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INTERNATIONAL REGULATIONS FOR FIELD TRIALS FOR RETRIEVERS



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Art. 1 – AIM

The retriever is the shooting man's indispensable help during a shooting day. The aim of field trials is to select the best dogs having real game finding ability, style and efficiency, good temperament, good marking, showing initiative and being tender mouthed.

Handling has to be considered as an indispensable complement to these qualities. The dog should be steady while walking at heel or sitting in a drive and willing to obey the handler's instructions when needed.

Art. 2 – ORGANISATION

International Field Trials must be organised on a formal shooting day within the shooting season of the host country. A field trial should be run as close as possible to an ordinary shooting day and ethics should always be the top priority.

In accordance with the decision of the FCI at its 1976 Innsbruck meeting (“the FCI will only award the FCI-CACIT on field trials which are held on live game”), FCI-CACIT Field Trials for Retrievers can only take place during a real shooting day, on game which has not been released, handled or manipulated (alive or dead) in any way during the trial. Every country has its own shooting regulations and traditions, but game should be completely free before the trial starts. No release pens, boxes or other systems can be used after the trial has started.

THE FCI-CACIT CANNOT BE AWARDED ON TESTS USING COLD GAME OR DUMMIES.

Art. 3 – SOCIETIES

Field trials are organised by societies affiliated to the national kennel club or national canine organisation recognised by the FCI. The organisers, in cooperation with the host, take the necessary measures for a successful outcome of the field trial. The organisers are responsible for the correct application of the current regulations.

The guns are invited by the organising committee or by the host.

The organising country and the host country do not have to be identical. If an organising society wants to organise an international field trial in another host country, this is possible if both national canine organisations agree.

Art. 4 – SHOOTING

FCI-CACIT field trials can be held either during a driven shoot, where the dogs sit at the peg, or during a walked-up shooting day where the dogs walk in line, or a combination of both. It is desirable to test the dogs in water if possible.

- a. In a walk up, the judges, handlers and guns (at least two per judge or pair of judges) move forward in line. When game is shot, the line stops and at the judge's order a dog is sent to find and retrieve the game.
- b. At a driven shoot, the judge positions the dogs in such way to have the best opportunity to mark. When there is only dead game, the dogs should be sent only at the end of the drive. When there is wounded game, the judge is recommended to send the dog immediately if the situation permits to do so. This is up to the judge's discretion.

Art. 5 – NATIONAL REGULATIONS

As the FCI-CACIT is awarded in combination with the CACT, national regulations in each country remain valid, as far as they are not in contradiction with those of the FCI. If there are conflicts between the national and international field trial regulations, the international regulations prevail.

Art. 6 – ENTRIES

All purebred retrievers can take part in FCI-CACIT field trials, if they have a pedigree recognised by the FCI and are older than eighteen (18) months and one (1) day on the day of the competition.

Art. 7 – PARTICIPATION

If the need arises, participation can be limited only on the basis of merit (= open field trial awards achieved under FCI regulations or equivalent national regulations). Participation cannot be limited based on nationality of the dog, owner or handler, or any other criteria unrelated to previously achieved results. Preference in the draw can be given to members of the organising society.

If there are more entries than possible runs, participation will be decided by a draw. The regulation of the draw has to be available (preferably publicly) before the deadline of the entries.

To maximize the opportunity for all, ***the organizing society has the right to decide that no handler*** can have a run ***with a second dog***, before all others in the draw have been offered a run. Therefore, ***every second dog*** of a handler will automatically be placed at the end of the draw. ***If the organizing society want to do so, this must be clearly stated in the regulation of the draw.*** Exceptions are the national or the European Retriever Championships where dogs are qualified rather than selected by draw ***and handling multiple dogs cannot be restricted.***

Entries from dogs without the necessary qualifications according to the regulation of the draw need to be accepted but will be added automatically to the end of the reserves list. Also their order will be decided by draw. When the opportunity would arise, they must be offered a run. Qualified dogs, even when the 2nd dog of the same handler, always have preference over dogs without the necessary qualifications according to the regulation of the draw.

Wildcard cards can be provided for judges that have judged previous field trials for the organising society or people that have contributed a lot to the organisation. This is up to the organising society.

Art. 8 – REGISTRATIONS

Registrations must be sent to the secretary and within the deadline announced by the organising committee.

The organising committees are advised to provide a registration form which includes all the necessary details needed to create the program such as: dog's pedigree name - breed and sex – colour – stud book number - working book number - date of birth – name of the parents - name of breeder - names and addresses of owners and handlers.

