

COONHOUND ADVISOR

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It seems borderline insane that I am writing an article for November already. I feel like the year just got started. I guess the saying, "Time flies when you are having fun" rings true. This year has been a blast for me. It was my first full (non-covid) year since I was hired at UKC and even though some events were still hindered by Covid, most were back to normal. It was nice getting out and seeing everyone while attending a lot of events that I had on my bucket list for years. Rain, sleet, snow, high winds, or extreme heat, folks showed up with hounds in hand ready to catch up with old friends and compete against their peers. That is what it is all about.

To Cut or Not to Cut?

Recently, during the Final Cast of the 2021 World Championship, a hound was scratched due to the fact that the handler cut the hound loose before the opportunity to cut the hound loose presented itself. Even with what is referred to as a no-leash lock rule, you must run an eight-minute clock on dogs that are struck in (or a two-minute clock on dogs treed in), and a dog has to be heard opening for that hound to be recast. In this instance, the handler cut the dog loose before the eight was ran. There have been tireless debates all over the internet and social media regarding this issue and I feel like the Advisor Column is a good place to sort out some misinterpretations and misconceptions.

The fact is, the Rulebook is very clear in stating that you must hear a dog to turn loose, if other dogs in the cast are struck or treed in. That is where we will start. The first sentence of Rule 11(d) states, *After being scored, dog shall not be released until another dog struck in on track, or on tree, opens. The second sentence continues, If no other dog is declared struck, scored dog may be released immediately after scoring tree.* Not much room for debate there. Pulling a dog off a scoring situation, the Judge and handler should get to a spot that is a reasonable distance from the scored tree and run an eight-minute clock to hear the struck dogs (or a two-minute clock for treed dogs) before the scored dog can be recast.

Some of the discussion seems to come down to the fact that in Rule 11(d) it doesn't specify what happens to the dog if it is cut loose before hearing a dog that is struck or treed in open. Additionally, there is the debate that since this offense isn't listed with some other dog and handler related scratching offenses in Rule 6, that it is unclear what the repercussions should be. This is where the "Implied Scratch" rule comes into effect.

Venture with me, if you will, to the very beginning of the Official Nite Hunt Honor Rules. There are some clarifications right there at the beginning before you even get to any numbered rules. I will include the first couple sentences

below just in case you don't have your Rulebook handy. It reads: *In addition to the rules on the scorecard, the Official UKC Coonhound Rulebook and the most recent Coonhound Advisor columns in COONHOUND BLOODLINES and on the UKC website, contain additional rules, statements of policies and interpretations of UKC rules pertaining to the conducting of UKC events. All event activities, rules, policy applications and interpretations are subject to the final decision by UKC in its sole judgment and discretion.*

For those of you skimming, I will give you the shorthand version of the above, this Advisor column is used for giving official UKC interpretations of rules in the Rulebook. And it is in this Advisor column where you can find multiple articles over the past decade, dedicated to explaining the "Implied Scratch" rule. I will include one of Todd Kellam's old articles about that rule below, but let's finish this thought first. To sum up the article below with one well written sentence that Todd included in there, it says "The penalty for doing something that the rules specifically state cannot be done, in cases where the rules do not offer a different specific penalty, is to be scratched from the cast."

This article isn't the time or place for the he said/she said game. As a matter of fact, that is a game that should be played less than it is, but I digress. For the sake of transparency, I will let it be known that UKC supports the ruling made by the Panel of Field Reps that were working the World Championship for scratching the dog in question. The correct call was made by the Rulebook.

I know there will be personal feelings about this. Believe me, there are rules that even I don't agree with, but it is the job of event officials and UKC to uphold the rules in the Rulebook at our events. It doesn't matter whether a dog has a lead, if the dog is in the hole, or if the cast is all tied up. Furthermore, in a cast that is being live streamed with a couple thousand eyes watching it, there is more to be considered than the "no harm, no foul" premise that I see a lot of folks alluding to. This call had MAJOR implications for UKC. If we ignore a blatant rule infraction on this stage, what does it say about our ability to police the rules? We have a responsibility to conduct ourselves and our events with the upmost integrity and any overlooking of a rule, especially in the biggest cast of the year, would be a major blemish to our integrity.

