

The latest from the JGHV Director of Testing

(Taken from *Der Jagdgebrauchshund*, 3/2019, translation by Ken Bremer)

The hunting year 2018/2019 is drawing to a close and we, the active dog handlers, are preparing our young dogs for the upcoming spring tests. For many, certainly with great expectations and goals, because this will lay the foundation for the further "career" of the hunting or future breeding dog. But one thing, please. We cannot always be better; we cannot always get more performance and the points do not always have to be higher! Here's a short quote that I've changed somewhat, "*In times when everyone is always looking for something brand new - a new car, a new computer, the latest phone, the latest fashion – my wish for all is that everything in the new year will remain the same: Continue to be as satisfied, as healthy and as likeable as ever and just be satisfied with what nature has given us.*" I wish you much success for the year 2019.

In editing Questions from Testing Practice (i.e. the German language *Fragen aus der Prüfungspraxis*), which I am currently working on very intensively, I came across an important paragraph. **"Testing a dog at natural ability tests (VJP or other natural ability tests) is probably one of the most difficult tasks and most challenging responsibilities for an association judge."** That is the case, and that's why association judges are needed who constantly handle dogs and hunt small game with a dog themselves. How can anyone judge a pointing dog who does not handle a pointing dog themselves, how can anyone judge a pointing dog who has never hunted rabbits or pheasants? This question should be asked by any judge before they accept an invitation to a VJP. The one who judges a VJP must be aware of what they are doing there and what their judgments (predicates, points and findings) mean for the future hunting and potential breeding dog. With our statements, we judges control the use of dogs for hunting and breeding. In this regard, another quote, "The association judge of the JGHV has a predominant position in hunting dog affairs and must do justice to this in public as a "hunter with a dog". Therefore, it is particularly important that the association judges perform their duties competently, proficiently and **without the slightest bit of prejudice, unimpressed by the personality of the handler,** breeding and dog breed. Every handler of a hunting dog will be happy to submit themselves to an association judge with good character, judgement and competence.

As the Head of Testing, I ask you to go well prepared into the next testing season. Take advantage of the opportunity for ongoing education. Deal with the appropriate testing regulations and handle a dog yourself, as long as this is possible healthwise. I wish each of you fields full of game, good dogs and harmonious testing. The last is unfortunately not always the case, because letters and complaints tell another story. From one letter, I have briefly presented a remarkable test account and added a couple of explanations or tips on the testing regulations.

A handler reported on a VJP (literal quotations): "*On the morning of the test in the test headquarters, the test director gave a short introduction. Afterwards we drove*

out to the testing grounds. Having arrived there, I was happy to hear the head judge share that we would now begin with a search to air out the dogs. After all dogs had been aired out, we were however surprised when the head judge of the group shared, how the dogs did, and this was followed by hard-nosed scoring of the dogs, though he noted that one might be able to improve their scores in the course of the test. As an example, I'd like to quote, how he appraised the preliminary evaluation of a dog in this group: "Your dog demonstrated fantastic quartering, briskly paced, expansive and already quite systematic, you can scarcely hope for anything better, you receive 9 points!".....

It is absolutely correct to give all of the dogs an opportunity to air out. This shouldn't count as the search but as an opportunity for the dog to air out, and at the most, to give the judges a first impression about the dog. Every observation (positive or negative) should be noted, but these preliminary field searches should in no way be evaluated directly thereafter with predicates and points. It would make sense to possibly have a brief talk with tips for the handlers, but no more.

....."We alerted the judges to the fact that a few seconds ago, seen by all, that a hare got up from its resting place and ran up the field. A perfect situation to do a hare track. But the judging group did not follow the suggestion of the handler but sent me with my dog to do a field search with quartering right up this very field on which the hare had run away. In doing this, gun sensitivity should be checked too."

Of course, the progression of the test lies in the hands of the VR, but the one who doesn't take advantage of opportunities like these will be penalized at the end of the day and will still be searching for game in the evening.

"Thereafter we searched from one plot of land to the next, as well as in an adjoining piece of forest without finding a single hare after 1.5 hours. The field marshal (Revierführer) was asked for advice. Thereupon we succeeded in getting each of our dogs onto a hare. On the way back, I was asked again to do a quartering search, and if the opportunity arose to test the dog's pointing ability. In a friendly manner, I pointed out to the head judge that I didn't want to search downwind with my young dog, but o.k., a search with the wind at our backs. It came as it had to come: my dog ran over a pheasant which flushed and flew off. "Not much progress with pointing either", I heard from the judge's group.

In this paragraph the concept of a quartering search (Quersuche) is often mentioned. In the PO (test regulations) we read "**Search**". For the search the primary value is to be placed on the will to find game. At the same time, the search should be **diligent, expansive, brisk, persistent and adjusted to the terrain. A systematic search is not expected at the VJP**. This text passage doesn't say that the dog should quarter (from left to right or reversed), but that the search should be adjusted to the terrain (dividing up the space, correct approach to cover) and oriented to the direction of the wind. As much as possible, the dog should turn into the wind and in doing this show by the posture of its head and its use of nose that it wants to find game. Also, when hunting we only hunt in places where we have the

greatest chance to find game. Why should the dog do otherwise at the test and on command run from one point to another? Search doesn't mean wild, breakneck, unfocused racing around the field!

