

The latest from the JGHV Director of Testing

(Taken from *Der Jagdgebrauchshund*, 4/2019, translation by Ken Bremer)

The natural ability tests are currently underway in all clubs. Next to the actual testing candidates - the dogs – others (Test Directors, judges/Verbandsrichter, apprentices and handlers) are also called upon to show or assume the appropriate responsibility / performance.

If I look then at the source of errors in the test documents from the Fall 2018, then I don't envy the jobs of our breed book registrar (Stammbuchführerin) Ms. Dornig and her colleague. Repeatedly, test documents with errors. Name of the dog incorrect, parent dogs incorrect. Breed book number incorrect, no reason given for withdrawal from the test, all subjects given "0s", if the dog failed on the first test subject, no VR number and no signature on the forms, and so on. Most clubs respond quickly, but occasionally it leads to delays in the work, because some look for excuses, or the corrections come in late and sometimes only after several reminders.

My dear judges, regardless of what task you have taken on in hunting dog affairs, you/we all work as volunteers and thus mistakes are sometimes made, which we have to reduce to a minimum. A judge got to the heart of it and shared this with Ms. Dornig and me. I have included these lines here, because he's right.

It is of course correct, that the Test Director bears responsibility for the correct organization of a test with all its facets and must make an effort to follow all of the rules of the test regulations (PO).

This also applies to the responsibilities of the Head Judge (Richterobmann/obfrau) of the group, who depends on proper cooperation with his/her fellow judges. In my opinion, this is often the source of the errors which have crept in more and more in the past few years.

In today's "fast pace" of life, the running of the test is subordinated more and more to ensuring early departure from the test headquarters/meeting point (Suchenlokal—in Germany, usually a restaurant). In today's VJP/Derby, most want to be finished with all work in the fields by lunch, the inspection of physical defects is somehow squeezed in between, a judge has a personal obligation and has already signed the scoresheet, one or two handlers somehow have "urgent" appointments and ask that the scoresheet be sent to them, the judges often sit in unsuitable locations in the test headquarters and are unable to prepare the scoresheets with any concentration, the waiter constantly inquires when the last group will finally roll in, whether the awards ceremony will take place before lunch or only after lunch and so on and so on...

The problems connected with running the test naturally become greater, when the test becomes more extensive; i.e. with the Fall tests the time needed by the judges' groups becomes so tight – due to the pressure to finish from those waiting in the restaurant—that one can hardly work "error free". This trend to "self-induced, needless hurry" can hardly be reversed. The routines from past times, when one first took a break after the field work or went home and then met again in the early evening to eat together and conduct the awarding of scores ceremony; these times are long gone.

As these changes in the running of the test occur, Test Directors, Head Judges and VR

are called upon to create the necessary breathing space. More and more I make sure that the test meeting place guarantees this breathing space for the practical written workup of the test by the judges. This is not always possible when testing locations change. We, at least in our club, want to take pains to insure in the future that we will not give in to the pressure exerted on us from the "handler circles". A test day is a test day; on this day other things do not have priority. All handlers with their families should take this to heart.

I write this to you in such detail today, because I suspect that we are not the only ones who have experiences like these. Perhaps Mr. Westermann can remind the clubs sometime that their handlers should not plan on doing other things on these days, if they –needless to say—demand top scores for their dogs.

Oh, how right he is. The question is only: Can we really no longer make changes? Yes, we can, we Verbandsrichter have to move forward setting a good example and show that we take time for the dog, and also demand this time/respect/decency from the handlers.

Setting a good example also includes that we Verbandsrichter also have time to stay until the awarding of scores or a half an hour after the reading of scores, as the protest period ends only then. All judges are to be available until then! This applies naturally to apprentices as well. So on this day, let's think about the testing of the dogs, because hunting requires good dogs, and we have an obligation to provide these.

And now a further story/question, which was emailed to me, and which I would like to publish without mentioning any names, for I was really surprised and it made me seriously think about the fact that there is such uncertainty among some Verbandsrichter.

Dear Mr. Westermann,

Yesterday we had an intensive discussion about the VGPO on the topic of Fox Retrieve on Drag and the consequences for passing the test.

