

**WIRESHAIR POINTING GRIFFON
CLUB OF AMERICA**

NATURAL ABILITY TEST



Wirehaired Pointing Griffon Club of America

NATURAL ABILITY TEST REGULATIONS

Copies may be purchased for \$2.00 each, to cover printing and mailing costs. Make checks payable to the W.P.G.C.A and mail to:

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NATURAL ABILITY TEST

Official Rules & Regulations

Those hereditary characteristics which are essential to the dog if it is to become a truly versatile hunting dog have been selected for hundreds of dog generations. The Natural Ability Test (NAT) is an examination of these heritable characteristics. It is the initial testing of the young dog before it has had much formal training. *The purpose of the test is to evaluate the results of breeding as exemplified by the innate abilities of the dog.*

Dogs are eligible for the NAT from the day they reach 6 months of age until and including the day they reach 16 months of age. Dogs older than 16 months may be entered for evaluation only but are not eligible for any prize classification. Dogs of all versatile hunting breeds are eligible as long as the dog is eligible for registration in a recognized breed club or registry.

Three judges should officiate, and one will be designated senior judge for the test. A Judge may not judge his own dog or a dog trained or bred by him. This includes first generation offspring of his stud dog.

All dogs will be evaluated for faults of coat and conformation and all Griffons will be given a score of 1 to 4 on both coat and conformation. Temperament will also be evaluated and noted on the score card.

Each dog's performance in each category of the test will be evaluated as follows:

Very Good	4 Points
Good	3 Points
Satisfactory	2 Points
Poor	1 Point
Failure	0 Points

Each test category has a minimum score required within each prize category. (See page 8 for details of minimum scores required for each Prize Category.) A special score of 4H may be given to a dog in a particular portion of the test. However, this is purely an honorary score for an outstanding performance. All three judges must concur, and the senior judge must give the reasons in writing on the score card.

Bitches in heat need specific approval from the Field Test Chairperson to be admitted. The Field Test Chairperson and the judges are responsible that the performance of the other dogs being tested will not suffer due to the presence of a bitch in heat.

Dogs that are evaluated as being gun shy or gun sensitive, may not qualify for a prize classification, but may continue to complete the remaining tests. Gun sensitivity, which excludes a dog from breeding, is present if the dog reacts to a shot with signs of fright so that he interrupts his work rhythm, returns to the handler and regains his natural work rhythm only after a while. Gun shyness is present if the dog reacts to a shot with signs of fright or even panic, looks to his handler or other people for protection or runs away making further testing difficult or impossible.

Other signs of shyness must also be carefully recorded, i.e., environmental, hyper-nervousness, fear of live game, etc. Any such sign of mental instability that is unmistakably noticed must be recorded since they exclude the dog from any breeding program.

Severe punishment inflicted on a dog in a test will disqualify the handler from the test, hence the dog is also disqualified. Eating, attempting to eat, burying, or any form of mutilation of the game making it unfit to eat, by a dog during the test day will disqualify the dog from any prize classification.

Throughout all the tests the Judges have the prerogative of recalling any dog for a retesting in any category. Usually this is done after all other dogs have been tested.

The owner of each dog entered in the NAT will receive by mail an official score card for the dog from the W.P.G.C.A a few weeks after the test. For any dog that qualifies in the test the owner will receive a certificate of qualification.

Affinity For Water

The truly useful versatile hunting dog should show no fear of water and no hesitancy when entering water. In normal hunting situations, the dog will be expected to retrieve shot birds that have fallen in water or on the far side of a stream or ditch. The dog that fears water will cause the hunter a cold swim or at least wade, or a very long walk around if he is to retrieve his shot game.

The test is set up beside a body of water in a place that permits the dog easy entry into water which gradually deepens to a swimming depth. Sudden drop-offs into deep water are not desirable.

