

WD/X/Q HANDLER'S GUIDELINES

Participants will either be emailed a running order in advance of the test OR an online copy will be available. It is recommended that the participants provide their own copy to consult on the day of the event, as copies may not be available at the event.

Handler's suggestions:

1. In advance of the day of the event, it is advisable to review all rules for the test(s) you are running. In addition, it is advisable to train with birds, as your dog will be required to retrieve freshly shot birds.
2. On arrival at the event, check in with the marshal so they know you are present. Verify your running number with the marshal.
3. "Air" your leashed dog in the area designated and put it back in their crate in your vehicle until it's your turn to run. Do not let your dog see the tests, play with, bark at, or disturb other dogs or people. This is not a time to socialize your dog.
4. Before the test begins, the judge will explain the rules of the test to all handlers. A "test dog" will be run before the first test. Ask questions to the judges if you do not understand the test.
5. There are usually one or two "holding blinds" that you will be asked to wait in on the way to the line. Your dog cannot see the tests from these holding blinds. The marshal will call your number and tell you where to take your dog; for instance, the marshal may say, "Number 1 in first holding blind, number 2 in second blind, numbers 3 and 4 get ready." After you have proceeded to the first holding blind and the preceding dog has completed their test, the judges or marshal will call you to move up and/or to the line.
6. The use of pinch/prong collars and/or electronic collars is prohibited.

Suggested LINE PROCEDURES for the Handler

These may vary slightly depending on the test.

1. Walk to the line indicated by the judge or marshal, with your dog at heel. The line may be a mat, sticks, or an area designated by tape or paint. The dog can be on lead for the WD and WDX.
2. Tell the judge your number. For the WD and WDX stakes, be familiar with the leash and collar requirement.
3. When pointing out guns (or throwers) to your dog for the intended marks, use whatever commands that are familiar to you and your dog. Examples may be "Sit" and/or "Stay," and/or "Mark." Dogs tend to identify the mark best when the dog is facing the direction of the bird that is thrown.
4. For multiple marks, it is suggested that you indicate all gunners to the dog. Many handlers indicate the gunners to the dog in the reverse order in which the birds are to be thrown, so that the dog is left facing the first bird to be thrown or shot. It is not permissible to touch, knee, or shove the dog when identifying the gunners. It is permissible to repeat your commands prior to signaling to the judge that you are ready. When you and your dog are ready, it is permissible to repeat your commands prior to signaling to the judge that you are ready.
5. Signal the judge when you and your dog are ready. Common signals are to wave your opposite hand behind you so that it is not visible or distracting to the dog or nod your head. The signal is to inform the judge that they can call for the birds. After signaling, you cannot

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speak to the dog again until after the birds are thrown and your number is called. The judge will signal the gunner to shoot or throw the bird.

6. For multiple marks, after the first bird is shot and the dog has marked it, you may pivot towards the next bird to get the dog in position to mark the next throw. This may be repeated for each mark in the series. The judge, not the handler, will signal for all birds. You may NOT talk to your dog or pat your leg while birds are going down.
7. When the judge releases your dog by either calling your number or saying, "Dog," then you can release your dog to retrieve the "mark". Take your time. For multiple marks, the dog may pick up the birds in any order. Be sure that the dog is ready and looking in the right direction. If a dog in the WDX or WDQ "breaks" (goes before its number is called), the handler may call the dog back to "heel," but cannot threaten or intimidate the dog. If the dog comes to heel promptly, it is a "controlled break," and it's still eligible to continue the test. When the judge says your number, send the dog. For the WD, a dog can be held until released by the judge; therefore, it is advisable to hold your dog by the collar/slip cord so it cannot break.
8. Stand quietly until the dog picks up the bird. If the dog doesn't find the bird, the judge will signal the gunners to help the dog or tell you to "pick-up" or call your dog back in. You may not help the dog while it is hunting for the mark.
9. When the dog picks up the bird, you may blow a few sharp whistle blasts or use whatever "come-in" command that is familiar to you and your dog. If necessary, you may repeat the command to get the dog to come back. Calling the dog to the heel position is acceptable. Do not threaten your dog. Take the bird from the dog any time AFTER it has delivered to the area designated by the judges. Once the dog delivers the bird to hand or the designated area, take it and hold it so that the dog does not try to take it again. Do not put it on the ground. The judge, marshal, or bird steward will take the bird from the handler.
10. Note: Always hand bird(s) to a judge or hold it behind you until someone takes it from you. At the discretion of the judges, you may be allowed to drop the birds in a bucket instead of handing them to a judge. Do not drop the bird on the ground.
11. If the dog drops the bird before crossing the line, you may tell it to retrieve it using a command familiar to the dog. Be firm but not overly aggressive. If you touch the bird or dog before the dog has crossed into the designated area or line, you have failed the test. If the test does not require delivery to hand, as in the WD Stake, and the dog drops the bird after crossing the line and within two steps from you, you may pick the bird up.
12. For multiple marks, when the dog returns with a bird, and before you take delivery of the bird, it is suggested to have the dog lined up towards the next bird to be retrieved. This will help the dog to quickly remember the next mark and be pointed in the right direction prior to being sent. You may line your dog up for the next bird by patting your leg if needed or by using voice commands, but do not touch the dog between birds. Take your time.
13. Once the test is completed, place the lead back on the dog and leave the line (WD/WDX). In the WDQ, the lead is replaced after you have heeled the dog behind the judges' chairs. When the test is finished, you may praise the dog. (You may give a big sigh of relief!)

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Special considerations

1. In the WD/WDX tests, the dogs may be brought to the line on leash. For the WD, a dog can be held until released by the judge; therefore, it is advisable to hold your dog by the collar/slip cord so it cannot break.
2. For the WDQ, leashes are removed in the holding blind prior to advancing to the line.
3. Generally, the dog who is ready for multiple retrieves is "Steady" and will stay on the line until it is sent/released. This is applicable for the WDX and WDQ stakes.