diagram 1)

**3.28.2 Quartering into cheek winds:** The traditional pattern for pointers and setters when quartering into both right and left cheekwinds is for the dog to run at right angles to the wind, quartering the ground diagonally in front of the handler. The dog's range will vary as when quartering upwind. A left side cheekwind will generally see a longer cast to the right and vice versa. A left side cheekwind will see the dog's left cast return to a point level with and even slightly behind the handler's position, and vice versa (see diagram 2)

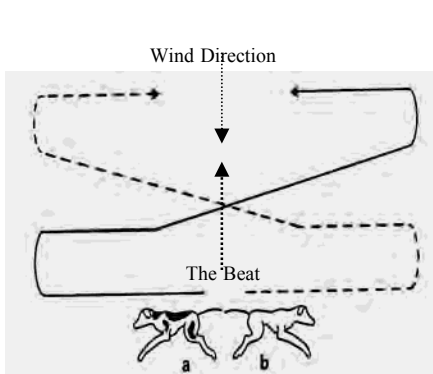


Diagram 1: Working upwind

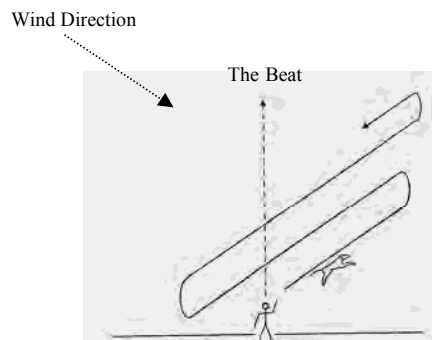


Diagram 2: Working left side cheek wind

- 3.29 Ranging:** A dog may seek game close to or wide from the handler, either fast or slow, and will work differently under the varying conditions of wind, cover and abundance or scarcity of game.
- 3.30 Retrieving:** Retrieving covers the performance of the dog from when it is ordered to retrieve until it delivers the game to the handler. Game should be retrieved cleanly to hand. If game is dropped by the dog, the dog must pick up on command. Dogs that come across dead or wounded game while working shall not be penalised for either seeking dead or retrieving. (See also Seeking Dead)
- 3.31 Roading:** Roading is effected in much the same manner as “drawing-on”, except that it is usually done at a much faster pace, i.e. a dog points, the handler some distance away, takes time to reach the dog; in the meantime the bird may have run rapidly perhaps to the right or left across wind. A well-trained dog will then, keeping to windward of the scent, dash at high speed across wind and pick up the point again many metres to right or left. Clever roading, with head high, is one of the most spectacular phases of pointer or setter work. One of the worst faults in either pointer or setter is to road game, foot scenting, with nose to ground.
- 3.32 Seeking Dead:** A dog should remain steady to shot. When game is shot, the handler sends the dog from the steady position to find it. The dog should move steadily in a direct line close to where the game dropped and indicate that the game has been found by standing on point; meanwhile the handler should remain standing in the position from where he fired the shot. A dog should not touch game. Dogs are normally expected to stand well off the dead game and point stylishly. When a dog cannot locate the shot game, at the judge’s discretion the handler may be allowed to slowly approach the spot where it is thought the game has dropped, but never closer than approximately 10 metres. This procedure applies to a retrieving dog as well.
- 3.33 Staunchness:** Any dog that, without moving, holds a point well is regarded as staunch on point. A dog following running birds steadily and firmly over any considerable distance so that the handler will get the shot is a staunch worker.
- 3.34 Stealing:** When the finding dog is drawing on, drawing up after winding game, roading, working game after indicating a find by pointing or standing on point, any dog that moves in on the pointing dog shall be regarded as stealing. Dogs are expected to back immediately after they sight the pointing dog.

## **Section 4 - CONDUCT OF TRIALS**

### **4.1 General**

Trials shall comply with the shooting and game laws of the relevant State or Territory of Australia.

### **4.2 Eligibility**

Trials shall be open to all Pointers & Setters registered with the Working Gundog Association of Australia (SSAA) (WGAA). A trial must have five or more dogs competing before official WGAA placings can be awarded.

### **4.3 Types of trials**

The WGAA shall conduct the following events for Pointers & Setters;

**4.3.1** Pointer & Setter Field Trials

**4.3.2** National Field Trials (to be held not more than once per year)

**4.3.3** All Pointing Breeds Field Trials (to be held where specifically scheduled, under rules for Pointers & Setters)

**4.3.4** Pointer & Setter Closed Season Field Trials

**4.3.5** Other types of trials may be added to these rules as needed.

### **4.4 Schedules**

Details of each event conducted under these rules shall be published in a schedule that shall include information relating to date and time, judge, entry fees and closing date, and other relevant details. The trial committee shall endeavour to ensure that all interested members are given the opportunity to enter.

### **4.5 Awards and Titles**

**4.5.1** Points awarded for placings at WGAA field trials shall be 5 points for first place, 3 points for second place, and 1 point for third place.