The handler will bring the dog to the edge of the water, remove leash and preferably the collar. A plain dummy or other object (excluding any game bird or mammal or any feather or fur adornments on the dummy) is thrown by the handler, or judge if preferred, into water of minimum swimming depth. The tossed object is just an inducement to the dog to enter the water and need not be retrieved. The dog is allowed to go into the water as soon as the object is tossed, with or without any command.

If the dog enters the water willingly and swims on this first attempt, the dog is again set up by the handler and the dummy is again tossed. The second toss will usually be a bit farther and into deeper water than the first. Again, the dog must enter the water willingly and without hesitation, and must swim.

Should the dog show hesitancy on either entry, a third entry might be required by the judges. The dog that shows hesitancy on the first, but not on the second and third can receive highest scores. A dog that shows no hesitancy on the first entry but shows increasing hesitancy on the second and third will be scored lower depending on the severity of the hesitancy or amount of coaxing required.

In order to receive a qualifying score, a dog must swim at least two times, or more if the judges require it.

The dog that refused to enter the water entirely or refuses to swim will be recalled and tested with a dead game bird used as the tossed object. Dogs requiring game to be tossed before entering water cannot be given more than 3. Dogs that won't swim, but go willingly into the water to their bellies, can re-

ceive "1", which is not a qualifying score, but does indicate that the dog would enter the water.

Searching

The search in the field will be a minimum of 20 minutes. Throughout the search the dog should show interest in finding game. The dog should adapt his pace and range to suit the conditions. The wild running dog that repeatedly passes likely cover and is not searching with purpose should be penalized. Similarly the dog that stays at his handler's feet and does not actively work into cover likely to hold game should be penalized.

Each dog will be tested for gun shyness during the search. A gun of conventional gauge is discharged twice by a gunner on a signal from one of the judges. Blank shells must be used.

The search should be active and forward and the dog should quarter the cover, turning into the wind and crossing it to best advantage. During off wind searching the dog should go out and work in a quartering fashion back toward the handler.

The search should be efficient, purposeful and productive, and should give the feeling that no game has been missed. One main reason for using a dog in hunting is the dog's superior mobility over that of his handler. How well the dog uses this superior mobility; how well his mobility is attuned to his scenting capabilities so as to thoroughly search the traversed cover; how well this mobility is geared to the quality of his nose so as not to miss any spots where game has recently been by indication of its presence are all indicative of the quality of the search.

Style of running, great speed or excessive range should not be rewarded in the judgment of searching. Also, slow, methodical purposeful searching should not be faulted. The dog that shows joy and enthusiasm with controlled purpose should receive the highest score.

Ideally when at all possible, the search will be divided into 2 ten minute segments, allowing the dog two opportunities in the field. When another dog is under judgment in the searching, other dogs in the judging group will be kept on leash and will walk quietly with their handler, behind the gallery.

Pointing

Scoring this aspect of the dog's work should depend only on staunchness, convincing intensity and productivity. Style of pointing should play no role. In judging a young dog the Judges must look for the pointing instinct. *If a young dog has several opportunities to point game and has done so, the Judges should score the dog on his best performance.*

Sometimes a young dog has an opportunity to point a game bird at the end of the tracking test when he locates the bird. The judges should make use of this also when assigning the dog a score in pointing.

If the bird moves and the dog leaves the point to relocate without command he should not be faulted. However, the dog that repeatedly points unproductively and must be commanded to leave unproductive points should be faulted as indicating poor use of nose and questionable quality of nose.

The young dog should not be faulted if he breaks his point and chases the game after it is flushed.

Tracking Live Game Bird

This tests the dog's usefulness as a tracker of crippled game. His nose, cooperation, perseverance and concentration are all brought together to track down a crippled bird.

A live, healthy pheasant or chukar partridge has 7 outer primary feathers pulled from one wing. The young dog may be shown the bird before it is released if the handler wishes. The dog must then be hidden behind a blind or some obstruction so that the dog does not see the course taken by the bird.

