

Spaniels Hunting Tests: History

The concept of the Spaniel Hunting Test began as a request for an AKC sanctioned event to be known as the "Spaniel Gun Dog Qualification." It had been recommended that AKC sanction Spaniel breed specialty clubs to hold these tests for the purpose of gauging a dog's natural abilities during demands of actual hunting conditions.

Building on that premise the first Spaniel Hunting Test Advisory Committee met in New York City, March 9 & 10, 1985. The committee was made up of well known Spaniel enthusiasts, Robert Ryan, NY; Fred Neville, WI; George Hickox, NH; Edd Roggenkamp, CA; Henry Henriques, CT; Joe Ruff, CT; and Dean Brunn, IN. Representing the American Kennel Club were A. Hamilton Rowen, Director of Field Trials & Hunting Tests; Robert Bartel, Senior Field Representative; and John Carroll, Assistant Director of Field Trials & Hunting Tests. Following the conclusion of this meeting work continued for the next three years finally producing a workable Hunting Test program complete with Regulations and Procedures. On July 13, 1988 the American Spaniel Club held the first Spaniel Hunting Test in Pescadero, CA. Presiding as judges for this event were Wayne Kilpatrick and Jeffery Miller.

Over the next few years interest grew steadily with new clubs running events every year. In 1996 (the first year records are available) 69 events were held with 145 titles awarded from the 7 recognized Spaniel breeds. Those breeds were the English Springer, Welsh Springer, English Cocker, American Cocker, Field, Sussex, and Clumber Spaniels. In 2005 American Water Spaniels and in 2006 the Boykin Spaniels were added bring the total breeds being tested to nine.

In the ten year period from 1996 thru 2005 an average of 78 Hunting Tests per year were held with an average of 171 titles per year awarded. The highest number of titles was awarded in 2004 totaling two hundred thirty, including 92 Juniors, 93 Seniors, and 45 Masters. English Springer Spaniels lead the pack in titles earned with just over two thirds of all titles. During that period 1710 titles were earned at 781 events. On June 1, 2005 the American Water Spaniel became eligible with 6 junior titles awarded before the end of the year. On January 1, 2006 the Boykin Spaniel became eligible and at least 2 Juniors, 2 Seniors, and 1 Master were awarded in the first nine months.

In August 2006 the Spaniel Hunting Test Advisory Committee again met to address issues the parent clubs decided needed consideration. For a period of several months before the meeting a sub committee had worked to compile the most important issues relating the regulations by which the tests were conducted. Among those issues were the requirements to be met to become a Hunting Test judge. The results of this meeting can be found in the Spaniel Hunting Test section of this web site under 2006 Spaniel Hunting Test Advisory Committee heading.