

# Working Gundog Association of Australia

## Code of best practice for Spaniel Judges

### CONTENTS

**SECTION 1** WHAT IS REQUIRED OF A SPANIEL FIELD TRIAL JUDGE

**SECTION 2.** INTEGRITY

**SECTION 3** CODE OF BEST PRACTICE FOR JUDGES

**SECTION 4** INVITATION TO JUDGE

**SECTION 5** APPOINTMENT TO THE WGAA SPANIEL FIELD TRIAL JUDGES LIST

**SECTION 6** BEFORE THE TRIAL

**SECTION 7** AT THE TRIAL

Judging the Trial

Judging the Dogs

**SECTION 8** AFTER THE TRIAL

Critiques

Records

**SECTION 9** OVERSEAS JUDGES AND AUSTRALIAN JUDGES OFFICIATING OVERSEAS

**SECTION 10** PITFALLS

**SECTION 11** USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

This guide is intended as a useful reference for those embarking on a judging career in Working Spaniel field Trials and to assist established Judges to understand their obligations to Competitors, WGAA branches/clubs and the Sporting Shooters Association of Australia. It is important that the information enclosed is read in conjunction with SSAA Rules and Regulations.

It should be noted that this is intended as a guide to the relevant WGAA Spaniel Field Trial Rules.

1. Absolute integrity is essential.
2. Do not rush into judging. Ideally you should have experience competing before you judge for the first time.
3. Help as Steward wherever possible in order to gain experience.
4. Ensure that you have a good knowledge of the WGAA Spaniel Field Trial Rules and Guide for Spaniel Field Trial Judges.
5. Study other Judges' procedures.
6. Attend as many Seminars/Judges' Workshops as possible.
7. Ensure that you are polite to Hosts, Guns, Officials and competitors at all times.
8. Be particularly aware of any extra help that is required when dealing with inexperienced competitors.
9. Always be sure that you can justify and explain your decisions.

## **SECTION 1. What is required of a Spaniel Field Trial Judge**

The overall and stated object of the WGAA is to promote in every way the general improvement of dogs and this objective also applies to Judges.

The overall aim and objective of a Spaniel Field Trial Judge at whatever level, is to provide value for the time, training, effort and money, which the competitor puts into competing with their dog. **Moreover, the decisions of Spaniel Field Trial Judges in particular will ultimately affect the future development of a particular breed and/or respective discipline concerned.**

There is, therefore, an expectation that Judges will be competent and may be trusted. Judging is not a right but a privilege. Judges should be respected by the competitor. To that end the following Code sets out the relevant aspects that Judges should be capable of demonstrating.

## **SECTION 2. Integrity**

2.1 Judges should act honestly and impartially when undertaking an appointment.

2.2 A dog should be placed on merit only according to WGAA Spaniel Field Trial Rules. Judges will not be expected to provide a critique of each dog but should be prepared to discuss their decisions relating to individual competitors confidentially with those competitors after the Trial should they seek an explanation.

2.3 Judges should conduct themselves in a manner compatible with the standing of a Judge at all times whilst at a trial and in any other capacity which might have bearing on the interests of the canine world.

2.4 Judges are referred to the factors set out below which may be said to affect their standing and may result in exclusion from Judging lists or future judging contracts or withdrawal of an agreed appointment.

2.4.1 Criminal Convictions.

2.4.2 Threatening Behaviour.

2.4.3 Misrepresenting or abusing authority.

2.4.4 Not Judging in accordance with WGAA Spaniel Field Trial Rules.

2.4.5 Breach of SSAA Rules and Regulations.

2.4.6 Using the name of SSAA or WGAA in an unauthorised manner.

## **SECTION 3. Code of Best Practice for Judges**

3.1 Judges are expected to decline, or to withdraw from, an appointment, which they cannot fulfil. The aim of the competition can only be fulfilled when the judging of dogs is carried out in a fully competent manner. If in doubt Judges should enquire about the nature of the ground on which the Trial is to be held from the Field Trial Secretary before accepting an appointment.

3.2 Ill health of various kinds can temporarily or permanently make it impossible for a person to complete a judging appointment according to the demands which are set forward in this Code of Best Practice. A Branch/Club can, if necessary, either temporarily or permanently withdraw the judging invitation or cancel the Judging contract should it become apparent that the Judge cannot appraise his/her own situation and can no longer

fulfil the judging appointment.

3.3 Judges must be able to undertake the judging of the dogs with an obvious independence and in a confident and convincing manner. Judges must not at any time rely on others to assist with the main work of judging.

