

Field Spaniel Society of America, Inc. Working Dog Instinct Test

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Definitions: The word “dog” is being used regardless of sex.

Working Dog Instinct refers to a dog who demonstrates instinct for hunting and is a parent club (FSSA, Inc.) issued certificate of achievement and achievement of this award counts toward no American Kennel Club title.

Chapter 1: Introduction

This guideline was prepared to provide a clear understanding of the regulations, performance standards, responsibilities, and procedures necessary for conducting a successful Working Dog Instinct evaluation event. There will always be questions that will arise; however, these guidelines attempt to provide a high degree of uniformity between tests and will be reviewed and revised as required.

Purpose:

The purpose of the Working Dog Instinct Test is to evaluate the abilities of Field Spaniels to determine their suitability, with continued training, as hunting companions. The hunting Field Spaniel must find, flush and retrieve birds in a pleasing and efficient manner. The Working Dog Instinct test was conceived out of the desire to encourage activity in training Field Spaniels as hunting dogs.

Chapter 2: General Regulations

Eligibility of clubs: The FSSA, Inc. Hunting/Field Committee shall be the only authority to grant permission to clubs to hold Working Dog Instinct events, which should be ideally held in combination with a Working Dog/Working Dog Excellent test rather than as a separate event.

- 1. Rules applying to registration and discipline:** All rules, standards, administration, sanctioning, etc. shall be administered by the FSSA, Inc.
- 2. Making application:** Any club wishing to hold an approved Working Dog Instinct event must make application to the FSSA, Inc. Hunting Chairperson at least 60 days prior to the event.
- 3. Entry requirements:** The Working Dog Instinct test is open to all Field Spaniels registered with the AKC of at least six months of age; in good standing with AKC, FSSA, Inc. who have not achieved any more advanced level of titling (WD, WDX, or any AKC hunt test title).

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4. **Bitches in season:** Bitches in season shall not be eligible for running in a Working Dog Instinct test and shall not be allowed on the grounds. The club sponsoring the test is free to formulate its own policy with regard to refunds regarding bitches in season, illness or death of dog.

5. **Judges' Eligibility and Approval:** One judge is sufficient for purposes of this test although two judges may be utilized. Anyone in good standing with the AKC and FSSA, Inc. may be approved to judge the Working Dog Instinct test provided they have read these regulations and have been active in the FSSA Working Dog Program or AKC hunt test program within the last five years of a judging assignment. A request for exception may be made to the FSSA, Inc. Hunt Test Chair. The judge need not be a member of the FSSA, Inc. All judges' panels containing the names, addresses, assignments, and affidavits must be submitted to the FSSA, Inc. Hunting Chairperson with the test records before any dog is recognized as qualifying for a WDI (Working Dog Instinct) certificate. A judge cannot judge a dog they co-own, own, or trained. Further, they can not judge an immediate family member, as defined by AKC, handling an entry.

6. **Rosettes:** Any club holding a WDI event shall offer a WDI rosette to all qualifying entries. The rosette shall be inscribed with the words "Working Dog Instinct" and the logo of the FSSA, Inc. The sponsoring club may, at their discretion, include the sponsoring club logo on the rosette.

7. **Publications:** All clubs holding a Working Dog Instinct test will have available the latest edition of the Working Dog Instinct test Guidelines which is available from the FSSA, Inc. Hunting Committee Chairperson.

8. **Training and Correction:** There will be no training or corrections allowed at a Working Dog Instinct test.

9. **Hunt Test Committee:** Any club sponsoring a Working Dog Instinct test shall appoint an event committee made up at least three (3) people including the event secretary. At least three members of the committee or their appointees shall be at the event and shall set up the field (judges may assist); however, judges control the field. The Event Committee shall be responsible for compliance with all applicable rules and regulations and shall have the authority to decide upon any matter arising during the running of the event except those under the sole jurisdiction of the judges.

10. **Premium List:** The event secretary shall be responsible for issuing a premium list that includes the name of the club, location, date, names and addresses of the committee, start time, judges and their addresses, entry fee, and entry closing date. The premium list should be submitted to the FSSA, Inc. Hunting Chairperson.

11. **Entry Closings and Limits:** The event committee shall be responsible to determine the entry closing date, entry size, and running orders. Entries shall be made on an official FSSA, Inc. Working Dog Instinct form that shall include the following certification: "We certify that the following dogs qualified for a Working Dog Instinct Certificate."