Art. 9 – RESTRICTIONS

- a) Dogs belonging to a person excluded directly or indirectly from the FCI or having a debt to an organisation affiliated to the FCI are not allowed to compete.
- b) The presence of bitches in season is strictly forbidden.
- c) No entry will be accepted after the publicly announced closing date.
- d) No entry fee will be refunded unless the withdrawal is announced at least 5 days before the competition and is for a valid reason.
- e) Entries will only be valid when accompanied by the entry fees, unless the organisation decides to accept payments on the day of the trial.
- d) No change of registration will be accepted after the closing date for entries.
- f) Dangerous dogs, dogs suffering from contagious diseases, monorchid or cryptorchid dogs, dogs belonging to persons who are members of societies or clubs not recognised by the FCI members or contractors and dogs of a colour not recognised by the FCI breed standard are not admitted.

Art. 10 – POSTPONEMENT OR CANCELLATION

If the organising committee decides for valid reasons, to change the dates of the trial, it must inform those concerned as soon as possible.

Competitors have the right to request a refund of the entry fee paid within eight days of this notification. Entries for which the fees have not been reclaimed will remain valid for the newly fixed date.

The organising committee always reserves the right to cancel trials and refund entry fees.

Art. 11 – JUDGES AND JUDGING

Judges are invited by the organising society. Their names must be communicated to the competitors prior to the closure of entries and must appear in the trial program.

A FCI-CACIT field trial is judged by at least two, but preferably four judges (judging in pairs).

If the two-judge system is used, both judges **have to be appointed for Retrievers on the FCI Judges Directory** (<https://www.fci.be/en/Judges/>) or “The **Royal** Kennel Club” (UK) Official Panel of Field Trial Judges (A or B panel).

If the four-judge system is used, at least two judges **have to be appointed for Retrievers on the FCI Judges Directory** (<https://www.fci.be/en/Judges/>) or “The **Royal** Kennel Club” (UK) Official Panel of Field Trial Judges (A or B panel). The other judges must be approved by their local kennel club or national canine organisation to judge field trials for retrievers. They cannot judge together, but must be paired with an FCI or **Royal** KC panel judge.

The judges are completely free in their judging. However, their decisions must be in accordance with the current regulations.

Candidate judges or judges not yet approved to judge and award FCI-CACIT should be encouraged to attend international field trials and be in line, a maximum of one on each side. However, they are not allowed to judge actively, i.e. not to send dogs, not to take part deliberations, not to search an area, not give instructions to handlers etc.

They may ask questions to the officiating judges if the situation allows and/or debrief after the trial. However, they are not allowed to fill up a judges system. Those interested in gaining experience this way, should ask for approval to the organising committee well in advance.

The organisers reserve the right to replace judges, who are unable to carry out their duties during the trial or only during a part of it, or to take any other action they consider appropriate.

Art. 11.1 – TASK

The judges' task is to find the dog which, on the day, pleases them most by the quality of its work from the shooting point of view. Therefore in a field trial, they must give top priority to the natural game-finding ability of a dog.

No judge should accept an invitation to judge a trial, and no competitor should enter a trial, unless they are fully familiar with the current Field Trial Regulations.

At the start of the day, the judges should be introduced to each other and decide their positions in the line, which will remain the same throughout the whole trial. The judges should brief the guns and handlers and if, at any time, conditions force them to depart from the arrangements they have set out, the chief steward should be informed so that he or she can advise the competitors, guns and others concerned.

Judges should make sure that they have the correct dogs in the line.

Whilst judges should take reasonable precautions for the safety of the competing dogs, it is also in the duty of the handlers to guarantee that their dogs are suitably trained, physically fit and ready to perform the task assigned by the judges before being instructed to perform it.

Art. 11.2 – ASSESSMENT

At the end of each retrieve, judges are advised to place each dog in a category such as A or B (+ or –) according to the work done. Such grades may, quite properly, be occasionally supplemented by additional notes as the judges are going through their books. However, it is imperative to note that grades should never be retrospectively adjusted. Nor should any attempt ever be made to combine a series of grades in order to obtain a single letter grading for a dog. When all dogs have been seen by a judge, or judges, the latter will confer to determine which dogs they wish to discard or retain; it is vitally important for judges to make short notes of each dog's work. Judges should never expect to be able to rely on memory.

A dog should be steady to the shot and the fall of game and should retrieve both furred and feathered game tenderly to hand on command. Handlers shall not send their dogs until directed by the judge.

