

COONHOUND ADVISOR

Trevor Wade

October is here and with it comes cooler weather, Halloween decorations and the conclusion of our World Championship. September is always a huge month for United Kennel Club as we crown our World Champions which will be highlighted in this issue and our Autumn Oaks Champions which were highlighted in last month's issue. By this point, I know most people are going to shift their focus to fewer competition hunts and more long nights tweaking and tuning those young hounds with what I hope is a successful hunting season for everyone. While you're sitting on the tailgate waiting for Ol' Roscoe to come treed, here are a few rule topics for you to look over and think about.

Deadlines

With double headers becoming more and more popular, so have the calls and emails regarding deadline times. For clubs that are new to the double header format or unfamiliar with how it works, spacing your early and late round entry deadlines out appropriately is imperative! Let us dive into this a little further...

I would say the most common mistake would be for a club to only take drive time and hunt time into consideration with no thought going towards time outs or having to move locations. Even in a one-hour hunt, if dogs were to get out of pocket or on a busy road that caused a cast to call time out, you can burn an hour catching dogs quickly. It would be my recommendation to never have shorter than 4 hours between rounds. Meaning if you have an early deadline of 7 P.M., your late hunt deadline would be 11 P.M.

Is this the perfect solution? No, it's not. Another thing clubs need to take into consideration is what time it gets dark in your area in that time of the year. I got a message just this week about a double header late hunt that was missed due to not having enough time to get back and that hunt even had that 4-hour gap between rounds. The problem was, the early round deadline was 7 P.M. but it didn't get good and dark until 8:30 P.M. which put the hunters in that particular cast in a bind when a dog got deep and treed towards the end of hunt time. I understand that bad breaks happen, but you need to help the hunters out and give them as much time as you can to get their hunt in and complete without stressing about the 2nd hunt.

Another common question we get is, how do I ensure that I can hunt the 2nd hunt before I leave for my 1st Round cast? My honest answer is, there is no way to 100% ensure it but there are ways for you to help yourself out. When I talk to clubs about this very issue, I always encourage them to take entries for both hunts before they send the 1st Round out to hunt. It is a win/win situation for the club as they have a decent idea of what they need to plan for as far as guides and judges go for the late round and it gives the hunter peace of mind knowing that as long as they are back by the return deadline for the Early Round, they will be good to go. With that in mind, if I'm the MOH or HD, I will let the early round deadline pass before I consider drawing casts, even if I had to make the deadline a half-hour after the 2nd hunt entry deadline due to a higher number of entries than expected and/or having to send a cast further than originally expected.

Recasting Your Dog

Q: How do I know how far to let a handler walk his dog off a scored tree when I'm judging a cast since there is no time limit in the rulebook?

A: This is one of the rules that was up for vote at Autumn Oaks last year but didn't pass. I can tell you that a lot of the discussion centered on the freedom of the guide or judge to allow the handler to walk a little more or less, depending on the surrounding area and the other dogs in the cast.

UKC's position on this is to give the power to the appointed judge to make sure that handlers don't walk any more or less than is deemed necessary. Our nite hunt rules put an emphasis on strong, capable judges and this is one of the situations where a judge's authority comes into play. If a handler is being unreasonable, the judge needs to step in and take control of the situation.

Dogs being struck or treed does alter the way you approach this a bit. Be sure that if there are dogs on the cast struck in but no dogs declared treed, you get to the spot where the struck dog(s) were last heard and run the 8-minute clock on the struck hound until it barks. At that point, the dog on the leash must be recast. If any or all dogs on the cast are declared treed, the handler has the option to recast the hound or keep it on the leash until the next opportunity presents itself. The definition of next opportunity would be when the next dog is scored, whether you have arrived and scored the tree, or the dog were to leave the tree before the cast arriving.

If you ever have a question about recasting your hound, Rule 11(d) is a great place to start. A lot of information can be found there that we get questions about daily.

Handler Etiquette While Showing

I recently had a conversation with a UKC licensed Bench Show Judge at a major coonhound event where the judge expressed concern regarding handler etiquette in the shows the person had judged recently. The judge requested that I made note of it in the advisor column so I will touch on it quickly. A lot of times when handler behavior is discussed, it has to do with how they treat the judge or other participants but, in this case, it is focused more on how they treat their hound.

I will not act like I am any sort of expert when it comes to handling dogs. I would consider myself a novice when it comes to getting a hound to gait or stack properly. However, I do know that the pressure from outside entities that want to take away our rights as hounds people is stronger now than ever before and the last thing they need is more ammunition to use against us.

Jerking, slapping, or any sort of over-aggressive correction needs to be done on your own time, training your hound outside of the show ring. To me this is no different than trying to correct your hound for making a slick tree in a nite hunt. Training and preparations are to be made during the week, not during the event. You just have to grit your teeth, take your minus and work harder for the desired results.

I just want to reiterate; I don't personally see this happen often but if writing these few paragraphs can help shine a more positive light on the sport then it is my duty to do so. Keep in mind that you never know who is watching. Don't let winning a show take precedent over the perception that may be formed by a first-time onlooker or anti-hunter.

Attention!

The following person's Nite Hunt Director and Nite Hunt Judging privileges have been suspended until the date listed.

Timmy Murrell • Booneville, Kentucky

Indefinite

Violations to these privileges should be reported to the United Kennel Club.

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