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12. **Catalog:** A formal catalog is not required, but if issued shall be of a format to correspond to the description in the AKC Hunting Test for Flushing Spaniels regulations.

13. **Submission of Records:** At the conclusion of the event, the test secretary shall send all records to the FSSA, Inc. Hunting Chairperson within 30 days.

14. **Unsportsmanlike conduct:** It shall be deemed unsportsmanlike conduct if any person in connection with a Working Dog Instinct event abuses or harasses a judge, event committee member, or other participant. Any judge or Event Committee member may expel any person displaying unsportsmanlike conduct or is seen kicking, striking, or abusing a dog during the event. The Event Committee shall investigate any alleged unsportsmanlike conduct immediately and after investigation make a determination if the person should be expelled and report such instance with their submission of event records.

15. **Safety:** All persons in the field must wear an item of blaze orange; a hat alone is not considered sufficient blaze orange. It is recommended that all bird planters wear protective eyewear.

16. **Guns:** Only official guns appointed by the Event Committee shall be allowed to shoot over the dogs if live ammunition is utilized. The official gun used shall be a break apart 20 or 12 gauge shotgun. It is strongly recommended that all gunners have attended the AKC Gunners seminar.

17. **Birds:** Only game birds shall be used for the Working Dog Instinct (pheasant, chukars, pigeons). The Event Committee shall appoint a bird steward to be responsible for the care of all live and dead birds. Dead birds shall be kept out of the general public's eye. Bird planters should wear gloves.

18. **Courses:** The course shall be of sufficient size and cover to allow dogs to be evaluated. The Event Committee shall set up all courses, but it is recommended that judges' input be solicited.

19. **Marshal:** The Event Committee shall appoint a marshal who will assist the judges, control the gallery, manage the entries' test times, and any other responsibilities necessary to keep the event moving in a timely and enjoyable manner.

20. **Scorecards:** The official entry form includes a scoring record, which is accorded a "pass" or "nonqualifying" rating. Judges must agree on which dogs qualify. The scoring record shall be available at the end of the event only to the individual handler scored.

21. **Handlers:** Handlers warned three times as being unsafe or unsportsmanlike by the judges may have their dog excused.

22. **Certificate:** A certificate of achievement shall be issued at the direction of the Hunt

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Test Chairperson in accordance with the awards policy of the FSSA, Inc. as to the time for distribution of awards. The certificate shall state “FSSA, Inc., Working Dog Instinct Certificate” and shall include the logo of the FSSA, Inc., the full registered name of the dog, the owner of the dog, and the date of issue.

23. **Other:** It is recognized that further definition and refinement will occur as the program progresses.

Chapter 3: Test Standards

FSSA, INC. WORKING DOG INSTINCT CRITERIA

Description: The test will evaluate the following distinct instincts: nose, search, flushing, retrieving, desire, and cooperation. In addition, it will evaluate reaction to gunfire.

1. **Nose:** The dog's nose will be judged primarily during the search for a bird. The young dog who investigates other scents, including old game bird scent, shall not be penalized as this is part of the learning process so long as the handler is able to redirect the dog within a reasonable amount of time not to exceed 5 minutes.
 - a. Nose and flushing are ideally judged as a performance unit.
 - b. A bird shall be planted a distance not to exceed 30 yards nor closer than 10 yards in sufficient cover.
 - c. The handler shall walk the dog toward the area of the plant off-lead and should demonstrate reasonable control off-lead.
 - d. The handler may encourage the dog to find the bird at all times.
 - e. This test may be repeated twice to give the dog sufficient opportunity to demonstrate desire to use the nose and flush.
 - f. **The dog shall be considered successful** when it is obvious to the judges that the dog is searching deliberately and showing a desire to use the nose to investigate the source of the scent.
2. **Flushing:** The range at which the young flushing dog flushes is of no consequence. However, flushing attitude will be evaluated in this test. The dog must flush quickly and cleanly. A slight hesitation, in keeping with the hunting description of the Field Spaniel breed, is allowable.
 - a. A WDI test may opt to use no live ammunition. However, if live ammunition is utilized, a shot will not be fired when the bird is flushed, except on express permission of the owner who certifies that the dog has been exposed to gunfire previously as a test event is not the time to introduce the dog to being shot over. This certification shall be evident on the entry form and the judges will so inform the gunners prior to the test of the dog. If a shot is fired, the intent shall be for the gunner to bring down the bird and this shall be considered a sufficient test of the dog's tolerance to gunfire. A dog at the WDI level shall not be penalized for reasonable time to come back to the handler should the bird fly away.
 - b. Nose and flushing are ideally judged as a performance unit.