Judges should ask their guns not to shoot directly over a dog in the area where it is already out working on a retrieve.

All wounded game should, where possible, be gathered and/or dispatched immediately. Unless exceptional circumstances prevail, wounded game should always be tried for before dead game. If game cannot be gathered, the judge must depute this task to the official handler and dog appointed for this purpose.

If game is shot very close to a dog, which would make a retrieve of no value, the retrieve may be offered to a dog under another judge. During the first round of the trial dogs should, whenever possible, have the opportunity to pick game shot by their own guns.

If the dogs tried, fail to complete the retrieve, the judges should search the area of the fall and, if they find the game, the dogs tried, except in exceptional circumstances, will be discarded. However, should a dog or dogs prove to have been tried in the wrong area, they should not be so penalised if they worked in a proper way.

In the case that a dog or dogs fail to retrieve and won't be discarded for the reasons mentioned above (called a dry-run), the judges will still assess the work. This assessment and comment will count in the overall assessment of the dog and can influence its potential ranking.

Good marking is essential in a retrieving dog as it should not disturb ground unnecessarily. Judges should give full credit to a dog which goes straight to the fall and gets on with the job. Similarly, the ability to take the line of a hare, wounded rabbit or bird should be credited.

A good retrieve will include a quick and unfussy pick-up followed by a fast return. The handler should not have to snatch or drag game from the dog's mouth. Whilst judges should not penalise a dog too heavily for putting game down to get a firmer grip, they must never, however, condone sloppy retrieving.

A good game-finding dog should not rely on the handler to find the game. It should, however, be obedient and respond to its handler's signals when necessary. Dogs showing game-finding ability and initiative when hunting and retrieving should be placed above those which have to be handled to their game. Usually, the best dog seems to require the least handling. It appears to have an instinctive knowledge of the behaviour of wounded game and makes a difficult find look simple and easy.

If a dog is performing indifferently on a runner, it must be called up promptly. If more dogs are tried on the runner, the work of all these dogs must be assessed in relation to the order in which they are tried.

Art. 11.3 – EYE WIPE & FIRST DOG DOWN

Game picked by the second or a subsequent dog or the judges, constitutes an 'eye wipe'. Dogs which have had their eyes wiped during the trial, no matter when it may have occurred, will be discarded. All eye wipes should be treated on their merits. If the first dog sent shows ability by acknowledging the fall and making a workmanlike job of the line or the area, it needs not automatically be barred from the awards by failing to produce the game, provided that the game is not collected by another dog tried by the judges, or by the judges themselves, when searching the area which they directed the handler to search. Moreover, there will be occasions when circumstances make it impossible to send a dog promptly. If this happens and a significant delay ensues, a dog disadvantaged in this way should not be penalised as a first dog down.

Art. 11.4 – HARD MOUTH

All game should be examined for signs of hard mouth. A hard-mouthed dog seldom gives visible evidence of hardness, it will simply crush in one or both sides of the ribs. A visual inspection and blowing up the feathers on a bird will not disclose the damage, a tactile examination is imperative.

Place the game on the palm of the hand, breast upwards, head forward, and feel the ribs with fingers and thumb. They should be round and firm. If they are caved in or flat this may give evidence of hard mouth. Be sure the game reaches the co-judges for examination. Judges should always satisfy themselves that the damage done has been caused by the dog, not by the shot or the fall. Judges must be clear about the difference between damage to the ribcage caused by shot and the quite distinctive damage caused by a dog. Handlers must be given the opportunity of inspecting the damaged game in the presence of the judges, but the decision of the judges is final.

A sure sign of good mouth is a dog that brings live game whose head is still raised and the eye is bright. Superficial damage, if any, in this case can be ignored. At times, the rump of a strong runner may be gashed and look ugly. Care should be taken here, as it may be the result of a difficult capture or lack of experience in mastering a strong runner by a young dog. There should be no hesitation or sentiment with hard mouth. The dog must be eliminated.

Art. 12 – FCI JUDGES DIRECTORY

The FCI Judges Directory (discipline = Retrievers) is a list of judges, appointed by their local kennel club or national canine organisation affiliated to the FCI to judge international retriever field trials and award FCI-CACIT. Each delegate in the FCI commission for retrievers is responsible to keep this list up to date *in cooperation with his or her national canine organization*.

