

WORKING TESTS AND FIELD TRIALS **for the Versatile/HPR breeds**

No single test in isolation can provide an absolute measure of a versatile/HPR gundog. A basic natural ability test, whilst helpful, is not usually enough to evaluate a dog for breeding purposes. We suggest as a minimum, first doing a Natural Ability Test and then going on to do the Novice Hunting Test. You may decide thereafter to even do the more advanced working Tests or Field Trials! Refer to the list, below.

The KUSA/NFTA Natural Ability Test is a natural ability Test for the HPR breeds that is offered on Club level, but is recognized by the KUSA and the NFTA. This test is conducted at a very basic level and tests for most of the inherent abilities that a GSP should have. Dogs should display hunting desire, the instinct to point planted birds, have a good scenting ability (nose), do a basic retrieve from land and water, show some tractability and no major temperamental faults, and not be sensitive or shy to gunshot. There is no age limit, and this test does not test the finding and holding of natural game, retrieving of game, or for any advanced retrieving, training or water work. A basic conformation exam is also done at the conclusion of the test. This test is offered by **the Cape Field Trial Club, the Transvaal Hunt Point and Retrieve Field Trial Club, and the KZN Hunt, Point and Retrieve Field Trial Club.**

SAVHDA Tests (the South African Versatile Hunting Dog Association) SAVHDA utilizes performance based systems to test and grade the Versatile/HPR breeds. These hunting tests are based on German testing systems in use in Europe and the USA. These testing systems allow a detailed assessment of the Versatile dog's abilities in the field on natural game, and test the retrieving and mental capabilities fully.

SAVHDA Tests examine the versatile dog completely from field work, to retrieving, tracking and water work. They are not a competition of one dog against another, but a test of the individual dog's abilities and training from a practical and ethical hunting perspective.

- The **Junior Versatile Hunting Test (JVHT)** is a Natural Ability Test. This test is exactly the same as the NAVHDA test and very similar to the German natural ability test (the VJP). Dogs must be 16 months of age or younger to enter the JVHT, thus we consider the test to be a fairly accurate measure of inherent abilities.
- The **Novice Hunting Test (NHT)** is a more advanced test than the Junior, and tests more fully the working capabilities of the Versatile dog. A functional level of field performance and retrieving of game from land and water is required. It is also a good test for natural abilities, and gives a very good indication of the dog's innate qualities and ability to take training.
- **The Advanced Versatile Hunting Test (AdvHT) or Older Dog Versatile Hunting Test (OVHT)** is exactly the same test as the German Solms or the HZP, which are the breed tests for versatile dogs in Germany. OVHT is the designation for dogs that are tested when older than 2 years of age. It is a demanding test of the Versatile dog!
- **The Utility Test** is designed to test a hunting dog's usefulness to the on-foot hunter in all phases of hunt, both before and after the shot, in field and marsh or water, and on different species of game. Field and water training should be virtually finished at this point in the dog's life. Steadiness to shot and retrieve is required. This test is the same as the NAVHDA Utility Test.
The Utility test is a challenging and demanding one. Dogs entered in this test should have reached maturity and have at least a hunting season or two behind them.

HPR Field Trials represent a high level of competition for HPR dogs in South Africa and provide for a high standard of performance and polish in what is effectively upland

wingshooting, that is, the questing and finding of francolin, partridges and occasionally guinea fowl. Field trials are competitions, not tests, thus they differ in nature from the other working tests.

Practically, only fairly simple retrieves are presented to the dogs under these circumstances and consequently the emphasis of Field Trials focuses primarily on the questing and finding aspects of the dog's work. A very basic water retrieve is required for prizes at the highest level. Although Field Trials are a fundamentally important testing ground, they do not pretend to fully test the many other versatile capabilities that are essential to a Versatile/HPR gundog, such as the ability to persevere on a difficult retrieve or in the water, to track and recover a wounded bird over long distances, or to retrieve the largest of our geese with ease from land or water.

Field Trials are a highly competitive sport and the system can only prove the limited number of dogs that belong to individuals who have a specific interest in, and commitment to the sport of Field Trialing. Unfortunately, many hunters have neither the interest in nor the time for Field Trials, which is a pity because many dogs are never seen in competition.

Field Trials are recognized by the Kennel Union of Southern Africa and the National Field Trial Association and are offered by **the Western Cape Field Trial Club, the Cape Field Trial Club, the Transvaal Hunt Point and Retrieve Field Trial Club and the KZN HPR Field Trial Club.**