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- c. A game bird will be planted for the dog at a distance not to exceed 30 yards nor closer than 10 yards from the start. The field set up shall mimic a hunt test with gunners to either side.
 - d. Gunners shall flag the young dog back and forth in a standard three-man drill training exercise and the dog shall be worked into the general area of the bird.
 - e. **The dog shall be considered successful** if showing a desire to flush by the manner in which the dog goes in to investigate the scent. A dog that momentarily leaves the immediate area of the bird and then returns to flush shall not be downgraded although deliberate blinking of the bird shall not be considered qualifying. Should the dog trap and retrieve the bird, this may be considered sufficient to demonstrate retrieving and mouth (see point 3).
3. **Retrieving & mouth:** The dog must demonstrate a strong retrieving instinct and a soft mouth in handling the retrieve. Line steadiness is not required and the dog may be gently restrained by the collar. A standard canvas bumper with bird wings attached will be utilized to evaluate willingness to retrieve and mouth. A dead bird may be substituted for the winged bumper at the discretion of the handler as some dogs, once introduced to birds, may no longer desire a bumper.
- a. The judge or assistant will show the dog the bumper and will throw the bumper (or dead bird) to a distance not to exceed 10 yards nor closer than 5 yards.
 - b. The handler may encourage the dog to retrieve.
 - c. **The dog shall be considered successful** if the dog picks up the winged bumper and carries it at least a distance of approximately 5 feet or sufficient distance that the judge is clearly able to determine the dog's willingness to retrieve. The dog need not return completely to the handler with the bumper, though this is encouraged. A tendency of the dog to damage the bird/bumper shall be a serious downgrade to the point of non-qualification. The judge shall examine the bird or bumper if there is a question regarding mouth and shall demonstrate to the handler that damage has occurred.
4. **Gunfire Tolerance:** A shotgun (or starter pistol if the test uses no live ammunition for the WDI test) will be fired at a distance not to be closer than 30 yards, nor farther than 60 yards. At the same time, a bird/winged bumper will be thrown. The dog may be shown the bird/winged bumper and enticed with it before the throw.
- a. The handler shall advance toward the thrown bird/winged bumper with the dog off lead.
 - b. **The dog will be considered successful** if staying its' ground for the shot and being willing to go toward the thrown bird/bumper. A slight startle is acceptable provided the dog does not run away from the noise of the shot or show other behaviors indicative of gun-shyness. Handler encouragement is permissible and desirable.
5. **Desire:** The dog must show a willingness to work and interact with the handler and find birds at all times. This is best shown by the dog's attitude, more than by

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- his speed, range or the completion of a given task. Desire will be judged in all phases of the test.
6. **Cooperation:** Cooperation is the innate willingness that a dog has to work with and to please his handler. For example, a chase of a bird during the flushing evaluation provides an excellent opportunity to judge both desire and cooperation in relation to one another. Cooperation will be judged during all phases of the test and reasonable control of the dog off-lead without excessive hacking is expected.
 7. **Water Ability:** The handler and dog will be at the water, a distance of no more than 6 feet from the water's edge. The dog shall be under reasonable control but need not be steady. The handler shall throw a winged bumper and command the dog to retrieve it from the water. The bumper shall travel a distance sufficient that the dog shall demonstrate ability to enter water and swim. The dog may be shown the bird/bumper and enticed with it before the throw. At the handler's option, another individual may throw the bumper on the handler's ready signal. This individual will remain perfectly quiet and shall not provide additional encouragement or commands. **The dog will be considered successful** if entering the water willingly and demonstrating swimming ability. The bumper need not be retrieved as the purpose of this test is to demonstrate water entrance ability and swimming ability. Handler encouragement is permissible and desirable, but repeated commands and avoidance of entering the water may be downgraded to the point of nonqualification. A pick-up dog shall be at the ready to retrieve the thrown bumper.

