



**Note: ESSFT.COM received this Memo from ESSFTA.ORG Field Vice-President, Mike Nolan, on Thursday, July 7, 2022 for posting.**

MEMO FOR RECORD

SUBJECT: Gunning for Spaniel Field Trials

The Purpose of this Memo is to reduce confusion and to establish without hesitation a baseline of understanding that has seemed to become an area of confusion throughout the Spaniel Field Trial community.

1. The gunning of live birds is an integral part of the Field Trial game. The individuals who participate in the shooting of trials are volunteers who give their time and money to assist in the successful completion of Field Trial events.
2. It is critical to realize that the individuals who volunteer to shoot trials are doing so with excellent intentions and want to provide the dogs and handlers with a superior event. No one wakes up in the morning and decides that they plan on missing shots or do an unsafe act.

These two principles are important to keep in mind at every event.

There has been considerable discussion and input on the shooting of trials over this past year. This Memo is an attempt to explain the recent Board of Governors of the ESSFTA review of the "Gunning of Field Trials." A considerable number of skilled gunners, Pros and handlers were solicited for their opinions. Opinions varied and were discussed in detail at the Board meeting in April. They varied considerably from "We need More Training/Seminars" to "We have TOO Many seminars". The following seems to be true throughout the game:

- a. Effective Field Trial Committees have Good Guns/Good Grounds/Good Birds.
- b. Ineffective Committees have mediocre guns/poor grounds and weak birds.

There is also some erroneous understanding of duties and responsibilities with regard to gunning/Safety and the handling of complaints with regard to shooting.

Some of this confusion is caused by designating the Interclub Gunning managers "Safety" Officers. Let us be perfectly clear on the following responsibilities:

1. The Field Trial Committee is Responsible for the Gun Team and The Gun Captain and has the liability if there is any incident with regard to safety issues. That is why the insurance policies for the event are issued to the Field Trial Committee.
2. If an individual sees and "Unsafe" act they are to report it to the Gun Captain who will take action and notify the Field Trial Chairman. IF necessary the Field trial Committee as a whole will meet to discuss the incident and take corrective action.
3. The Parent Club and the AKC have no role in this action.
4. The Interclub Gun Chairman and the National Safety Gun Chairman have no direct line responsibility with the guns. They act in a Consultative role assisting the Field Trial Committees in teaching safe shots and recommending guns to the Committee and to discuss development of these individuals.

Speaking to long time, experienced guns there is a common element involved in their success. They shoot a great deal. Nothing takes the place of experience. Most shoot a significant number of training sessions. Most have spent lifetime hunting and understand the basics. Today's guns don't necessarily have the opportunities to shoot as much. We encourage the shooting of Skeet, Trap or Sporting Clays whenever possible. Training sessions are important to shoot as much as possible to give each gun the feel of the dogs. Encourage your guns to shoot.

Seminars and attending them is also encouraged. The basics need to be understood. Shooting for a field trial is different than just hunting. Seminars will raise the bar for your gun teams. We hope to encourage regional seminars to carry the message forth.

We had a tremendous amount of input concerning gunning. There are some small changes we hope to make to move the game forward in a positive manner. We have a time table for their introduction and ask you for your support.

It is all about the dogs.

ESSFTA Board Of Governors