

# COONHOUND ADVISOR

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Winter is here in full force in southwest Michigan. As I write this, I am trying to acclimate back to the below freezing temperatures and the foot of snow outside after my trip home from 60 degrees and sunny South Carolina. Although I know that isn't always the case there, it was a welcomed addition this past weekend.

It is hard to believe that it is already time to gear up for one of my favorite events of the year, Winter Classic. Before my employment at UKC, I was lucky enough to travel to Batesville a few times for Winter Classic. I always enjoyed the facilities there and the hospitality you received from the locals. The Civic Center has that big event feel when you walk out onto the concourse and look down over the arena floor at the vendors and booths set up, and the bench show going on. It also makes for a neat set up for calling out casts.

Recently I was doing an interview with a hound related podcast, and we got on the topic of major events. The topic specifically was how to get the most out of your trip to a major event. I couldn't help but to think back to my early days in competition hunting. Back then, social media wasn't as prevalent, but the narrative was always how cutthroat the competition scene was. It was about cheating, dog fights, and arguments. Fast forward to now, now that I've been in plenty of casts, and I know that isn't the case. For a person familiar with the rules and their dog, I would say the overwhelming majority of casts are very enjoyable. Sure, there are bad apples out there, but you will have that in any venture or hobby you have.

I think the key to having a successful hunt, is to go into it with a positive mindset. If you go into a cast looking for trouble and on the defensive, more than likely it is going to be miserable for you. If you go into a cast or event with a positive mindset, confident in yourself and your dog, you are going to have a great time, win or lose. Don't always believe what you see and hear on social media. Go out and have a good time with like minded people. That is what it is all about.

Due to the travel schedule, I have a short deadline and I'm going to refer back to some articles from the past that still seem very pertinent today. Some things had to be changed to match rule updates.

### Hunt Cancellation Policy

**Q:** I recently went to a UKC hunt, and the weather was bad. I entered my dog in the Champion category. I was the only entry in the Champion Division. There was also one entry in the Registered Division. When the entry deadline hit, the MOH announced there would be no hunt and called for us to come up, and he gave our entry fees back. When asked why there would be no hunt, the MOH stated you had to have at least two dogs entered in Registered hunt or you could not have a hunt. (Also, there were non-hunting Judges

available) I believe this to be incorrect and am furious over it. Would you please give some guidance by answering the following questions?

1. Does there have to be two dogs entered in the Registered division to have a UKC hunt?
2. If there is only one dog entered in a hunt (example, Nite Champion) do you still have the hunt or do you cancel it?
3. Do I have any recourse against this club and Master of Hounds?

**A:** With any given weekend of bad weather sweeping across the country, the UKC phone lines light up on Monday morning with questions similar to the one received above. It's a bad situation, to say the least, but this is a situation that clubs and officials need to know how to address if and when it happens to them.

Since the beginning of licensed events, it's been acceptable to have a one-dog Champion cast. It's only been for the last decade or so that it has been acceptable to have a one-dog Registered cast. If you remember back, it was the cast breakdown sheet that prohibited less than three-dog casts in the Registered portion of the hunt. Well, that prohibition has since been dropped. One and two-dog casts, when a lack of entries require such, are now permissible in both categories of a UKC Licensed event. Just keep in mind that in the case of one-dog casts, the club needs to assign a non-hunting Judge right from the start. Can you have a one-dog hunt? Yes.

I think the key issue here is that under no circumstances may a club or a licensed official "cancel" a hunt. If the weather is so bad that nobody shows up, fine, no hunt. That kind of stuff happens. We won't receive any complaint calls because nobody was there anyway. The problem arises when someone does show up for the event and there are no club members present because they didn't think it was fit to hunt. When a participant does show up, then they need to have the opportunity to hunt. It's of paramount importance that people be able to trust the Upcoming Events list so that they are willing to get in their truck and know that they will have a chance to hunt at the end of that 100-mile drive.

Do you have any recourse? You can submit a signed/written complaint against the club. UKC will contact the club and take appropriate action. Appropriate action may vary, depending on whether or not we are dealing with a probationary club and may range from a warning letter to probation to a suspension of licensed event privileges.