3.4 Judges must be capable of meeting the physical requirements of fulfilling the judging appointment.

3.5 From the above it follows that a person with definite lessening of capabilities, and who is dependent on assistance or the presence of various forms of technical help may need to consider if he or she is capable of fulfilling a judging appointment in an adequate and satisfactory manner.

3.6 The Branch/Club should be satisfied that invited Judges are able to fulfil their appointments.

3.7 As far as reasonably possible the Committee of the Branch/Club organising the Spaniel Field Trial are responsible for ensuring that the aims of the Trial are fulfilled and that the competitors receive the quality of judging that they deserve.

3.8 WGAA National has an overriding responsibility and may in individual cases either temporarily defer or permanently withdraw approval when the Judge in question is considered not to have the necessary capabilities. That is not to say that any particular disability will preclude judging. A common-sense approach needs to be adopted by both the Branch/Club and Judge.

## **Judging**

Judges should observe the following formalities when judging:

3.9 Treat all competing dogs in a confident, careful and consistent manner. Judges must not unfairly penalise any dog.

3.10 Conduct themselves in a courteous manner at all times and concentrate fully on the dogs. It is inadvisable for judges to call any competitor by their name, initiate or engage in a conversation initiated by a competitor whilst judging is in progress. Judges should address competitors by number rather than name as this avoids confusion.

3.11 Dress in a conventional and acceptable fashion precluding them from being the centre of attention, or from causing any distress to the dog being trialled or its owner.

3.12 Judges should not smoke, consume alcoholic drinks or use or activate a mobile phone while judging.

3.13 Judges should always consider the safety of competing dogs. Judges should be careful for the safety of dogs and should not require them to negotiate hazards such as dangerous barbed wire fences, ice on ponds, unsupervised roadways or walls with high drops. Whilst judges should take reasonable precautions for the safety of competing dogs, it is also the duty of the handler to satisfy himself or herself that their dog is suitably trained, physically fit and prepared to undertake the work allocated by the judges before directing it to carry out the task specified.

## **General**

The following are general requirements for Judges:

3.14 Absolute integrity in order to judge honestly and impartially, and to place dogs solely on their merit.

3.15 A suitable temperament and sufficient stamina to cope with what can be a physically and mentally demanding task.

3.16 To judge in a customary fashion acceptable to the competitor and the breed of dog.

### **Minimum Requirements for a Spaniel Field Trial Judge**

3.17 A comprehensive knowledge of the activity to be judged and its rules.

3.18 Judges are responsible for the proper conduct of the trial in accordance with WGAA rules and the schedule for the stake. Judges are expected to maintain and abide by the highest standards in accordance with the appropriate Codes of Best Practice as published from time to time.

3.19 Qualifications for persons to be added to the WGAA Judges List can be obtained from your WGAA State Representatives.

### **Summary**

3.20 Judges should have a comprehensive knowledge of the breed(s) to be judged and the different styles of work of the individual breeds. It is the responsibility of the Judges to keep abreast and up to date with developments in such matters.

3.21 Judges should have a comprehensive knowledge of competition procedures and etiquette. It is the responsibility of the Judges to keep abreast and up to date with developments in such matters.

3.22 Judges should be familiar with WGAA Spaniel Field Trial rules, and the Code of Practice for Spaniel Judges as amended from time to time and to keep up to date with all relevant Rules governing field trials and judging.

3.23 Judges should seek to enhance the value of competitive work and of Spaniel Field Trials and must act at all times with honesty, integrity and impartiality.

### **Section 4. Invitation To Judge**

The soliciting of judging appointments is, in the opinion of WGAA, unacceptable.

Formal written judging contracts are not compulsory in Spaniel Field Trials, but with agreement of both the Branch/Club and the Judge may be put in place. Where the Branch/Club organising, the Trial require a Judge to enter into a written contract, Judges, if they are prepared to enter into a contract, should:

4.1 Ensure that they have received a written invitation from the Branch/Club.

4.2 Confirm that they are available and are able to comply with any conditions laid down by the Branch/Club.

4.3 Confirm eligibility and acceptance of the appointment in writing.

4.4 Ensure that the acceptance is followed by written confirmation of the appointment by the Branch/Club.

4.5 The invitation, acceptance and confirmation taken together form a contract between the Judge and the Branch/Club.

4.6 Clarify the position regarding expenses.

## **Section 5. Appointment to The WGAA Spaniel Field Trial Judges List**

Is State specific and follows a course determined by the Senior Judges of that State in accordance with SSAA rules and procedures.

## **Section 6. Before the Trial**

The Branch/Club should send a Trial schedule to the Judge as a reminder of the appointment. This will also indicate the Stake to be judged and should be accompanied by information on accommodation and the location of the 'meet'.