To be added to the discipline Retrievers on the FCI Judges Directory, a judge needs to meet following criteria:

- *have achieved a qualification “Excellent” on an International FCI Field Trial or a qualification “Excellent” (or corresponding national qualification) on a national Open Field Trial held and judged accordingly to the FCI regulations. This result cannot be older than 7 years at the moment of adding.*
- *have co-judged two International FCI Field Trials in a four-judge-system (Art. 11) or have completed two International FCI Field Trials as a candidate judge.*

Art. 13 – STEWARDS

Stewards are nominated by the organising committee. They are in charge of assisting the judges in calling dogs in line and keeping necessary order amongst competitors and spectators. A chief steward, who should be present throughout the trial, shall be responsible for ensuring the regulations are observed. The chief steward must not interfere with the judges’ decisions which are final but should, however, decide upon any matter not related to judging which is not provided for in the rules and regulations. The chief steward may call upon the judges to assist with such a decision and that decision should be final.

Art. 14 – HANDLING

All competitors must be present when the chief steward announces that the trial has commenced, and subsequently when required by the judges.

A competitor who is not present when the chief steward announces that the trial has commenced, and whose number has been forwarded to the next available reserve dog, forfeits his run in the trial. Should a competitor be delayed by circumstances which are exceptional in the opinion of the chief steward of the organising society, then the competitor may still be allowed to take his/her run in order of draw, providing he/she is available when required in line by the judges.

A dog must be handled by the same person throughout the duration of the trial.

Any person in charge of a dog at a field trial must at all times ensure that the dog is kept under proper control whilst at the meet, or venue of the trial, and while travelling to or from the meet or venue in any transport provided for that purpose.

Dogs cannot be on the lead or wear any form of collar when under the orders of the judge's authority. The handler is not allowed to use any means of coercion or control.

No person shall carry out punitive correction or harsh handling at a field trial, under penalty of exclusion.

If, after consultation with the judges, the chief steward considers a dog unfit to compete, by reason of contagious disease or physical condition, such a dog shall be required to be removed immediately from the ground and from the trial.

A handler and dog must always be available to pick up wounded game when required as agreed between host and society.

ART. 15 – RUNNING ORDER

The running numbers are drawn just before the competition in presence of the competitors. A field trial (driven or walked up) should be run with a right and left side, each side judged by a different judge or a different pair of judges.

A. Walked up Field Trials / numerical running order

Walked up field trials are judged in numerical order. Competitors number 1 and 2 start on the right, numbers 3 and 4 on the left. From then on, competitors are sent to the available places in numerical order. In exceptional circumstances (when the left and right side are separated by an obstacle, long distance, etc.) with the judge's approval it can be decided to split the competitors ***as described below for driven field trials.***

Initially, the dog with the lowest number under each judge should be placed on the judge's right. All dogs, unless discarded, must be tried in the first two rounds by more than one judge if there are two judges, or by more than one pair of judges if there are four. Whether the trial is run in numerical order or split, dogs must not come into line in the second round under the same judge(s) as in the first round. After the second round, dogs may be called back into line in numerical order to either side in a four-judge system or to any judge in a two-judge system.

If the game situation permits two retrieves in the first round, then one retrieve in the second round is the usual procedure. It is imperative that the chief steward is informed about any dogs eliminated or discarded for any reason. This will enable him to have the correct dogs available when required. It is, however, the judge(s) responsibility to ensure that the right dogs are in line.

The chief steward should send in the second round dogs to the appropriate judge when there is a vacancy in the line. Second round dogs should have their opportunity to be tried against first round dogs when the situation arises.

A judge should be most careful to see that each dog gets its chance in the correct order, initially starting with the lowest number on the right. Should dog No. 1 fail and dog No. 2 be successful, so eliminating his partner, No. 2 still has the first chance on the next retrieve. In these circumstances a dog may be given two consecutive retrieves.

When a judge tries his dogs, for example No. 1 and No. 2, behind other dogs, if No. 1 dog is successful, then the next retrieve under that judge should be offered to No. 2 dog. If the two dogs fail on game, the judge should not call fresh dogs into the line to try for the retrieve until all the other dogs already in the line have been tried. In the concluding stages of a trial, judges may use their own discretion as the situation arises.

Dogs in line should be sent in order, even where this results in a dog being given consecutive retrieves. A new dog coming into line would not be sent for the next retrieve, ***as long as there is a dog available that was in line while the retrieve was shot.***

In the interest of simplicity, the line should be filled numerically from right to left. In the event that 3 or 4 dogs go out, the line should be filled numerically from the right. The only exception to this is, when only one dog remains in the line on the left side, then the lowest numbered dog coming into the line would come in to back up that dog.