**4.5.2** A dog that obtains 15 points in WGAA field trials including a minimum of two first place awards shall, after payment of the prescribed fee, be awarded the title "WGAA Field Champion (National)". Such title shall be added as a prefix to the dog's registered name.

**4.5.3** A dog that wins ten WGAA field trials shall, after payment of the prescribed fee, be awarded the title "WGAA Grand Field Champion (National)". Such title shall be added as a prefix to the dog's registered name.

**4.5.4** A dog that wins a National trial shall be entitled to have the initials NFTW (National Field Trial Winner) added as a suffix to its registered name.

**4.5.5** A dog competing in its first two seasons shall be known as a Novice dog. An award for Best Novice Dog shall be made at each trial to a Novice dog that fills its card to the judge's satisfaction. If a Novice dog wins a trial, it shall cease to be a Novice dog for future trials.

### **4.6 Judge**

**4.6.1** The trial committee will appoint a person to judge a trial who has trained a dog to a winning standard, has acted as an assistant judge (or an equivalent), and is fully conversant with all aspects of pointer and setter work.

#### **4.6.2**

The judge will have primary responsibility for the running of the trial, but should discuss decisions with the assistant judge.

#### **4.7 Assistant Judge**

**4.7.1** The trial committee will appoint as assistant judge a person who is conversant in matters relating to pointer and setter field trials.

**4.7.2** The assistant judge will assist the judge in the running of the trial, and may be instructed to take the place of the judge and report to him results when, for example, two dogs come on point at the same time.

#### **4.8 Gun Steward**

A gun steward who is mutually acceptable to the judge and the assistant judge may be appointed to shoot for a handler. A gun steward shall be a person who is a licensed shooter and experienced in pointer and setter work. The gun steward shall be called upon with the judge's and assistant judge's permission, and shall walk between the handlers and act under instructions from the handler. A person appointed as gun steward must not act in any manner that would deliberately disadvantage a competitor's dog.

#### **4.9 Vetting**

The assistant judge shall inspect any dog for sexual or other causes that may interfere with the safety or performance of its opponents.

#### **4.10 The Draw**

The order in which dogs are required to compete, and the braces, shall be determined by ballot. Dogs, which are the bona fide property of the same owner, must be separated where possible. The draw for the first round must be made in public on the day of the trial. The judge shall have discretion to decide upon the method of subsequent draws.

#### **4.11 Rounds/Availability of Game**

The trial shall consist of at least two rounds, with the judge having discretion to run a third round. If there is insufficient game to complete any round, the trial must be abandoned.

#### **4.12 Bye Dog**

If there are an uneven number of dogs in any round, the judge shall nominate a dog to run against the "bye" dog at the end of that round. However, the judge may bring in the "bye" dog in place of a dog which has eliminated itself in the early part of the round.

#### **4.13 Collars**

Dogs shall be required to wear distinguishing collars - red for the first drawn, blue for the second. The red dog must be cast to the left and the blue dog must be cast to the right, unless circumstances dictate otherwise. No other collar may be worn. The handler of the red dog shall walk on the left and the handler of the white dog shall walk on the right.

#### **4.14 Handlers**

- 4.14.1** A dog may be handled by any person approved by the judge, but no other person may be permitted to interfere in the handling of that dog. No other person shall be permitted to accompany the handlers without the approval of the judge. Handlers shall walk together. A handler may withdraw a dog only with the consent of the judge.
- 4.14.2** A handler shall follow the judges' instructions in going to a dog on point and shoot or fire a blank according to directions. Gun safety must be of paramount importance at all times, and handlers should proceed at normal walking pace with no suggestion of running.
- 4.14.3** Handlers shall not touch their dogs unless instructed to do so by the judge. Where a handler is working two dogs, when one dog finds he may ask a steward to hold the other after it has shown its ability to back.
- 4.14.4** The handler shall nominate to the judge and assistant judge at the start of the first heat whether the dog will seek dead or retrieve shot game. A dog shall seek dead or retrieve only when sent by its handler.
- 4.14.5** A handler may speak, whistle and work a dog by hand within these rules, but the judge may call the handler to order for making any unnecessary noise or for any disorderly conduct. An opponent's dog must not be interfered with or excited. If after being cautioned a handler persists in any such behaviour, the judge may debar both dog and handler from further participation in the trial.
- 4.14.6** Handlers must not punish a dog while in a trial or in the trial environs. Penalties may apply for breaches of this rule.
- 4.14.7** If any person impugns the actions or decisions of the judge or officials, the trial manager, upon being made aware of the incident, shall immediately lodge a protest against that person under the SSAA's protest and appeals provisions. The fee charged in such cases shall be a nominal one only and shall be paid for by trial management.

