

Popper Job Description

Poppers should be dressed in hunting gear, camouflage, or dark clothing. The club provides a popper shotgun, blank ammunition, and ear protection. If you have a comfortable field chair or folding chair, bring it along (nothing white, please). UNLESS you are a popper for the WC/WCX. For the WC/WCX, the poppers and throwers wear white shirts and/or hats, or very light clothing.

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 set up. Go to the site and report to the Stake Marshal who will show you your station and answer any questions you have.

Prior to the beginning of the test, have someone show you how the popper gun operates. There are a number of different models, each slightly different. Practice loading and unloading (in a safe area). Know where the safety is, and keep it on at all times except when you are at your station and are ready to fire. Always treat an empty gun or a gun loaded with popper (blank) ammunition as if it were a weapon loaded with live ammunition.

You will be working as a team with a Thrower. 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 team of popper and thrower 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. 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. Release the safety. At the Judge's signal (a raised hat, hand, clipboard, or similar signal), you fire the blank round ("popper"). Never point the shotgun in the direction of any person or dog. To fire, point up and away, in approximately the direction which the bird will be thrown. After you "pop," the thrower will toss the dead bird to the spot predesignated by the Judges. The judge will instruct you on when you should pop relative to when the bird is thrown, but normally, in the WC/WCX test you fire first and then throw. In the Hunt Test, the bird is normally thrown first and then you fire at the highest arc of the bird.

Once you have fired the blank, remain still. 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 bird and is well on his way back to the handler. Then quietly reload, put the safety on, 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.

As the test location changes, make certain that the area around your station is cleaned up, and that all equipment and unused blank ammunition is accounted for and returned to the Stake Marshal. If you are working at the end of the day, make sure that all equipment and unused blank ammunition is accounted for and returned to the test headquarters area.

And if:

IF the Judge signals you, you pull the trigger, and NOTHING HAPPENS, you may instantly realize that you forgot to release the safety. Don't panic. Release the safety, 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 released the safety, you may have a jam or hangfire. Don't panic, but treat the gun as a loaded weapon. Tell the Judges your gun jammed. The Judge will call a "no bird" and a qualified person will examine the shotgun and make certain that it's in working order. It may be only that the particular blank round got stuck.