

VGP - Utility Test

The VGP is a test that evaluates a finished versatile hunting dog. Dogs tested at this level are expected to handle any game in any hunting situation. Most of the dogs who run a VGP are between 24 and 36 months of age. A VGP consists of 4 different subject areas: **field, forest, water, and obedience.**

In the field portion of the VGP, the following attributes are evaluated:

- **Nose** - A dog will need to demonstrate a good nose, to have the ability of finding game.
- **Search** - A dog is required to demonstrate a high level of desire, stamina, and cooperation in this phase.
- **Pointing** - Intensity, honoring and steadiness to shot are all observed and a dog is required to demonstrate these traits at a high level. The dog must be steady to wing and shot.
- **Manners** - A dog is required to demonstrate the ability to relocate and hold the game.
- **Gamebird Drag** - A dog is required to demonstrate a desire to find the game quickly and without any additional directions from the handler.
- **Gamebird Retrieve** - A dog is required to complete the retrieve of a shot gamebird.

In the water work portion of the VGP, the following attributes are evaluated:

- **Marked Duck Retrieve** - The dog sees a dead duck thrown into the water. After the dog is sent for the retrieve, a shot will be fired over the dog to ensure that he/she is not gun sensitive in the water. The dog must complete the retrieve.
- **Blind Retrieve** - A dog is required to show the ability to locate the game by either signals from the handler or by using his/her own desire to search. Minimum distance of 30 Meters.
- **Search Without A Duck** - A dog is sent to search a large body of water that is devoid of any game. The handler must remain in place but may assist the dog by pointing and giving a few directional commands (the fewer the better). The dog must hunt persistently and show a strong desire to

find game whether they come across any scent or not. Usually, the judges will expect a dog to search for 10 minutes before allowing the handler to call the dog back.

- **Search Behind A Duck** - It is important for a dog to show ability to follow the duck track on the water using the nose. A dog that works with eyes alone will not be rated.

In the forest portion of the VGP, the following attributes are evaluated:

- **Blood Tracking For Hoofed Game** - This is performed on a lead and a dog must demonstrate calm and confident concentration, as well as initiative and desire. A dog must have the ability to guide the handler to where the game is and behave correctly while searching for the game. The blood trail is approximately 400 meters long and usually aged between 2 and 8 hours. Handlers may also request an overnight blood trail for additional points.
- **Furred Game Drag Track** - The judges lay a 300-meter fox drag (fox should be provided by the handler). The handler must send the dog with 1 command. The dog must complete the track and retrieve the fox to hand. The manner of working the track and the retrieve are both taken into account for scoring, as well as the use of the nose, perseverance, and desire. There are two parts to scoring: the track and the retrieve.
- **Furred Game Retrieve Over Obstacle** - A fox is placed behind a natural barrier (usually about 30 inches tall). The handler must send the dog with one command. The dog must jump over the obstacle to retrieve the fox to hand.
- **Independent Forest Search** - The dog is sent to search a wooded area that is not known for holding game. The dog is expected to search diligently until called back by its handler. Perseverance, passion, and boldness are all taken into account for the rating of a dog. Generally, the judges want to see a dog search the woods for 10 minutes without another command from their handler before they will allow the dog to be called back.
- **Dense Cover Search** - In this portion of the test, the dog and handler are asked to search a dense wooded stand. The dog will be required to demonstrate a calm and purposeful search. The judges will fire a few shots randomly during the search. The dog is expected to remain calm

and under the control of their handler even while the shots occur.

The obedience portion of the VGP, there are seven main categories being evaluated:

- **Obedience during the driven hunt** - The dog is put on a down-stay or a sit-stay and expected to remain quietly by the handler's side while a mock driven hunt is conducted right in front of the dog. The driven hunt consists of several people yelling and shooting as they push through the woods in front of the dog.
- **Heeling on lead** - The dog is required to heel on lead with its handler while weaving in and out of trees in a wooded area.
- **Heeling off lead** - The dog is required to heel off lead with its handler. The judges will ask the handler to vary walking/running speed, stop, and change directions to evaluate the dog's ability to heel off-lead.
- **Down/Stay** - The dog is placed on a down/stay while the handler walks out of sight. The handler fires a couple of shots before returning to the dog. The dog must remain in place throughout the entire process.
- **Steadiness to Wing** - During the field portion of the VGP, the dog is expected to remain steady to the flush of a gamebird.
- **Steadiness to Shot** - During the field portion of the VGP, the dog is expected to remain steady to the shot after a gamebird is flushed.

Overall Obedience - A dog's obedience is judged during the entire time of the 2-day test. A dog should be under the handler's control at all times...whether the handler is sending the dog for a retrieve or just walking the dog back to the car.