Some soft feathers are pulled from the bird to mark the release spot. Only a few feathers should be laid at the starting point and the bird releaser (usually a judge or apprentice judge) should NOT rub the bird on the ground. The bird is then released so it can run cross wind or with the wind, never into the wind. When the bird has run far enough to satisfy the judges and is gone from sight, the dog is brought to the starting spot and shown the feathers. Before the dog is

shown the feathers and starting point of the track, a judge should instruct the handler to remove the leash, take hold of the dog's collar with one hand, and with the other point to the feathers and start of the track. The handler should then quietly and calmly command the dog to track the bird. Further assistance may lower the score.

The dog should use the track with deliberate concentration. If the scent is lost, the dog should attempt to relocate the track and move forward along it. *The crucial task for the dog is to progress along the track efficiently, always carrying it forward.*

The highest scores are awarded for efficient, methodical use of the track, leading the dog toward the bird. Lowest scores are given the dog that runs wildly, completely ignoring the track. In scoring this tracking test, the dog is not required to locate or retrieve the bird, simply to follow the track and *demonstrate that he has tracking ability*. The dog that finds the bird by wide searching but not using the track at all cannot receive a score for tracking. How fast the dog tracks or whether the dog holds its head high or low should not be considered. Efficient working along the track is the important feature of this test.

Judged Throughout

Nose and Use of Nose

This aspect of the dog's quality as a hunting dog is tested during searching and during tracking a live game bird. The dog's nose and how it is used is the most important attribute of the hunting dog. The quality and use of the nose determines to a great extent the quality and usefulness of the dog. The use of nose is partly an estimate of the quality of the nose. How well a dog can detect scent is dependent on many features of the environment as well as the dog's innate scenting ability. Quality can be judged in a relative sense. How well the dog uses its nose can be judged in a more absolute sense.

The dog that repeatedly overruns his nose and bumps birds with favorable wind conditions shows poor use of nose. Overrunning the nose is particularly evident on tracking the live game bird. Concentration, hard on the track, demonstrates good use of nose. The distance at which the dog **acknowledges, not points**, the scent of a bird in the field and the accuracy of locating the bird dem-

onstrates quality of the nose. Also, the dog that acknowledges spots where game has been and moves quickly on without undue sniffing at the spot shows good nose. However, the young dog should not be penalized for a flash point at a spot where game has been, if not overdone. The final score is a composite score arrived at by combining nose and use of the nose demonstrated in searching and in the tracking.

Attitude Toward Working

At all times during all tasks, the dog should show happiness and enthusiasm for his work. This is well demonstrated on the tracking test. The dog that perseveres on the track of the bird shows a good attitude toward work. He should be hunting throughout the tests and show distinct desire for making game contact.

Wild running should not be confused with a good attitude toward work or with purposeful hunting. Wide ranging speed without purpose is not hunting and does not add to the dog's score in attitude toward working. The dog that enters the water without hesitation demonstrates good attitude.

Cooperation

This can be best described as teamwork between the dog and his handler. The dog that continuously shows his desire to please his handler without being commanded to do so is showing good cooperation. The dog should always be aware of his handler's location without showing over dependence.

The need for the handler to hack his dog in, or the need for excessive handling to keep the desired contact show poor cooperation. Both excessive dependence and excessive independence are indications of poor cooperation.

A young dog that breaks and chases a flushed bird after pointing the bird, and then returns to his handler without a command shows good cooperation. A young dog that retrieves the dummy during the water test, or locates and retrieves the live game bird on the tracking test, shows good cooperation.

Good cooperation is demonstrated by the dog that maintains good contact with the handler and is always aware of the handler's change in direction. A clearly demonstrated but unspoken communication between the handle and dog indicates excellent cooperation.

SCORING THE NATURAL ABILITY TEST

TEST	Minimum Number of Points Required?		
	Prize I	Prize II	Prize III
Searching	4	3	2
Pointing	3	3	2
Tracking Live Game Bird	4	3	2
Affinity for Water	3	3	2
Nose and Use of Nose	4	3	3
Attitude Toward Work	3	2	2
Cooperation	3	2	2