Presumed facts:

- *Fox Retrieve over Obstacle. The fox is retrieved in accordance with the regulations. Predicate 4.*
- *Fox Retrieve on Drag:
The dog comes to the fox, picks it up but leaves it somewhere on its way back to the handler, i.e. it doesn't retrieve the fox.*

So, Fox Drag, Predicate 0, Fox Retrieve on Drag also Predicate 0.

Until now, everyone is in agreement.

My conclusion:

According to §11, i VGPO the dog must be tested further, because he achieved at least the predicate "sufficient" in the subject Fox Retrieve over Obstacle.

The opposing opinion says that this viewpoint is incorrect, because a dog which has

*picked up a piece of game, **must** retrieve this game. As soon as a dog receives the predicate 0 in a VGP retrieving subject--also in Fox Retrieve on the Drag--it can no longer pass the test. In that case, §11 i would no longer apply. There cannot be a VGP score sheet with "VGP passed" and Fox Retrieve on Drag = 0 and this would be rejected by the Stambuchamt (Office of Breed Registry, i.e. Peggy Dornig).*

If the dog comes to the fox, gets scent of it, but doesn't pick it up at all, returns to its handler without the fox and is re-sent twice to retrieve, the subject Fox Retrieve on Drag could not be evaluated, and is thus to be evaluated as "not tested". In this case, according to §11 i, the dog must be tested further. My objection that perceiving, but not picking up, would already lead to the predicate "insufficient" in the subject Fox Retrieve on Drag, similar to the small game (Nutzwild) retrieves, was dismissed as incorrect. This was justified with §13,1b and especially §13,3, as the evaluation of retrieving only begins with picking up the game. Which opinion is correct?

Answer: To this, I will only repeat the contents of the PO (test regulations) with a short explanation.

§11 (1) of the VGPO: "A dog must receive at least the predicate "sufficient" in **either the fox drag or the fox retrieve over obstacle**. Otherwise it cannot pass the test." Therefore, the dog passed the subject "Fox Retrieve over Obstacle" with the predicate "very good" 4 points and therewith does not have to successfully complete the subject Fox Retrieve on Drag, in order to pass the test. In general, we have to keep in mind with the fox subject that—in contrast to the drags with furred small game and feathered game—the dog, even if he was at the fox, may be sent again and must retrieve on the third send at the latest. If it doesn't do that, then §12 (8) b) applies:

If the dog fails on the drag, regardless of whether it arrived at the game (fox) or not, it shall receive the predicate "insufficient" 0 points on the score sheet under Fox Drag. Reason: It is all the same, if he only scents the fox after being sent three times and doesn't pick it up, or whether he picks up the game, sets it down and doesn't retrieve. Both cases are "insufficient" 0 points.

A further reason that the dog with one success in the subject (Fox over Obstacle or Fox Drag) can pass the test, as long as the rest of the subjects were successful, can be found on page 56 of the PO (test regulations) "Overview of the Classification into Prize Categories VGP" subject group Forest, III Prize: at least "sufficient" in all subjects with the exception of the Fox Drag and Fox Retrieve on Drag or Fox Retrieve over Obstacle.

And two more questions:

Hallo Mr. Westermann, two questions on the Btr.

At a Btr, I asked that a photographer attending the test keep a distance of at least 40m to the judge / handler team, a request which was met with incomprehension.

("We have always done it like this, that the photographer was allowed to stand there and take photos.")

What distance would you consider appropriate, so that the working dog would not be disturbed?

Is it acceptable to let the handler decide, contrary to the PO (test regulations), that the photographer may be present?

Answer: §8 (6) c of the VZPO/VGPO/VPSO During the work of a dog under judgment, the spectators must remain far enough behind the handler and judges, that the working dog is not disturbed.

Personal statement: In the PO, there is no distance in meters as to how far those participating (judges, handler and spectators) must remain behind that dog that is working, but only the note that the dog's work is not to be disturbed by these people. Testing is hunting! During the hunt there is no corridor free of other hunters, drivers, dogs, etc.

A well-trained dog (reliable retrieve with fox) and dog with a strong temperament (wesensstark) does not allow itself to be disturbed by a photographer who is 40m away. Only the ones who train and test in a way similar to actual hunting (jagdnah) will successfully handle hunting dogs at tests and while hunting. I wish you all a successful and harmonious testing season!

Josef Westermann

Head of Testing

Jagdgebrauchshundverband e.V. (JGHV)