

## VJP HANDLING AND TRAINING TIPS

**Hare track:** The hare track, or in many cases cotton tail tracking is a unique item to the VJP test and the JGHV testing system. The purpose of the hare track is to evaluate a dog's ability, will and desire to follow a fresh scent track. The hare track also is an important tool in being able to evaluate the dog's use of nose.

While most of us here in America don't hunt rabbits, teaching a dog to track at a young age is the foundation, and basis for it being able to find and locate any type of moving game in most any condition, including on water. So, the hare track has many benefits.

The hare track is the single most important item in the VJP, and will influence your overall score the most.

Handling tips:

- Use a slip lead!
- Be sure you listen to the judges so that you know exactly the direction the rabbit ran.
- Make sure the dog is connected to the track and moving in the direction the rabbit ran before you release it.
- Make sure you are ready when called and have your slip lead ready to go.
- Don't let your dog see the rabbit, cover your dog's eyes and face anytime "rabbit" is called.
- Have the ability to call your dog back to you when needed.

Training tips:

- Imperative that you teach your dog a track command and to put its nose to the ground when you point to the ground and say your track command. "Suche" or "Track" are the most common commands.
- Do foot tracks with treat drops to initially teach your dog to track and follow scent. Learn to use a slip lead, and use it!
- Practice actual rabbit/hare tracking as much as you can, if you don't have access to rabbits/hares substitute dead animal drags if needed.
- Limit your dog's sight chases. Two or three is generally all that is needed and if your dog is getting into frequent sight chases try to terminate them as soon as possible.
- Shoot a rabbit or two for your dog the hunting season before your VJP. If you have a low desire tracking dog allow your dog to catch a placed live rabbit at the end of a track.
- Teach your dog to extend the track by working down the track with it if needed and to try and restart the track after the first attempt.

Hare track has a score multiplier of 2!

**Use of Nose:** Evaluated at the VJP during both the hare track and field search. With use of nose being such a genetic trait of the dog there are not a ton of handling and training tips for it. However, there are a few very important ones that will help your dog display its use of nose.

Handling tips:

- In the hare track make sure your dog is worked/released on the downwind side of the track.
- In the search field keep your dog being productive by handling it, if and when needed. Don't let it potter in the same area or at old scent for a long time.

Training tips:

- Hunt, expose and spend time lots of time with your dog doing tracking and search work!
- Teach your dog to search in a windshield type pattern by zig zagging as you walk in fields.
- Teach your dog to turn and hunt with different wind directions(head wind, tail wind, cross wind)

Nose has a score multiplier of 2!

**Field Search:** A VJP field search will normally last about 10-15 minutes and you'll want to walk as if out hunting. You can vary your speed, don't have to walk in a straight line and will be given instructions by the judges as to the area they want you and your dog to search or hunt. Pointing work will generally conclude your field search.

Gunfire sureness will be tested during the field search. Handler will normally fire the required two shots.

Handling tips:

- Pay attention to your dog as you walk, and handle, work with your dog as needed.
- Biggest mistakes handlers make are:
  - Not handling their dog at all, and not bringing or teaching whistle commands.
  - Not bringing enough water along for the dog and the dog getting too hot.
    - Good idea to completely wet dog down before going out if it's warm.
    - Wetting of ears helps a dog cool down.
  - Dog is out of shape or hasn't been hunted much.

Training tips for field search:

- Practice field searches by zig zagging as you walk and teach your dog a turn/check-in whistle or voice command.
- Hunt the dog and expose it to as many different places, terrain and types of field cover as possible. Make sure your dog is in good shape!
- Work on general obedience of the "here" or "come" command while practicing searches as well.

Field search has a score multiplier of 2.

**Pointing:** At most NA VJP's game birds are liberated for the evaluation of pointing. The type of bird used at a test will be quail, chukar or pheasants. Test programs must list what type of game will be utilized.

Style not of importance, but what is, is that the dog stops and points in a nice natural ability fashion, meaning the dogs' body doesn't go soft; it isn't turning its head back and forth and doesn't keep wagging its tail the whole time.

The amount of time a dog is expected to point isn't long, but it needs to be long enough for the judges to see and evaluate the dog's ability. This could be anywhere from 10 to 20 seconds. It is best if the handler and judges can calmly approach the dog.

If a bird is moving then the dog can and really should relocate and point bird again when it stops. The picking-up or leashing of the dog is not part of the pointing evaluation.

Handling tips:

- Pay close attention to your dog and work it in the direction you're told the birds are in.
- Keep close tabs on wind direction and be sure to work your dog from a downwind or most preferable a crosswind direction.
- Keep your dog well watered, if it's hot or thirsty call it to you before you get to the bird area and give it water.
- Don't say anything to your dog as it is working the bird scent, and don't say anything to your dog after it goes on point until the judges tell you to get your dog.
- Don't let your dog catch the bird if it flushes it. Call it, grab it, do whatever is necessary. Obedience in presence of game not being evaluated at the VJP so keep calling it, use your whistle.

Training tips for pointing:

- Use launchers for bird work and don't let your dog see the bird it's supposed to be pointing. Don't let your dog chase or catch a bird it pointed or flushed. Chasing after a bird is a reward/motivation for a dog not to point or hold a point.
- Pigeons are a great bird to do most of your pointing work with.
- Learn and use the Halt command in conjunction with pointing and steadiness work.

Pointing has score multiplier of 1.

**Cooperation:** A dog's cooperation is something that is offered to you by the dog and the manner in which the dog hunts and works with, and for you. A dog that won't point isn't as cooperative as a dog that does stop to point. At the VJP cooperation is evaluated over the entire course of the test.

Handling tips:

- Not a lot of handling tips for cooperation since it is something the dog offers to you. However, in field search pay attention to your dog and where it is and what it is doing. Walk at an appropriate speed in the field search and don't work in opposite direction of your dog.

Training tips:

- Develop a strong bond and working/hunting relationship with your dog.
- Teach the dog not to go on long sight chases after game and to check-in with you at times during the field search.
- Teach the dog to come when called.

Cooperation has score multiplier of 1.

**Desire:** A dog's desire to work is something that is part of its make-up and natural ability. It is evaluated over the entire course of the test.

Handling tips:

- Not a lot of handling tips for desire either since it is something the dog gives on its own. However, if you have a high drive dog work on shaping/tunneling its desire into a manageable form so that it can perform the given tasks in an appropriate manner.

Training tips:

- If you have a high desire dog (and most DD's are) very good obedience training is a must!
- If you have a low desire dog expose to more live game.

Desire has score multiplier of 1.

**Obedience:** A dog's obedience is evaluated over the course of the VJP but it is not scored. Either the dog is or isn't obedient at the VJP, and a dis-obedient dog at the VJP would be one that doesn't allow itself to be tested by always running off, and making it untestable.

Training aids are not allowed to be used while testing. This means no e-collars, no pinch collars or choke collars.

Handling tips:

- Call or whistle when you know/think they'll listen and obey. Don't keep calling and calling or whistling if they are not responding. If this is the case it's not a huge deal at the VJP unless your dog interrupts the test for a long enough period of time by not allowing you to pick him or her up.
- If your dog isn't listening to you and isn't returning the judges will simply tell you to go after your dog and get him or her gathered up.

Training tips:

- Make sure your young dog is well past obedience 101.
- A strong “here” or “come” command is imperative and one that the dog will obey without a e-collar and while under high distraction and in new places.
- Use and train with a whistle and teach the dog a whistle recall command!
- Make sure your dog will come and obey you in all different situations and locations(ie around the house, yard, out in fields, etc).