

**Request to the ESSFTA**  
**Eligibility of ESS for Retriever Hunt Tests**

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### ***What breeds currently are eligible to run in a Spaniel Hunt Test?***

The following breeds currently are eligible to run in AKC Spaniel Hunt Tests:

- Airedale Terriers
- American Water Spaniels
- Boykin Spaniels
- Chesapeake Bay Retrievers
- Clumber Spaniels
- Cocker Spaniels
- Curly-Coated Retrievers
- English Cocker Spaniels
- English Springer Spaniels
- Field Spaniels
- Flat-Coated Retrievers
- Golden Retrievers
- Irish Water Spaniels
- Labrador Retrievers
- Nova Scotia Duck Tolling Retriever
- Nederlandse Kooikerhondje
- Sussex Spaniels
- Poodles – Standard and Miniature
- Welsh Springer Spaniels

### ***What breeds currently are eligible to run in a Retriever Hunt Test?***

The following AKC recognized and FSS breeds are eligible to participate in Retriever Hunting Tests:

- Airedale Terriers (8/1/19)
- American Water Spaniels
- Barbet
- Boykin Spaniels
- Chesapeake Retrievers
- Curly-Coated Retrievers
- Drentsche Patrijshond (Drent)
- Flat-Coated Retrievers
- German Shorthaired Pointer
- German Wirehaired Pointer
- Golden Retrievers
- Irish Water Spaniels
- Labrador Retrievers
- Miniature Poodles
- Nova Scotia Duck Tolling Retrievers
- Small Munsterlander
- Spinone Italiano
- Standard Poodles
- Vizsla
- Weimaraner
- Wirehaired Pointing Griffon

### ***What titles can be earned at Spaniel Hunt Tests? At Retriever Hunt Tests?***

*Spaniel Hunt Test titles:* As mentioned in the Regulations for AKC Hunting Tests for Spaniels. Chapter 2, Sections 2-4a, the core Hunt Test Titles of Junior Hunter, Senior Hunter and Master Hunter can be earned. In addition, advanced titles can be earned at all three levels (i.e., Junior Hunter Advanced, Senior Hunter Advanced and Master Hunter Advanced). Further, as of 3/1/19, section 5 has been added to Chapter 2 (and will appear in the next printing) specifying that a dog that has passed the Master Hunter test twelve or more times is eligible to be awarded a Master Hunter Lifetime Achievement Title.

*Retriever Hunt Test titles:* As mentioned in the Regulations & Guidelines for AKC Hunting Tests for Retrievers, Chapter 2, Section 6-7, the core Hunt Test titles of Junior Hunter, Senior Hunter and Master Hunter can be earned. In addition, three additional certificate titles (Master Amateur Hunter, Master National Hunter, and Master Hunter Lifetime Achievement) are offered.

### ***How would AKC titles for Spaniel Hunt Tests and Retriever Hunt Tests be differentiated?***

When a title is earned in a Spaniel Hunting Test by an eligible versatile hunting breed that is not a spaniel, that title is indicated as JHU, SHU, or MHU (i.e., Junior Hunter Upland, Senior Hunter Upland, or Master Hunter Upland). Breeds currently eligible for this title are: Curly-coated Retrievers, Flat-coated Retrievers, Irish Water Spaniels, Golden Retrievers, Labrador Retrievers, Chesapeake Bay Retrievers.

When a title is earned in a Retriever Hunting Test by an eligible versatile hunting breed that is not a retriever, that title is indicated as JHR, SHR, or MHR (i.e., Junior Hunter Retriever Senior Hunter Retriever, or Master Hunter Retriever). Breeds currently eligible for this title are: American Water Spaniel, Boykin Spaniel, German Shorthaired Pointer, German Wirehaired Pointer, Vizsla, Weimaraner, WPG, and Spinone Italiano.