“Next, the field marshal again tried to bring us into contact with feathered game, so that pointing could be tested. My dog was sent to search und searched 90 minutes long in wheat, in the hedge and behind the hedge with temperatures about 28 C. (82.5 F.). The honorable judging committee did not agree where the game might be sitting, so that we constantly changed places. During this travail my dog pointed a dead fox, but this was later dismissed by the judges as “indicating scent” (Witterung anzeigen). After the other dogs were also unable to find game, we were summoned again to finally demonstrate the desired pointing. From a distance two pheasants were seen. Suddenly my dog was pointing, it took 10-15 seconds until we came closer. Then a pigeon flushed from the cover. The judges, who were about 5-6 m behind, explained that this was just scent from the pigeon droppings underneath and not real pointing. Mildly angered, I sent my dog into the hedge again. No one could see the dog and the sought-after pheasant not at all. A pheasant flushed. Whether my dog pointed or not, no one saw it. One of the judges was sure, however, the dog had overrun the pheasant and not pointed. It was regrettable that the third judge was so bad on foot that he had to sit down constantly and was always 100-200 meters behind what was happening.”

It is almost impossible to judge something like this based on a report, and the evaluation should lie in the hands of the judges involved. One can only judge something, however, if one has seen it. VR who are constantly far away from the action, whether it be for reasons of health or out of laziness, should ask themselves honestly if they can do justice to the demands of a VJP. I tip my hat to a judging group who leave the longer distances to younger judges (young judges should be in every judging group), but not to those who think that a VJP is conducted with binoculars from the street. I also do not tip my hat to those who allow a VJP dog to work for 90 minutes on game, if what was contained in the report is true.

“But then the judges succeeded with the absolute masterpiece. We drove with the entire crowd to a pheasant farm in order to give my dog a chance to point. Thereafter, the judges shared their judgement -- “pointing 0 points”. The tension in my face must have been visible. I was unsettled and made my opinion known. This surprised the group in such a manner that they came up to me and said that one could also write “no game found”. I agreed to this for better or worse. Having arrived at the test headquarters, the test director was of course not excited about our statement “no game found”. He did everything to sweep the whole matter under the carpet. After we talked further for another 30 minutes, the judges wanted to go out into the field in order to search further for game. One can imagine that I did not want to force my 12 month old dog to drive around again with these “experts” to a field. Here I was denied an opportunity to be heard and was instead pressured into agreeing to the entry “withdrawn for reasons of poor conditioning”. I allowed this to happen in order to avoid receiving a negative judgment for my dog on its pedigree.

In the meantime, one of the judges had left before the announcement of scores, and therewith my testing scorecard could not be filled out. At this point, let me mention again that I would have said nothing about 3 points in the subject „pointing”, but “natural pointing ability not shown” was simply false, just like the statement in the Vereinsblatt, (club newsletter) furred and feathered game “good”. How do you think a first-time handler feels at a time like this? When the score sheet had still not arrived after 4 weeks, I wrote the Test Director to ask when I would receive the score sheet for the VJP. He replied that he couldn't do anything about it, if the score sheet had apparently been lost in the mail.”

These are quotes from the handler. Question: How would the participating judges write about the test? I also know that our small game “paradise” is no longer ideal. Still, a test may not end in this manner. Whom should we believe? How certain are our test results? This letter naturally concerned me. But in recent years I must also observe, that many handlers come to the tests poorly prepared. Many handlers work with their dogs, unfortunately, in an incorrect manner. Many go to puppy classes / dog schools without any desire to hunt. Some have little opportunity to work on live game, but train “field search” daily, until the day when the dog has lost all desire to run around on a field on which nothing can be found but mice. Then there are those who think that they have to continually work on hare and the really clever ones already take their dogs with to a driven hunt in the fall at an age of 7-10 months. And it has become a popular sport of a few hunters to first go with a young dog into a “Schwarzwildgatter” (enclosed training area with wild boar). Never seen a hare, never had a piece of warm game in their mouths, never been able to swim, never pointed, but go to a “Schwarzwildgatter” and/or to a driven hunt. These dogs are being used in hunting situations for which they are simply not prepared because of their age. Every young dog should first complete their training / have experiences with a hare track and only then follows the tracking work (first paw tracks then on hoofed game!). Every pointing dog should train its nose on feathered game and develop it further, as this fine scent is not as intensive as that of hoofed game and requires completely different behavior from the dog. Every pointing dog should be first properly trained in the field, search on a long check cord at first, always approach the game into the wind, and in this way! the dog achieves the proper head posture or nose and trains the use of nose (head and nose up high). Search into the wind, turn correctly into the wind, and in this way I shape the young dog for its future use in hunting. Search for game with the nose / find game and not by breakneck, unplanned and wild running about. Not without good reason do we speak in the VZPO of use of the fine nose which recognizes the slightest scent (pheasant, feathered game, small birds, resting place of a hare, etc.). Look at the dog in the field, how it attempts to sort out the scents with head moving back and forth and with a high nose; filters the fine scents-- imperceptible to we humans—of a pheasant, a partridge, a small bird or a hare and finds its way to game. That cannot be compared with the relatively strong scent of a pack of boar or the scent cloud of a herd of red deer. The same with Laut. Valuable for breeding is Laut on a

hare track and this must first be awakened, before the dog gives Laut on the track of a wild boar / a red deer.