### Time Allowed For Tardy Handlers/Cast Lost on Way to Woods

**Q:** Recently, I entered two dogs in an RQE where I had a friend of mine handle one of the dogs. My handler had called the Master of Hounds earlier that day and advised him he may be a few minutes late, but that I would be entering the dog for him. He was told that shouldn't be a problem, as it would take a little time for him to get all the

casts drawn before calling them out anyway. Unfortunately, the handler had not arrived at the clubhouse yet when the casts were called out. After waiting a period of time, the guide and judge on that particular cast tried persuading the Master of Hounds to scratch the dog so they could head out. I feel it was done only with the intent to eliminate competition when they were told he was still on his way. Eventually, the Master of Hounds scratched the dog, and the cast was told to go without him. In the meantime, my handler arrived, and the cast had not yet left the grounds but was told by the Master of Hounds he was already scratched and there was nothing that could be done at that point. Should he not have been given at least one hour for “delay of the cast” considering he had called the Master of Hounds and told him he would be late? If not, where is there a written rule that a Master of Hounds can apply to scratch a dog/handler for not being on the grounds within a certain amount of time?

**A:** This question was recently posted on the UKC message board, and it immediately caught my eye as I was present at the RQE where this incident took place. The handler had asked for a Formal Complaint, which was granted, but before writing it up, he came to me and told me about the situation. He also told me about calling the Master of Hounds earlier that day and felt he was treated unfairly. I told him it was an unfortunate situation and that obviously the Master of Hounds had made his decision and could not overturn it. He agreed and left it at that but was obviously a little upset over the whole deal.

In such a situation, the one-hour delay of cast that is noted in Rule 6(e) where it states, dogs will be scratched... For delaying completion of cast for one hour after time out is called in accordance with rule 7, does not necessarily apply here. That rule applies only to situations where after a time out has been called during the hunt and a handler delays the completion of the cast. No, you won't find a written rule stating a certain amount of time that should be allowed. Officials are merely expected to use common sense and set a reasonable amount of time when/if needed. The MOH may have given the handler an hour or any other amount of time to show up; by the same token, he may also not allow much if any time at all after the cast/handler has been called if he thinks it is unreasonable that the handler is not there and ready to go with his cast. Understand that giving someone a certain amount of time to arrive at the club or having to run here or there before they are ready to go with the cast on the hunt is only done out of courtesy. Most cast members will not have a problem with it when you may not be ready to go the minute they are. However, expecting too much or being unreasonable is another thing regardless of excuses. How many times have you drawn out on a cast, and someone says, “We need to stop at a gas station – I'm running on empty.”?

Most of us have been guilty of delaying the cast in some form, but let's be considerate especially when time might be an issue as it can be very annoying and disrespectful of

others in your cast. Probably the best advice one can give to avoid unfortunate situations such as the one described is, if you plan on going to a hunt, make sure you have your dog, boots, tracking system, plenty of gas in the truck and whatever else you will need and give yourself plenty of time to get there. If you are busy at home with personal issues, limited on time and will be flirting with the deadline, well ... there's always next week. A wise man posting on the message board may have said it best when he simply stated, “The UKC implemented a rule a long time ago called a deadline”, which he interprets as, be at the grounds with your hound and ready to go huntin'. It's fair to say Mr. Flowers hit the nail on the head with that one!

The same can also be said for when a cast becomes lost or separated on their way to the woods and need to return to the clubhouse. The Master of Hounds does not necessarily have to give the rest of the cast members an hour; they are simply required to give them a reasonable amount of time to return. That amount of time given is the decision of the Master of Hounds. Consideration needs to be given for how long it may take them to get back to the clubhouse after realizing the cast was not together and also making sure those involved will have enough time to get their hunt time in, should it be an issue, etc. Sometimes an hour is needed and given. By the same token, sometimes allowing an hour is simply unreasonable or becomes an issue. Again, it is the MOH who makes that decision, and we all need to live with whatever that allowed time may be.

