

COONHOUND ADVISOR

Trevor Wade

We have dedicated a lot of time in this column to the few rule changes that took place in the updated rulebook. Today, we are going to discuss a couple of topics that Allen and I recently discussed on the UKC Hunting Ops Podcast. Remember, if you have rule situations that seem to pop up regularly at events you are attending, shoot 'em over to my email at twade@ukcdogs.com, and we will try to knock them out in this column and on the podcast as time allows. To listen to a full discussion on these topics, check out Episode 44 of the UKC Hunting Ops Podcast.

Let's Talk About Holes

As coon hunters, we always get so caught up on the discussion of scoring trees which seems natural given the fact that we hunt tree hounds. In the past few columns, we've talked tree times, dogs treeing but not declared treed, dogs coming into a tree after the judge arrives, etc. Recently, we got a few questions pertaining to holes and how to score them. So, let's dig into that. Pun intended.

The most logical spot to start is in the Circle Points section of our Rulebook, at Rule 5(a). That rule reads,

"When dog strikes and trees on a tree or a hole in the ground where there could be a coon, yet Judge does not see coon and no off game is seen. NOTE: In case of running coon in a hole or place of refuge other than a tree, handler may call dog treed. However, if not called treed, cast may proceed to general area, and track can be considered finished if dogs, by actions either tree barking or otherwise, show to the satisfaction of the Judge, coon to be there. One dog must show end of trail. For dogs declared treed in a hole or tile, see Rule 3(b) or 4(g), if applicable."

The fact that this rule tells us that the points should be circled if coon could be there, but cannot be seen, is straightforward and I don't think we have any issues understanding that. The NOTE portion of the rule is the one that we need to highlight here. It tells us that a dog may be declared treed even if thought to be in a hole or place of refuge other than a tree. In the situation where you do declare your dog treed, you will need to follow that protocol. Which means, wait the three-minutes, and then score the tree points accordingly. However, the rule further tells us that in the instance that the cast determines a dog sounds to have finished a track somewhere other than a tree, the cast may proceed to that general area without a dog being declared treed. I'm talking hole in the ground, brush pile, tile, culvert, barn, etc.

Let's move to Rule 3(b) which reads, *"When dog is declared struck and treed and coon is seen other than in tree, dog declared treed to receive strike and tree points. Dogs not declared treed, strike points only."* This

rule clarifies a lot for us and hopefully erases a lot of the confusion regarding holes and how to score them. So, let's talk about a scenario I've fielded some calls on.

It's a four-dog cast and right out of the truck all 4 dogs get struck in. The point totals don't matter for this theoretical scenario. Two dogs are declared treed fairly quickly. The other two have gone quiet and the handlers are puzzled. When we arrive at the dogs declared treed, we find them on the outside of a hole, baying. We figure out pretty quickly that the other two dogs were in the hole and being drown out by the ground and other barking dogs. All four dogs are handled, and we find a coon balled up behind a tree root in the back of the hole. What do we do here?

Most people want to quickly reference Rule 4(f) for dogs treeing but not declared treed when the judge arrives but that is incorrect. That rule only pertains to instances where the dogs are on a tree, which is obviously the majority of the time in our sport but isn't the case here. What Rule 5(a) and Rule 3(b) has told us is that in a hole or place of refuge other than a tree, a dog doesn't have to be treed in. So, to answer the question above, for the two dogs treed in, they will be plussed both ways, strike and tree points. For the two dogs that were struck in only, they will receive plus strike points only.

If the hole would have gone too far back and the judge and cast couldn't see a coon to plus, but it could have been there, you would have circled strike and tree points for dogs declared treed, and circled strike points for those that were there but not treed in. If the hole went nowhere and it was obvious that nothing was there, the dogs declared treed would have been minused both ways, strike and tree. Dogs declared struck would receive minus strike points only.