As a Verbandsrichter it is our task to filter out the strongest dogs, to highlight the dogs which belong de facto in our breeding. The really talented dogs do not need a lot of opportunities on the hare track or in pointing. The dog uses every opportunity to point, it works every hare track, regardless of the cover and weather conditions. In judging natural abilities, it is certainly wrong to evaluate dogs according to a fixed formula, in that—for example—all work by the dog (e.g. hare tracks) are added up and the total divided by the number of tracks.

The natural abilities of a young dog are often exhibited differently and thus the overall impression! is decisive for the final judgment. It is nearly impossible to point out all of the criteria which need to be considered in assessing the overall impression of the dog, but I'd like to explain a few fundamental principles at this point. In making a judgment, the type of cover on which the dog worked should be considered. Decisive is not the length of the work, e.g. of a track, but above all, under what conditions did the dog work in the field. In so doing, the temperature, the time of day, the ground cover, the moisture, etc. should be noted. None of us can judge exactly, how outward conditions like mineral fertilizers, manure, sprays, etc. affect the scent of a hare or how they affect the fine nose of a dog. Important in making a judgment is the dog's effort in the face of difficulties like turns, change of ground cover, obstacles, distractions during the work. In judging the dog, we always have to ask, what demands are we making of the dog in the field. Thus, for example, the search on a pheasant, whose behavior is unique, makes completely different demands on the dog than a partridge. The pheasant usually looks for relatively dense cover, in which the scent of a single bird sitting tightly is not widely spread and the possibility that a swiftly searching dog with a fine nose, which is not 100% tuned into pheasants, will overrun pheasants in dense cover, is extremely high, at least much higher than with field birds. All judges should be aware of this risk and ask themselves the question, whether one can ever speak about "running over game", if the dog occasionally doesn't briefly indicate or point a pheasant. Pointing is caused by the perception of the scent of game. Ideally, the dog approaches feathered game that is sitting tightly, without the existence of a fresh track. As the pheasant tends to run when disturbed, the dog will frequently come onto a track.

With dogs that have a lower stimulus threshold ("Taster", i.e. very sensitive dogs) even the perception of a track is sometimes enough to trigger pointing. A dog with a greater inclination to follow (stronger drive) will first work out the track, until it gets the direct scent of game in its nose and then points perhaps. This is only possible, however, if the track runs against the wind. If a pheasant runs with the wind or across the wind, then the dog cannot get any direct scent of game as it works out the track.

§11 (4) VZPO states among other things: the natural ability to point is demonstrated

by the dog pointing or lying before game that it has found. In doing this, complete steadiness is not required. The special difficulties when encountering game that is not sitting tightly are to be taken into account. In summary, it can be said that at a VJP the positive as well as negative behavior of the dog must be included in the overall evaluation, whereby the exact weighting lies within the discretion of the judges. In the case of different examples of work, one can evaluate the total impression of the dog higher, if it continually improves its performance in the course of the test.

Handler mistakes at a VJP should not be calculated. Much more important is observing how the dog masters the situation despite mistakes by the handler. Especially with first-time handlers, the judges should make an effort to offer appropriate assistance in order to better recognize the natural abilities of the dog. The dog is being evaluated, not the handler! The dog's data with points will be listed in the Ostermann statistics, not that of the handler.

We judges have the task and obligation to carefully observe the work of each dog. The final verdict is determined by the total impression gained, while considering the dog's age and level of training. Tests are for hunting and breeding, not in order to find the dog with the highest points (Suchensieger)! Each effort should be rewarded with the appropriate predicates / points. Reflect again on the normal hunting dog which every hunter can handle. 11 or 12 points can only be awarded after confirmation with the predicate "very good".

We cannot complain on the one hand about insufficient game but then paint everything rosy on Formblatt 2 and in the reports. We shouldn't pour out 11s or 12s from a watering pot but give these scores only to dogs which have confirmed their excellent/very good work on game several times.

Summary: "In evaluating several pieces of work the overall impression of the dog during the entire course of the test should be decisive and not the mathematical average of all parts of the work. The overall impression consists of all demonstrated natural abilities and the temperament of the dog."

And one more point: I will again revise the tips and information for Test Directors / Verbandsrichter for preparation / judge's meeting of the VJP, including temperament, which was already published last year, and publish this on the website of the JGHV in a timely manner before the upcoming tests.

I wish you all a successful and harmonious testing season.

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