The Judge at this point should obtain from the Branch/Club Secretary enough information to enable him/her to identify the meet and generally prepare him/herself for the Trial.

The Judge should enquire of the Branch/Club Secretary the time at which he/she should arrive and the planned time for the commencement of Judging.

It is important at this time that the Judge plans his/her route to the Trial to avoid arriving late.

All Judges must be aware of the penalties for failing to honour an appointment. These apply whether the appointment is oral or the subject of a contract in writing.

If such an eventuality arises, the Judge should take the following action:

- Notify Branch/Club immediately.
- Confirm the reason in writing in order that a report can be made to State Representatives.

## **Section 7. At the Trial**

### **At the Trial all Judges must:**

7.1 Arrive in ample time for their judging appointment – it is discourteous to keep the host Branch/Club and competitors waiting. Make sure you have a notebook and pencil and a copy of Gundog Rules in case these are not supplied.

7.2 Report to the Field Trial Secretary or Trial Manager to collect the appropriate paper work, if supplied, together with any other instructions and special requirements.

7.3 Arrive at the Venue in good time to meet with your designated assistants. The Judge should take care to speak with said assistants, who may not have worked at a Trial before and explain both general requirements and the specific restrictions, if any, relating to the Trial in question.

7.4 Dress in a manner appropriate to the event and behave at all times in a way which will be sure to command respect.

7.5 At the conclusion of the Trial the Judges should place the dogs in order of merit, decide on any special awards offered in the Schedule, and give this information to the Branch/Club Secretary or Trial Manager.

7.6 The Judges should attend the prize giving and ensure that awards are made in accordance with the instructions they have given to the Branch/Club Secretary or Trial Manager.

7.7 At the conclusion of the Trial the Judge should express his/her thanks to the Host, Stewards, Secretary and other helpers.

## Judging the Trial

When judging do not make “snap” decisions. Study the situation. Take account of all the circumstances and adopt a fair, reasonable and moderate view of what has occurred and how you will deal with it. Always give the dogs the benefit of any doubt.

Judges should be prepared to make a judgement on an incident, which they did not foresee. Remain calm and take sufficient time to reach a decision that you can justify to yourself and to others who may require an explanation.

Have a clear view and understanding of the RULES and how and when to apply them.

Always have a copy of the current WGAA Spaniel Field Trial Rules available for reference when required.

### While officiating:

7.10 Judges should not smoke.

7.11 Judges should not consume alcohol.

7.12 Judges will need to speak to their co-Judges, the Host, the Guns, the Stewards, or other assistants from time to time during the trial but should not engage in unnecessary conversations which might distract them from concentrating on what is going on around them and the dog work in particular.

7.13 Judges should not use or activate a mobile phone while judging.

## Judging the Dogs

These listed items are intended to assist and enable Judges to appreciate their obligation to competitors, the Branches/Clubs and WGAA:

7.14 Judges should concentrate solely on the dogs they are judging and must Judge the dogs as they perform on the day and not on previous performance.

7.15 Judges should do their utmost, in so far as this is possible, to give every dog an equal opportunity to show merit, and should keep accurate and adequate notes.

7.16 Judges must judge in accordance with WGAA Gundog Trial Rules.

7.17 Judges should be aware of the number of dogs to be judged, the conditions and time available, and regulate their judging accordingly, but without prejudicing the standard of the Trial.

**The task of the judge is to find the dog which on the day, pleases them most by the quality of its work from a shooting point of view. They must, therefore take natural game finding to be of the first importance in field trials. A judge must also have a very good working knowledge of the breed or breeds under trial and have the future of the breed or breeds at heart, since final placings may influence breeding plans and so determine the course of breed development.**

7.18 Judges should not wait unduly for competitors who are late reporting for a Trial as this would delay the Trial.

7.19 Judges may dismiss from the trial any dog if, amongst other things; it is likely to cause suffering to the dog if it continues competing. The dismissal should be reported to the Trial Manager.

7.20 It is usual for Judges to allow a dog to be withdrawn from competition provided the

Trial Manager is notified.

7.21 All awards made by the Judge at a Spaniel Field Trial must be made in accordance with WGAA Spaniel Field Trial rules. Equal placings are prohibited. Where the Judge cannot agree on the placings the award must be decided by a run-off.

## **Section 8. After the Trial**

### **Critiques**

Judges at Spaniel Field Trials are not required to provide critiques but they should be prepared to explain their assessment of individual competing dogs with the handler or owner of that dog, but no-one else. This should not become a discussion, merely an explanation of the reason for the relevant decision. A Judge's notes are and should remain confidential.