B. Driven Field Trials / splitting competitors

At driven field trials it is strongly advised to split the dogs between the judges rather than use the numerical running order. Splitting the dogs is done in odds and even numbers.

In the first round the odd numbered dogs will be seen by the right-hand judge(s) and the evens by the left-hand judge(s). In the second round the odd numbered dogs remaining in the trial must be seen by the left-hand judge(s) and the evens by the right-hand judge(s).

Second round dogs should have their opportunity to be tried against first round dogs when the situation arises.

By splitting the dogs on a driven field trial, the opportunity to mark and to be sent for game shot by your own guns is maximized in the first round. After the second round the judges can continue to rotate the dogs remaining in the trial in this way if necessary until they judge together or revert to numerical order as described above, this is completely up to the judge's discretion.

As long as the dogs are split, the right and left side are not backing up each other. If judges decided to try more than 2 dogs on a retrieve, consecutive dogs will be brought into line from their own group.

When a field trial will contain a mix of both driven and walked up shooting, it's up to the judge's discretion to decide on the best running order system.

Dogs must be excluded from further participation in the trial if they have committed an 'eliminating fault'.

ART. 16 – WATER WORK

It is preferable to test the dogs in water during a field trial whenever possible. The lack or unavailability of water work does not prohibit awarding the FCI-CACIT.

To homologate the title of **FCI International Working Champion (FCI-C.I.T.)** the dog needs to prove it is able to swim in deep water by passing a water test.

The necessary WATER CERTIFICATE (**annex 1**) certifies that the dog enters the water willingly and swims to the satisfaction of the judge. It can be given on any official (national) retriever competition or exam, signed by any official (national) judge.

A copy of the above compulsory WATER (annex 1) must be submitted together with the application for the FCI-C.I.T.

Art. 17 – ASSESSMENT OF THE WORK

The ideal retriever is attentive, steady and quiet at the peg or at heel without asking any attention of his handler. He should mark his game well and should remember the fall for a longer period of time. Sent for a retrieve, he should show hunting ability, initiative, good use of nose and game finding ability. He must not refuse any sort of cover and enter water without encouragement. He should work with will to please and in good contact with the handler, without being over dependent. When finding game the dog should work quickly, retrieve correctly and with tender mouth. The game should be brought to hand correctly.

a. CREDIT POINTS

- Natural game-finding ability
- Control
- Drive and style
- Quiet handling
- Good retrieving and delivery
- Nose
- Quickness in gathering game
- Marking ability

b. MAJOR FAULTS

- Being over dependent on the handler
- Noisy handling
- Being restless and asking the handler's attention at the peg
- Bad marking and/or bad memory of the fall
- Bad heelwork
- Sloppy retrieving
- Working slowly and/or without much initiative
- Poor control
- Being eye-wiped
- First dog down

One major fault or a B retrieve means the end of the trial for a dog.

With one major fault, a B retrieve or two A- a dog cannot get an 'excellent' anymore. If a dog performed well on at least three retrieves before, a 'good' or a 'very good' can still be given by the judges.

Dogs with less than three good retrieves and a major fault, a B retrieve or two A- are 'not classified' (NC).

c. ELIMINATING FAULTS

- Switching game
- Physical contact with the dog
- Aggressive behaviour
- Hard mouth
- Whining or barking
- Gun shyness
- Running in
- Out of control, chasing unshot game or hunting with game in the mouth
- Refusing to enter water
- Refusing to retrieve found game

Art. 18 – PRIZES AND TITLES

The FCI-CACIT will only be granted by the FCI if the field trial was open to at least 12 dogs and at least 10 dogs were competing.

The judges shall have full discretion to withhold qualifications when, in their view, the work has been insufficient.

The qualifications are to be accompanied by a rating:

Excellent - Very Good - Good or by an equivalent national qualificative rating.

To obtain the FCI-CACIT the dog should have had at least 5 (five) retrieves and have accomplished a perfect performance of exceptional merit.

Only dogs who finished the trial with an equal number of retrieves can get ranked.

Art. 19 – PRIZE GIVING

At the end of the competition, the judges shall proclaim and comment on the results and hand in the classification to the organisers before their departure.

The English version of these regulations is the authentic text.

The changes in bold and italic characters were approved by the FCI General Committee, on the occasion of its meetings in Thuin (BE), 19-20 March 2024 and Amsterdam, 3-4 September 2024.

ANNEX A - Rules for the FCI-European Retriever Championship (FCI-ERC)