

POPPER GUNNER DUTIES

WC/WCX popper gunners shall be dressed white or light colored clothing. The club provides a popper shotgun, blank ammunition, a gun stand and ear protection, and has a limited quantity of white clothing items for gunners. Plan to bring a white coat or shirt to wear while in the field. You should provide a chair, gloves and any other gear you feel you need.

Arrive at the test grounds at the time designated by the Chief Marshal. Report to the Chief Marshal, who will tell you where the test you are working is to be set up. Go to the site and report to the Stake Marshal who will show you your station and answer any questions you have.

Instruction on using the popper guns and wingers will be provided one-half hour prior to the time designated for meeting with the Chief Marshal.

You will be working as a team with a thrower. You and your thrower should position yourselves and equipment to be clearly visible by the working dog. The location of your station, which has been determined by the judges, is called a "mark." Before the test starts, you will be told the sequence of the various marks. If, for example, you are mark number 1, then yours will be the first blank shot fired/dead bird thrown. If you are mark number 2, another popper and thrower team will have fired/thrown before the judge signals your team.

Before a dog and handler come to the line to do their retriever test, you should get ready. The gun will be mounted in a gun stand and should not be removed during the test. The gun should be pointed in the direction the bird will be thrown. Usually, the judge will call out, "guns up." You should at that point have a blank round of ammunition loaded and ready in the chamber of your gun. Even if the judge doesn't call out, you should be attentive to what is going on at the line, and when you see a new dog and handler approach the line, be ready. Cock the gun at that point. At the Judge's signal (a raised hat, hand, clipboard, or similar signal), you fire the blank round ("popper"). After you "pop," the thrower will toss the dead bird to the spot designated by the Judges.

In some circumstances, one person will fire the shotgun and throw the bird. We try to provide two persons at each station, but at times there are not enough workers. The station procedures are the same. The shotgun, and winger, if used, are positioned to permit the gunner to shoot the gun, and then release or throw the bird. If you are at a one person station there should be an extra chair at the station, draped with white clothing, positioned in the view of the working dog.

Once you have fired the blank, remain visible, motionless and quiet. Do not talk. Do not move around while the dog is working. Do not eject the empty shell and/or reload until the dog has picked up the all birds and is well on his way back to the handler. Then quietly reload and wait for the next dog and handler to come to the line.

Do not have any food with you at your position. If you have water or a soft drink, keep it tucked away under your chair. Sometimes lunch is provided in the field while the test is still going on. If this is the case, police up and secure all residual food, napkins and bags before any dog runs.

During the tests, respond to the requests and directions of the judges. Safety of people and dogs are paramount. If at any time for any reason, the judge is not comfortable with the pop or throw, or there is some other unforeseen event (a loose dog, for example, runs into the test area), the judge will call a "no bird." The test stops at this point. The bird, if already thrown, is picked up at the judge's direction, and the dog and handler who have been at the line will get another chance, starting over. Watch the judges, not the dog. Occasionally a dog may break before all marks are thrown. The judge will continue to call for the birds to be thrown, so be alert.

IF the judge signals you, you pull the trigger, and NOTHING HAPPENS, you may instantly realize that you forgot to cock the gun. Don't panic. Cock the gun and fire the blank. If the timing is not to the judges' liking, the Judge will call "no bird," and the dog and handler team will get another chance.

IF the judge signals you, you pull the trigger, and NOTHING HAPPENS, and you KNOW you heard the hammer release, you may have a misfire or hang fire. Don't panic, but treat the gun as a loaded weapon. Tell the judges your gun misfired. The judge will call a "no bird" and a qualified person will examine the shotgun, clear it, and make certain that it's in working order. It may be only that the particular blank round was defective.

At the conclusion of the series, make certain that the area around your station is cleaned up, and that all equipment, birds and unused blank ammunition is accounted for and returned to the Stake Marshal. Insure that the shotgun is not loaded, and leave the breach open