Judges should always be prepared to provide advice to inexperienced handlers if asked. Judges should be prepared to say a few words at the conclusion of the Trial if requested to do so. Speeches should be confined to polite generalities and should not be an in depth analysis of any one dog's performance. Judges may use the opportunity to thank Hosts, assistants and others, but if not asked to speak should make sure to thank the appropriate people before leaving the ground.

### **Records**

It is important for all Judges that they keep records of all their judging experience. This is of relevance to those hoping, at some future date, to be elevated to a higher judging level. If at any time this information is misplaced the appropriate Branch Secretary can be contacted, and it may be produced from the records held by the Branch/Club. Always remember that Branch/Club Secretaries have enough to do without having to provide information about a Judge's record which that Judge should be able to provide for him or herself.

## **Section 9. Overseas Judges and Australian Judges Officiating Overseas**

Judges from overseas officiating in this country must judge in all respects in the same general manner as is expected of Judges resident in Australia. Overseas Judges judging at WGAA Gundog Trials should note that they must judge to WGAA Spaniel Field Trial Rules.

To assist Judges from overseas, inviting Branches are required to supply them with:

1. A copy of the WGAA Spaniel Field Trial Rules and
2. A copy of this Code of Best Practice for Spaniel Judges

By the same token, Australian Judges are reminded when judging overseas that they must conform to the rules, regulations and conventions of the host country. Judging must be undertaken on the basis of the Regulations that are recognised in that country.

## **Section 10. Pitfalls**

- 1) Lack of knowledge of Breed to be judged.
- 2) Lack of knowledge of rule updates.
- 3) Acceptance of alcoholic drinks.

- 4) Inability to keep up with the line or co-Judges.
- 5) Loss of concentration.
- 6) Lack of communication with co-Judges and trial manager.
- 7) Being in a bad position to observe the dogs working.
- 8) Failure to be decisive with handlers or to control the Trial.
- 9) Failure to deal with aggressive dogs or competitors.
- 10) Failing to deal with adverse weather conditions.
- 11) Failure to deal with harsh handling.
- 12) Failure to deal with any contravention of WGAA Spaniel Field Trial Rules.
- 13) Adverse comments of any kind.

## **Section 11. Use of social media**

### **Overview**

The rapid growth of social media technologies combined with their ease of use and pervasiveness makes them attractive channels of communication. However, these tools also hold the possibility of a host of unintended consequences. To help you identify and avoid potential issues we have provided some examples of best practices which are intended to help you understand, from a wide range of perspectives, the implications of participation in social media.

### **General Guidelines**

#### **Maintain Privacy**

Do not post confidential or proprietary information. Do not discuss a situation involving named or pictured individuals on a social media site without their permission. As a guideline, do not post anything that you would not present in any public forum. Ask yourself, would I want to see this published in the newspaper or posted on a billboard tomorrow or ten years from now?

#### **Does it Pass the Publicity Test**

If the content of your message would not be acceptable for face-to-face conversation, over the telephone, or in another medium, it will not be acceptable for a social networking site.

#### **Think Before You Post**

There's no such thing as a "private" social media site. Search engines can turn up posts and pictures years after the publication date. Comments can be forwarded or copied. Archival systems save information even if you delete a post. If you feel angry or passionate about a subject, it's wise to delay posting until you are calm and clear-headed.

#### **Understand Your Personal Responsibility**

You are personally responsible for the content you publish on blogs or any other form of user-generated content. Be mindful that what you publish will be public for a long time—protect your privacy.

#### **Be Aware of Liability**

You are responsible for what you post on your own site and on the sites of others. Individual



bloggers have been held liable for commentary deemed to be copyright infringement, defamatory, proprietary, libelous, or obscene (as defined by the courts). Be sure that what you post today will not come back to haunt you.

### **Be Accurate**

Make sure that you have all the facts before you post. It's better to verify information with a source first than to have to post a correction or retraction later.

### **Correct Mistakes**

If you make a mistake, admit it. Be upfront and be quick with your correction. If you're posting to a blog, you may choose to modify an earlier post just make it clear that you have done so.

### **Respect Others**

You are more likely to achieve your goals or sway others to your beliefs if you are constructive and respectful while discussing a bad experience or disagreeing with a concept or person.

### **Respect Your Audience**

Don't use personal insults, obscenity, also show proper consideration for others' privacy and for topics that may be considered sensitive. Users are free to discuss topics and disagree with one another, but be respectful of others' opinions. You are more likely to achieve your goals if you are constructive and respectful while discussing a bad experience or disagreeing with a concept or person.

### **Take the High Ground**

Remember that you're most likely to build a high-quality following if you discuss ideas and situations civilly. Don't pick fights online.