### **Section 5 - POINTER & SETTER CLOSED SEASON FIELD TRIALS**

- 5.1** Pointer & Setter Closed Season Field Trials may be conducted under these rules. All points and awards awarded in both Pointer & Setter Field Trials and Pointer & Setter Closed Season Field Trials are specific to each type of trial.
- 5.2** The words "Closed Season" be added as a suffix to each of the titles and awards mentioned in 4.5.2, 4.5.3, 4.5.4 & 4.5.5 under the Awards and Titles section of these rules when a dog has received the required number of points after competing in closed season trials.
- 5.3** Retrieving: In a closed season trial a suitable dead bird will be cast at normal game shooting range. The handler will fire a blank from a shotgun when the bird is at its maximum height with the dog off lead at the handler's side. After the bird has hit the ground the dog will be sent to retrieve the bird.

- 5.4** Seeking Dead: In a closed season trial a suitable dead bird will be cast at normal game shooting range. The handler will fire a blank from a shotgun when the bird is at its maximum height with dog off lead at the handler's side. After the bird has hit the ground the dog will be sent for the seek dead.

## **Section 6 - PROTEST AND APPEALS COMMITTEE**

- 6.1** At all registered competitions there shall be a Protest and Appeals Committee (hereinafter called the 'Appeals Committee'), that shall be formed by the host association or club organisers, to hear and decide, protests and appeals.
- 6.2** The Appeals Committee shall consist of a minimum of three people, one of whom shall be Chairperson. Any of whom may be competitors in the competition, but in no case shall an appellant or protester, be included as a member of the Appeals Committee. In competitions where more than one State is represented, a delegate from any of the States represented may be appointed to membership of the said Committee. Such appointments shall be at the discretion of the host association or club.
- 6.3** A protest may be lodged by any competitor who feels aggrieved by a decision of the trial management or any other organizational matters or methods of conducting the competition. A competitor may protest the conduct of another competitor(s) or that another competitor(s) has not fulfilled their obligations according to these rules, or have not properly obeyed the rules.
- 6.4** The protest must be lodged in writing and accompanied by a fee, the amount of which shall be nominated by the organisers of the competition. If the protest or appeal is upheld, the applicant is to be refunded the amount of the fee. If the protest is disallowed, then the fee shall be forfeited to the organisers conducting the competition.
- 6.5** The protest is to be lodged with the trial manager or other persons nominated by the trial manager to receive appeals. Protests may be lodged during the conduct of a competition or after the competition has been completed but not later than thirty minutes after the scores for that competition have been announced or posted. When received, the protest or appeal must be lodged with the Chairperson of the Protest and Appeals Committee as soon as possible.
- 6.6** The Chairperson shall convene the Appeals Committee without undue delay. The Appeals Committee shall be empowered to hear evidence from the protester, the appellant, and person(s) involved in the protest. Moreover, to require the Range Officer, Scorers or organisers to produce targets, scoresheets, or other material relevant to the protest, to call evidence from any other person(s) who may be able to help the Appeals Committee and to do all such other things that the Appeals Committee believes will enable it to reach an unbiased and just decision.
- 6.7** Any accused person shall:
- 6.7.1** have the right to be heard before the Appeals Committee and to remain in attendance during each session of the Appeals Committee;
  - 6.7.2** be advised of the time and place the Appeals Committee shall hear the evidence of the protest or appeal;

- 6.7.3 be entitled to remain in attendance before the Appeals Committee until the Appeals Committee adjourns the proceedings to make its decision;
  - 6.7.4 be informed of the evidence or allegations made;
  - 6.7.5 be supplied the details of verbal or written statement(s) made against that person or persons; and
  - 6.7.6 be given an opportunity before the Appeals Committee to correct or contradict any accusations or allegation(s) made.
- 6.8 Immediately the Appeals Committee has made a decision, the Chairperson shall verbally announce that decision to a gathering of competitors summoned to hear the decision; or post the decision on a notice board. The decision of the Appeals Committee shall be final and binding on the matter of the protest and on all persons concerned therein.

**Note:** Desirably, the Appeals Committee proceedings and deliberations should be conducted out of the public gaze and free from distractions of the ongoing competition.

## **Section 7 - RULEBOOK REVIEW**

- 7.1 Rulebook reviews shall be conducted in accordance with the requirements set out in the NDC Handbook. Participation in the rulebook review shall be open to pointer and setter owners who have been actively involved in WGAA pointer and setter trials.
- 7.2 "Actively involved " means the owner of a pointer or setter who has competed in or officiated at a WGAA National Discipline pointer and setter field trial in their home State in the year prior to the review taking place.
- 7.3 Owners of other pointing breed dogs who may have competed in All Pointing Breeds events or who have officiated shall not qualify unless they meet the above criteria.
- 7.4 An attendance register shall be kept at all WGAA National Discipline pointer and setter events. This register shall be the responsibility of the host State and shall record all details, including a copy of the catalogue.

## **Section 8 - SSAA MANDATORY RULE**

**Stuck Live Round:** If a firearm malfunction results in a stuck live round which cannot be simply removed from the breech end of the barrel, the firearm is to be made safe and removed from the range to a competent person. Under no circumstances is an attempt to be made to remove the round by insertion of a cleaning rod or similar, from the muzzle or front of the cylinder.