I hope this helps those of you who may not have understood the ruling, understand it a little better now. United Kennel Club, the hunters/supporters of this registry, and the Coonhound World Championship are very important to both Allen and I, and if the Panel of Reps needed any help with the call, we were readily available to help in any way possible. It wasn't needed in this instance. The right call was made.

Here is an article that has been in the Advisor multiple times over the years, written by Todd and reposted by Allen multiple times over the years. Some of it has been edited to match our current rules.

The Implied Scratch

True or False: There are things that you can be scratched for during a UKC licensed Nite Hunt which do not appear in Rule 6 (The Scratch Rule). Think about it. What is the penalty for doing something that the rules plainly state cannot be done?

Answer: If you answered yes, you can scratch a dog for violations other than those specifically listed in Rule 6, then you are correct and you can skip to the next topic. For those of you who answered false, and I know there are some because of the calls we have received, then read on and I'll bring you up to speed regarding UKC's interpretation of the implied scratch.

Basically, anything the rules specifically say you can't do, you can be scratched for doing.

There are many examples of things that various rules tell you cannot be done. Some (not all) examples of rule violations that will get you scratched, even though they don't appear in Rule 6, are listed below:

- Arriving at a tree before the Judge.
- Failure to leash dogs at the tree.
- Shining the tree during the two minutes the handler with first tree wished to shine alone.
- Refusing to vote on a question.
- Casting a hound before hearing a struck/treed dog bark.

There are situations where the rules tell you what to do other than scratching the dog, if you violate that particular rule. For example, Rule 2(d) reads, *A handler calling the wrong dog on first offense results in a warning issue and no points assigned. On second offense, the available position is minused. On third offense dog is scratched. If that rule didn't specify what to do after the first infraction, it would be implied that the dog is scratched.* But the rules are very clear as to what you should do in that situation.

Some of the situations outlined above admittedly are rather minor offenses even on a strictly judged cast. You know and I know that at the Forks-Of-The-Creek Coon Club this Friday night, at their UKC licensed event, someone will get off with only a warning for arriving to a tree before the Judge does. But the only way to be consistent with final interpretations, if it gets to that level, is to say this. The penalty for doing something that the rules specifically state

cannot be done, in cases where the rules do not offer a different specific penalty, is to be scratched from the cast. I think that's about as simple to interpret as we can make it.

Signs Posted

Q: Last weekend I drove a good distance to a club I hadn't been to before. I followed the directions as noted in the upcoming events list in the back of *Coonhound Bloodlines*. After following the directions and then looking for signs the ad said would be posted, I learned there weren't any signs anywhere and ended up lost. After driving around for a little while hoping to find the location, I finally stopped several different times asking people in the area before someone could tell me where the club was located. Needless to say, I missed the deadline by ten minutes. It was frustrating to deal with this issue, especially when I had allowed plenty of time to get there if signs would have been posted as the ad stated. From experience, I can tell you it is frustrating when you can't rely on the directions given especially when you drove as far as I did on this particular night.

A: This is a good example of why it is important to have good directions for participants to find a club's location. And while it is a rare occurrence in the day of GPS systems, it's not entirely uncommon to get a handful of calls a year, from people frustrated with a club's directions. Let's be honest with ourselves for a minute, most of these clubs are in the middle of nowhere and that GPS isn't always dependable.

It is true that a lot of clubs give directions that will get you fairly close, followed by "Signs posted". That is fine and dandy so long as signs are, in fact, posted. Most of the regulars obviously don't need directions, but clubs need to also not forget the fact that usually they will have a few participants who might not be regulars or may be first timers who need to rely on the directions and GPS coordinates that we post in the magazine and on the online events calendar.

We encourage clubs to make sure you are aware of the directions that have been submitted to UKC for your event location, and that they are accurate and easy to follow. If your directions say signs will be posted, then make sure they are posted. Otherwise, you may end up with would-be participants who get lost and miss the deadline because of poor directions. You certainly can't blame someone for being frustrated when they miss a deadline because of it.