Therefore, if an English Springer Spaniel were to earn any of the basic titles in both Spaniel Hunt Tests and Retriever Hunt Tests, their Spaniel Hunt Test titles would be JH, SH or MH; while titles earned by an English Springer Spaniel in Retriever Hunt Tests would be JHR, SHR, and MHR. Currently if a retriever earns any of the basic titles in both Spaniel Hunt Tests and Retriever Hunt Tests, their Retriever Hunt Test titles would be JH, SH or MH; while titles earned by a retriever in Spaniel Hunt Tests would be JHU, SHR, and MHR.

As an example, if a hypothetical English Springer Spaniel named Upland Dynamo had earned a Master Hunter title in a Spaniel Hunt Test, and a Senior Hunter title in a Retriever Hunt Test it would be known as Upland Dynamo MH SHR. Conversely, if a hypothetical Labrador Retriever named Wetland Wonder had earned a Master Hunter title in a Retriever Hunt Test and a Senior Hunter title in a Spaniel Hunt Test it would be known as Wetland Wonder MH SHU.

### ***Are all breeds running in AKC Hunt Tests, whether Spaniel or Retriever hunt tests, required to meet the same criteria? Will the requirements be “adjusted” to accommodate different breeds?***

All breeds eligible to run in AKC Spaniel Hunt Tests are required to perform the same test elements and meet the same performance criteria to receive qualifying scores, and the same number of qualifying scores must be earned by all eligible breeds to receive a title. The same is true of eligible breeds running in AKC Retriever Hunt Tests.

For example, the *Regulations for AKC Hunting Tests for Spaniels* makes clear in Chapter 5 that “the evaluation of a dog’s abilities can never be precise; it is not an exact science. However, the primary purpose of the flushing breeds is to hunt, find, flush and return birds to hand as quickly as possible in a pleasing and obedient manner; whether a dog accomplishes its primary purpose is determined by its possession of a unique set of both natural abilities, and abilities acquired through training. Judges must keep in mind the fact that they are evaluating numerically, a defined set of 5 categories (i.e., hunting ability, bird finding ability, flushing ability, trained abilities, and retrieving abilities) in Junior, Senior and Master Hunting Tests, and not judging a dog in relation to the performances or merits of the other dogs entered.” See the attached *Hunting Test for Spaniel Official Score Sheet*.

Similarly, the *Regulations & Guidelines for AKC Hunting Tests for Retrievers* establishes consistent requirements (including both test elements and performance criteria) for Junior, Senior and Master Hunting Tests that must be met for a qualifying score, regardless of breed. The regulations define a set of four categories (i.e., marking,

style, perseverance and trainability) that are evaluated. See attached *AKC Retriever Hunting Test Evaluation Form*.

***Do different breeds have different “hunting styles” against which they are to be judged in a Spaniel Hunt Test? Who determines the nature of a given breed’s hunting style?***

Although the different breeds eligible to run in a Spaniel Hunt Test must meet the same criteria to earn qualifying scores at each level of the test, the different breeds demonstrate a range of “hunting styles” (e.g., characteristics of the way a breed quarters, flushes, retrieves, handles water). The AKC has collected descriptions of each breed’s style from the respective Parent Clubs for each eligible breed and has made this information readily available at: <https://www.akc.org/sports/spaniels/hunting-tests/hunting-style/>

***What are the elements of a Spaniel Hunt Test? Of a Retriever Hunt Test?***

*A Spaniel Hunting Test* includes the following elements: land work (i.e., quartering to find, flush and retrieve game), a hunt dead (a blind land retrieve when only the general area of the dead bird is known by the handler), a marked water retrieve, and a water blind (where the exact location of the dead bird is known by the handler). Progressively more “finished” performances are required as a dog moves from a Junior, through a Senior, to a Master level of the test. The *Junior* hunting dog must find, flush, and have an opportunity to retrieve two birds on land. In addition, one bird must be retrieved from water with a shot fired. The retrieve should not normally exceed a distance of twenty-five yards nor should it be shortened by more than five yards. A *Senior* hunting dog must find, flush and retrieve two birds to hand on land. In addition, the dog must be line-steady at water and retrieve one bird to hand from water with a shot fired. The retrieve should not normally exceed a distance of thirty-five yards nor should it be shortened by more than five yards. A *Senior* hunting dog must also exhibit the ability to complete a “hunt dead” situation on land at a distance of 35 to 40 yards. A *Master* hunting dog must find, flush and retrieve two birds to hand on land; it must be line-steady at water and retrieve one bird to hand from water with a shot fired. The distance should be at least forty yards but should not normally exceed forty-five yards. In addition, a *Master* hunting dog must be tested on a water blind (a shot is not fired) that should not normally exceed forty yards but shall be at least thirty yards in distance. The *Master* dog must also exhibit the ability to “hunt dead” on land at a distance of 55 to 60 yards.