Let's talk about another scenario that could pop up. Allen, Todd, and I are out hunting on a cast. Todd and Allen's dogs are stationary, but something just doesn't sound right. We decide to head to the dogs without them being declared treed, assuming they are in a hole. Upon arriving, we realize they are in fact treed down in a creek bottom and the bank is muffling their tree barks as they circle the tree. What do we need to do in this scenario? Since the dogs are treed, Todd and Allen **have** to declare them treed before they can be handled. With my dog, the third dog in the cast, being at large, they will have to wait the three minutes as well. So, the cast will back out, more than likely splitting tree points as that makes the most sense in that scenario, and wait for the three minutes to elapse before going in, handling the dogs, and ultimately scoring the tree.

Lastly, let's mention a couple quick notes that we won't go too far into but are relevant here.

1. Per Rule 3(c), if the dog(s) at the hole have caught the coon, the dog(s) would get plus strike points only, even if the dog(s) were declared treed in. Rule 3(c) in

the Plus Points section reads, *"If dog(s) catches coon, strike points only."*

2. Rule 5(i) that describes dogs being shut out still takes precedent in the situations listed above.
3. Be very careful when trying to apply the stationary to any dog that could have finished a track anywhere other than in a tree. Don't put yourself or another cast member in the situation where you force their hand into treeing their dog in a hole, brush pile, tile, fence, barn, etc.

Speaking of stationary, let's refresh our memory with this column topic from July of 2021 since these two topics go hand in hand with each other in a lot of ways.

Let's Talk Stationary

One thing that I get a few questions about at each hunt I attend is the stationary rule. To be frank, it's probably one that is talked about more than ever actually having any major implications on a cast but it's important to know and understand the rule.

- **What is the stationary rule?** When someone is discussing the stationary rule, they are referring to Rule 6(m) which reads that it is a handler related scratching offense, *"If handler fails to declare treed a dog obviously treeing (Judge's decision) for a period of five minutes. Dog may be declared treed while five is running but not after the five has expired. Judge must verify dog to be at a tree before it can be scratched. If the cast is in the process of shining a separate tree time shall be canceled or not be applied to another dog."*
- **How long is the stationary time?** I get this question a lot and if you refer to the rule above you will get your answer. The stationary has remained five minutes even though tree time is three minutes for dogs declared treed.
- **When do you start the stationary?** Again, this is referenced in the rule above. If a dog is obviously treeing (Judge's decision), you will start the five-minute stationary clock on that dog. A previous Advisor Column added that three things need to be happening for the stationary clock to be applied. 1) the dog is obviously treeing and treeing right, 2) you don't think the dog sounds to be in a hole or place of refuge, and 3) for whatever reason the handler is not calling the dog treed. Also, pay attention to that last

sentence of the rule that points out you cannot start the stationary on a dog if you are in the process of shining another dog's tree.

- **What breaks the stationary?** There are multiple occurrences that can break the stationary time being ran on a dog. The most obvious is the handler of the dog treeing the dog the stationary is running on. The stationary is broken if it becomes obvious to the Judge that the dog has moved. The stationary is broken if the dog shuts up, triggering a two-minute clock be ran, and it expires before the dog opens again. The stationary is broken when shine time is started on another dog's tree (You must continue to the tree and start shine time at your normal pace). The stationary will be broken at the conclusion of hunt time or if a timeout is called for one of the reasons outlined in Rule 7.
- **What do you do with the other dogs when the stationary is running?** Nothing changes for the other hounds in the cast. Continue hunting. It doesn't stop you from striking or treeing dogs, advancing to trees, shining trees, or recasting dogs.
- **What do you do when the stationary time runs out?** At that time, you will proceed to the stationary dog. Remember, the Judge has to verify that the dog is treeing on a tree for the dog to be scratched. The main word in there is tree, not in a hole, brush pile, fence, tile, creek bank, barn, or milling around in an area. It's also important to remember that once the time has expired, the handler no longer has the opportunity to tree the hound on that tree.
- **What is the result?** After the five-minute stationary period has elapsed AND the Judge has verified that the dog is in fact treeing, the hound will be scratched from the hunt.



ATTENTION!

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

Justin Crockett • Senatobia, MS

May 1, 2024

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



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COONHOUND BLOODLINES