

COONHOUND ADVISOR

Trevor Wade

It's the time of year where a lot of coon hunters either have their hunting way slowed down or put on hold altogether. High temperatures, ticks, mosquitos, gators, snakes, and plenty of other things factor into that decision, depending on where you live. I know there are some that flat out don't enjoy hunting when they don't have the ability to harvest game. I remember back in my novice years when you could buy a decent dog this time of year, since the owner wasn't going to be using it for five or six months and was more than willing to get some cash and have one less mouth to feed. Now in the social media era, this time of year you'll see dogs up for sell or trade "for something that doesn't eat." If a person keeps an eye out, they could luck themselves into a nice dog. I've had a couple decent ones fall into my lap that way in the past.

What is really frustrating for passionate hunters is seeing a group of hounds that have been "dumped" somewhere in the offseason with no collars and no owner in sight. I know it doesn't happen much, but when it does it sure gets shared a lot to give hound hunters a black eye they don't need. I recently fielded a call from an animal control office in northern Indiana. A group of five treeing walker females had been found in a residential area the week prior and they were looking for information. To make the incident worse, four treeing walker females had popped up in the same area just a couple years prior. The area they found the hounds, coupled with the appearance and demeanor of the hounds led them to believe that the two instances were related.

It was sure disheartening to listen to the stereotypes that were being thrown around. To be honest, in this instance, it was hard for me to defend. Obviously, I reassured them that the vast majority of hunters take great care of our dogs. Top dog food, supplements, housing, exercise, and veterinary care are afforded to our hunting dogs that we have invested lots of time and money into. But when you're talking to a person who has had nothing but negative incidents regarding hunting dogs, it's sure hard to change their opinion. I guess the reason I am taking the time to say this is we can all use the best resources for our dogs and afford them all the top care available, but it just takes one person to plant a bad seed in a non-hunter's mind. I never want to be the cause of that bad seed and I hope you don't either.

Veteran Casts

Q: I just turned 67 years-old and have a hard time keeping up with younger cast members on a regular cast. I always jump at the opportunity to be a part of a senior cast at a hunt. At an event I was at, there was a senior on my cast that had a spectator with him in his mid-thirties. Halfway through the hunt, the senior was really

struggling to complete the cast and handed off the card to his spectator. None of us objected at the time but I was wondering what UKC's ruling would be in this instance.

A: I sure hope that I have the opportunity and capability to hunt at your age, let alone have the ability to compete. And I'm glad to hear that you are taking advantage of being in a senior cast, as you've certainly earned that right. For those readers who may not be as familiar with the concept of Veteran Casts, most events have the option for Veteran Casts if they have the entry requirements. The only exceptions are UKC slam events, Autumn Oaks, Winter Classic, and any portion of the UKC World Championship or UKC Tournament of Champions. You can refer to Page 61 in your *Official Coonhound Rulebook* for clarifications, but I will give a few details here.

Anyone age 55 or older is eligible to compete in a Veteran's Cast. It requires a minimum of three individuals in the same category in order for a Veteran's Cast to be drawn. That cast will have no separate considerations as far as rules and/or placements. And obviously with these casts having the same rules, spectators are allowed and there is no age requirement for those spectators.

Now that we have caught everyone up on the particulars of Veteran casts, what do we do about the situation that is listed above? It is UKC's stance that in order for a handler to compete in a Veteran's cast, they must meet the minimum age requirement. In the instance above, the 30 year-old spectator does not meet that requirement and would not be eligible to handle a dog in this cast. Therefore, if the senior handler is unable to complete the hunt time, the dog would have to be withdrawn from the cast. It is important to preserve that even playing field and an alternate ruling here could sure open the door for manipulation in the future.

Uh-Oh!

Q: I was on a three-dog cast last weekend where all three dogs were declared together, right out of the truck. As we are heading to the tree, two of the hounds have hushed and my dog is the only one we can hear. Once we get in there, my hound was treeing, while the other two, a male and a female, were stuck together at the base of the tree. The type of stuck that indicates they had just completed breeding. Obviously, the female is scratched per Rule 6(d) but what do we do with the male's strike and tree points?

