

COONHOUND ADVISOR

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Associations are all around us and we are often bombarded with advertisements or pleas to join the fight for or against whatever it is those associations stand for. For the majority of my life, I was quick to disregard anyone or anything that required my money, for what I saw as nothing in return. As I've grown and become more aware, I certainly see the benefit and the necessity of the associations out there. In most cases, those associations don't ask anything of us aside from a small monetary donation. To those associations, volunteers are a must but also, there is strength in numbers and the higher they can get those membership numbers, the more influence they have.

Two types of associations come to mind as I am typing this. The first would be the associations that fight for our rights as houndsmen and outdoorsmen. I stay paid up in organizations like Sportsmen's Alliance, Hunter Nation, Michigan Hunting Dog Federation (we should all support our state associations) and a few others that protect the rights that matter most to me. The second type are associations such as the coonhound breed specific associations, that support our interests and passions. Some of the second type of associations may not have the ability to address legal issues, but they sure do a lot for their members and the breeds they represent. Let's discuss.

This past weekend I was in Flora, IL at the United English Breeders & Fanciers Association's annual English Days event. As part of an agreement between the English Association and UKC, UKC is currently taking and keeping track of memberships for them. That left me at the table, taking English Association memberships for the first time ever. During that time, I was presented with the question, "What does joining this Association do for us?" I would be lying if I said the question didn't catch me off guard. I stammered as I gave a half-hearted reply about being a member to get the prizes available that weekend, along with most other major events that the English Association supports. Yeah, it's obvious I wouldn't cut it in sales.

During the ride home, I marinated on that question in my mind and kicked myself for the reply. Breed Associations are the single biggest advertisement there is for the breed of your choice. That association has taken on the task of promoting the breed, preserving the integrity of that breed, and rewarding the accomplishments of the folks within that breed. They are often there for their membership at every major event. Some send trophies, some send prizes, and some send money. Regardless of that, those officers are volunteering their time for the folks in their breed and that says a lot about them and their belief in what that association and the people within

that association means to them. The biggest thing to take away from this is sometimes the question isn't what the association can do for you, it's what you can do for your association to make sure it continues thriving into the future. Coon hunting without the ability to go to your breed day event and enjoying the company of longtime friends with the same passion for a breed of dogs as you is what this sport is all about. Plus, you may kick yourself a decade from now when you don't have a shelf full of breed albums to look back on.

Withdrawn Dog Scratched For Fighting

Q: I have a question I need help with about a hunt I was on last night. Two dogs were declared treed, and we were heading to the tree. On the way in, it was obvious one dog had left the tree and it was minused, followed by the handler withdrawing the dog. We continued to the tree and the withdrawn dog (which hadn't been caught at that point) circled back to the tree, which resulted in a dog fight between the two hounds. I could not determine the aggressor, so I scratched both dogs involved.

The call was questioned and taken back to the Master of Hounds who overruled my call, citing that the withdrawn dog couldn't be scratched for fighting as it's no longer a member of the cast and the treed dog couldn't be scratched because it was fighting with a dog that was no longer a member of the cast. Did the Master of Hounds get this ruling correct?

A: Great question! We rarely get questions that aren't repetitive but this one was a new one for me and one that I frankly have not encountered on a cast. UKC's official interpretation in this situation would have been to scratch both dogs involved in the fight, as you originally did. I hate to undermine a Master of Hound's ruling publicly, but with this case being such a rare occurrence, it's safe to say that the precedence hadn't been made officially yet. While considering these questions, we use the rulebook to make the best determination, while also keeping in mind what can happen as a result of the ruling.

Let's take a look at the rulebook for some clarification. Rule 6(b) is where we will find the Scratched for Fighting rule. It reads that a dog will be scratched, *For fighting or attempting to fight**, when off-leash during the hunt, including any time-out periods. When the aggressive dog is known, scratch the aggressor only. If not known, scratch dogs involved. Withdrawing to avoid dog being reported for fighting is not permitted.