*A Retriever Hunting Test* includes the following elements: a marking series, and a blind series. Test distances on land and water should not normally exceed 100 yards at the Junior and Senior level; at the Master level distances should not normally exceed 150 yards. At the *Junior* level, dogs will be sent on a minimum of four single marks, two on land and two on water. At the *Senior* level, dogs shall be tested in a minimum of four hunting situations that shall include one land blind, one water blind (that may be run as a double blind on land and water), one double land mark, and one double water mark. There shall be at least one diversion shot and at least one of the hunting situations shall include a walk-up. At the *Master* level, dogs shall be tested in a minimum of five hunting situations as follows: multiple land marks, multiple water marks, multiple marks on water and land, a land blind and a water blind (at least one that shall be a double blind in any combination). At least one of the series shall include a walk-up. Diversion birds and/or diversion shots must be used at least once. In *Master* tests, in at least two multiple marking situations the dog’s marking/memory will be tested with at least (3) falls before the dog is sent to retrieve. The (3) falls must be presented before a dog is sent to retrieve any mark or blind. During a double set of marks (2 falls) *Master* judges shall include additional elements of testing (i.e., walkup, diversion bird, diversion shot, blind/s etc.) in testing the dog’s abilities.

***As eligible breeds are added to Spaniel and Retriever hunt tests, will the tests be “overrun” with entries to the extent that spaniels will not be able to gain a berth to run in Spaniel Hunt Tests, or retrievers not be able to gain a berth to run in Retriever Hunt Tests?***

The regulations for Spaniel Hunt Tests have addressed the concern of the Spaniel Hunt Test being overrun by non-spaniel eligible breeds as well as the concern that the Retriever Hunt Test might be overrun by non-retriever eligible breeds. In both respective Hunt Test regulations, it is made clear that as long as it is specified in the event premium that entries are limited to a specific number, entries of spaniels can be prioritized in spaniel hunt tests and entries of retrievers can be prioritized in retriever hunt tests. Specifically, the regulations state the following:

- If entries are limited to a specific number as stated in the premium, a Spaniel Club may, at its option, prioritize the entries for its Hunting Test to the Spaniel breeds (except the Irish Water Spaniel) plus Airedales. If at the time of closing the limit has not been reached, the Club must accept entries from other eligible breeds up to the event limit. If entries are to be prioritized to the Spaniel breeds (except the Irish Water Spaniel) and Airedales, this must be stated in the premium.
- If entries are limited to a specific number as stated in the premium, a Retriever Club may, at its option, prioritize the entries for its Hunting Test to the Retriever breeds plus the Irish Water Spaniel. If at the time of closing the limit has not been reached, the Club must accept entries from other eligible breeds up to the event limit. If entries are to be prioritized to the Retriever breeds and Irish Water Spaniels, this must be stated in the premium.
- All-breed hunting clubs and Airedale clubs may not prioritize their entries (except in the case of a test held in conjunction with their National Specialty Show).
- A Spaniel Club is defined by the club having “Spaniel” in its name (except for Irish Water Spaniel clubs). A Retriever Club is defined by the club having “Retriever” in its name plus Irish Water Spaniel clubs.
- A National Specialty Club may be approved to hold a Hunting Test open to its own breed, in conjunction with its National Specialty Show. The premium list must state that the event is open only to that Club’s breed.