A: Well, that is one way to get some puppies on the ground quick. In all honesty, this is a good reminder to keep an eye on your female, especially before putting her in a cast with male dogs. To get to the question, you are right. The female is scratched per Rule 6(d) which says dogs will be scratched if; *Bitches smelling strong enough to attract dogs, or a dog that is just bad to bother other dogs.*

I know that in the conversation I had with this individual, they cited calling time-out for interference and deleting the points. Unfortunately, you won't find this

situation outlined in Rule 7 to warrant calling timeout. And as we've discussed multiple times in this article and in the new UKC Hunting Ops Podcast, even though interference is a catch all word, you won't find it mentioned in the Rulebook and that is because there are no scoring breaks for instances a handler may consider "interference".

Instances that some handlers would consider to be interference, we would label bad breaks. And that is exactly what happened to the male in the situation listed above, a bad break. Whenever the cast arrives at the tree and find two of the dogs that have been declared treed locked up, they are obviously not treeing to the satisfaction of the judge. With the female being scratched, the male would then be handled and minused both ways.

Striking On or Before the Third Bark Clarification

This is a topic written by Allen back in March 2016. There was some debate on it recently, so I decided to pull it back in for a refresher course. I had to make a couple slight alterations to match today's running rules.

Q: Let's say a dog barks two times then shuts up. Twenty minutes go by, and the dog hunts in a completely different direction and barks once. Does this count as the third bark and must the dog be struck or, is this considered the first bark again with two to go? Seems if eight minutes denotes a dead or lost track that the same should apply to a dog that has opened and not been declared struck. If a dog opens once, but is not struck, and eight minutes lapse without another bark, seems to me like the bark requirement should start over. What is the reason for the three-bark rule in the first place? If a dog opens once, and a handler cautiously refrains from striking him in on a track he can't finish, why penalize the handler by requiring him to strike on the second bark 20 minutes later? On a somewhat related topic, is it permissible to declare a dog struck 5, 15 or even 50 minutes after its last bark?

A: Neither the UKC Nite Honor Rules nor UKC interpretations of such have ever referred to a time frame or distance requirement which would in effect re-start the number of barks a dog could make before being required to strike the dog. You must strike your dog on or before the third bark regardless. While I certainly can't speak for the reason that the three-bark rule was originally adopted, I can only assume that it was put in place to hold hounds accountable for tracks that they opened on.

Playing the devil's advocate, let's look at an example of how many times a hound could open without being struck in if the eight minutes actually re-set the bark requirement as you suggest. First, the dog could bark for a solid minute without being declared struck. So as not to confuse the issue, we'll say in our example that after the first minute, a dog opens twice but is not declared struck. Eight minutes later, he opens twice more and is not struck. And so on. Two hours later, this hound could have opened 30 times without being declared struck or penalized. And what if the dog treed a coon right off the tailgate put some plus

on the scorecard, then opened twenty more times the rest of the hunt without being declared struck or penalized? That would be a tough way to get beat.

In regards to your second question, you can only strike a hound that is opening on trail at that time the dog is struck. That portion of Rule 2 which states, "Dog must open and be heard opening when declared struck or treed" has been interpreted by UKC to mean that a dog must be opening when the call is made. This prevents a handler from holding off on one bark and jumping in behind someone else for second when a second dog barks and is struck ten minutes later. If you elect not to strike him when he opens, you have to live with it when the competition is getting struck in and your dog isn't saying a word.

One more thing, it's my understanding that in some parts of the country it's become an issue that if you're not in the process of saying "strike" as your dog is in the process of making its third bark, you will be eligible for the reprimand that is due for your offense. Whether it be warning for first offense, minus for second offense, or scratched for third offense. That's not true. On the third bark means immediately following the third bark, but before the fourth as far as I'm concerned. Dang, it's really not that complicated, is it?



Attention!

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

Darrel Barker • Rockford, IL
Scott Johnson • Monroe, WI
October 19, 2022

Justin Crockett • Senatobia, MS
May 1, 2024

Violations to these privileges should be reported to the United Kennel Club.
Rev. 5/2/2022