The clear and concise part is, the aggressor is not known, so both dogs would be scratched in this case. A dog previously withdrawn, while not pointed out by name in the rule, is still considered off-leash during the hunt. Furthermore, if a dog is held liable for its actions after the hunt has concluded and during time-out periods, shouldn't it be considered the same in this case?

Sometimes bad breaks happen on a hunt and while this is in part one of those cases, the dogs should be held accountable for their actions as well.

Let's be honest for a second and think about if the interpretation were to rule the other way. How many weekends would it take before we got a call that on the way to a tree, the cast hears some extracurricular activities happening, and a guy hunting a dog with some temperamental tendencies decides to withdraw "for some reason." That is a can of worms that is better left closed!

Entering Hunts When You Aren't There

Let's take it back to the very basics of any coonhound event, the entry. You can't compete if you don't enter, so it makes sense to touch on this topic because there does seem to be some confusion surrounding it. One component of taking entries that UKC fields a lot of calls on is people entering their dog before they arrive. Most of the time, this consists of a person running late after work, or a prior obligation causing them to cut it a little too close to the deadline.

First things first, there is no extending the deadline. No exceptions. Traffic, car trouble, baby-sitter backed out, overslept...those are all great excuses, but they do not warrant an extension. A common phrase I hear is, "Why are you so strict on the deadline? It only hurts UKC." Sure, we know that it would help the club and UKC if there were more entries, but if you make an exception, where is the next line drawn? What good is a deadline if there are exceptions and extensions that you have to police? If your solution is....setting another deadline, that doesn't seem like a reasonable answer.

The option that is most often used when a person is running late, is to call your buddy at the club to get you entered. Notice I said buddy. We aren't even going to entertain the idea of calling the entry taker, who already has their hands full, and adding more work and responsibility on them. This is 100% fine as long as you understand the risks. Having someone enter your dog for you will buy you a little time but when the time comes to call your cast and you aren't there to answer that call, you are scratched. There is no one-hour grace period, regardless of the rumors that are heard swirling around. Any amount of time the cast waits is just them being courteous to you.

Speaking of being courteous, let's all take a moment to thank the folks who volunteer to guide hunts these days. With big hunting, independent dogs becoming the norm instead of the exception, guiding has become more and more difficult. At a lot of the major events, there are

situations where casts are sent a distance away to meet their hunting or non-hunting guide. This guide is doing a service to the host club, the association, UKC, and quite frankly the hunters. There are absolutely no grounds to scratch a guide that is meeting you at a location a half hour drive down the road. When the club or association met with that cast and gave them instructions on where to go, that was as good as the guide being there. Sometimes these situations require a little bit of common sense. And in the case of a guide that has volunteered their time and land to take your cast, a little appreciation would be nice as well.

Uh-Oh, Wrong Division

One of the worst feelings for a person putting on an event is the moment you realize that a cast winner has won a cast in the incorrect division. What I mean is, a Registered dog put on a Champion cast or vice versa. The situation can get even more sticky at some of the larger major events where they split up their Nite Champion and Grand Nite Champion dogs as well. This happened at a larger event a few weeks ago and the dread with having to break the news that the owner's win was considered illegitimate was real. It's a good topic to bring up because it is important that hunters and showers are aware of this happenstance.

Any win acquired outside of the class or division in which the dog is currently in, is considered an illegitimate win to UKC. That means that any win picked up in that division will not count towards the dog's championship points, or towards Tournament of Champions, Top Ten, Performance points, etc. The majority of the time the entry takers, Bench Show Judges, and Master of Hounds do a great job making sure that the dog is entered in the correct class. However, everyone makes mistakes. As easy as it is to get frustrated with the event officials, some accountability must be taken by the entrant.

When the Champion Division casts are being called and they call your Registered dog's name, that should be a clear-cut sign that a mistake was made. Same goes for a bench show when you are showing your 3-year-old hound and they call you in for the puppy class. Something is not right. The good thing about both of these scenarios is that when you are paying attention to what is going on, you can catch any mistakes that are made and get in the correct class to earn the points and titles that you deserve.