



Premium

The MSDA Master Gundog Challenge

Friday April 11, 2025 at 8:00 AM Eastern Time (ET)

Mt Ararat Farm
Port Deposit, MD

Entries Open: Tuesday, January 28, 2025 at 7:00 AM Eastern Time (ET)

Entries Close: Tuesday, April 1, 2025 at 11:59 PM Eastern Time (ET)

The Maryland Sporting Dog Association (MSDA) Master Gundog Challenge is an event designed to test the advanced skills and attributes of gundogs in scenarios that surpass the typical requirements of a master-level spaniel hunt test. This club-organized test integrates innovative elements such as brace work and heightened retrieving challenges, blending aspects of spaniel hunt tests and field trials. While this is not an AKC-sanctioned event, it is judged primarily under the *Regulations for AKC Hunting Tests for Spaniels*, with specific modifications for this unique test format.

The MSDA Master Gundog Challenge offers an extraordinary opportunity for experienced gundogs and their handlers to showcase their skills in a demanding but rewarding environment. By combining elements from both spaniel field trials and AKC hunt tests, this event pushes the boundaries of a dog's capabilities, challenging them to demonstrate exceptional steadiness, teamwork, and skill under real-world conditions.

Judges: Kate Ostrowski and Jim Zimmerman

Hunt Test Committee

1. Steve Surprenant (Co-chair)
2. Brian Schmidt (Co-chair)
3. Pamela DeSmidt (Hunt Test Secretary)
4. Ron Ostrowski (Equipment)
5. Betsy Surprenant (Hospitality)

Bird Steward: Steven Roth

Gunners:

- Brian Schmidt (Gun Captain)
- Joanne Sweeney
- Harry Simpson
- Ron Ostrowski

Photographer: Matt Toth

Entry Fee: \$90

The test will be considered full when the total number of entries reaches 25.

Eligibility and Participation

This event is open to all AKC-eligible spaniel hunt test breeds, with priority given to dogs holding spaniel Master Hunter (MH) or Master Hunter Upland (MHU) titles. Dogs with Senior Hunter (SH) or Senior Hunter Upland (SHU) titles and at least two MH or MHU passes may also enter.

Exceptions for entering UKC-registered Gun Dog breeds, CKC-registered Sporting Dog breeds, and other flushing dogs or breeds may be granted by the test co-chairs for dogs demonstrating exceptional ability.

Test Structure and Elements

Dogs are evaluated on their ability to perform at the highest level across all test elements, demonstrating bird finding and flushing ability, steadiness, retrieving, control, trainability, and adherence to safety protocols.

The MSDA Master Gundog Challenge features four key test elements designed to evaluate a comprehensive range of gundog abilities, conducted in the following sequence:

1. Land Hunt in Brace

- Two dogs work simultaneously in a brace, emphasizing their ability to hunt cooperatively while honoring their bracedmates.
- Each dog must flush three birds and retrieve at least two, demonstrating steady-to-wind-and-shot behavior and control throughout.
- The dog's use of terrain, cover, and wind is assessed, as well as its ability to remain steady and honor the retrieves of its bracedmate.

2. Hunt Dead

- A long retrieve in challenging terrain designed to simulate finding and retrieving unseen game on land.
- Dogs must locate and return the bird within three minutes, with the scenario typically involving changes in cover and terrain. Handlers must demonstrate control without excessive handling.

3. Water Blind

- A water retrieve requiring the dog to swim and locate an unseen bird on land across a body of water deep enough to require swimming.
- This element tests the dog's capacity to take a line across a body of water and take direction at a long distance across that body of water.
- Dogs must retrieve and deliver the bird to hand within five minutes.

4. Double Retrieve

- A combination of land and water retrieves. The dog starts hopped near the water's edge and retrieves a live flyer duck on land and a duck in the water.
- Decoys placed on land and in the water to simulate hunting conditions.

General

- To pass, a minimum score of 5 out of 10 in each category of five abilities and an overall average of at least 8.0 is required.
- All retrieves must be completed and delivered to hand.
- Gun handling and safety is paramount throughout the test. Handlers carry and shoulder a club-provided break-open shotgun during most elements, following specific protocols for safe handling.
- Dogs displaying barking, whining, or other distractions are penalized, with excessive noise potentially leading to disqualification.
- Leashes must remain out of sight during off-leash work.
- Dogs that pass the test will receive an MSDA "Qualifying Score" rosette.

Notes solely for the Master Gundog Challenge test on April 11, 2025:

All Master handlers must attend a mandatory gun safety and handling briefing before the start of the land series. Handlers that miss this mandatory briefing will not be allowed to run their dog in the test.

There will be no callbacks – all dogs will be allowed to run in every series. However, if a dog does not qualify (NQ) in an element, it will fail the overall test, and the handler and dog will be dismissed from that element. For example, in the Land series, the dog must find and flush three birds. If the dog is not steady on the first flush, it will NQ the test, and the handler will be asked to leave the field. However, the dog may still participate in the next test element, such as Hunt Dead.

The Double Retrieve element offers a walk-up as an option for the Master Gundog Challenge. A walk-up start will not be used on April 11, 2025.

Chukar will be used in the Land and Hunt Dead test elements. Ducks will be used in the Water Blind and Double Retrieve; in the Double Retrieve, the first duck will be a live flyer.

Additional Information

Online Entries

Entries will be accepted online only using a form that will be available on the MSDA website (mdsportingdog.org). Entries open Tuesday, January 28, 2025 at 7:00 AM Eastern Time (ET). Entries close Tuesday, April 1, 2025 at 11:59 PM Eastern Time (ET). Paper entry forms and/or checks or cash (except in the case of waitlisted dogs who are later admitted) will not be accepted.

Running Order

The running order drawing will be completed electronically by 9:00 AM ET on April 3. The Running Order will be randomized and may be adjusted slightly to accommodate handlers running multiple dogs, and subsequently emailed to all entrants.

Safety

Maryland regulations regarding wearing fluorescent orange or pink will be strictly enforced. Anyone in a field with live fire must wear a vest, shirt or other outer garment which has at least 250 square inches of fluorescent orange or pink on both front and back. A fluorescent orange or pink hat is not enough.

Mandatory Gun Safety Briefings

All handlers must attend a mandatory gun safety and handling briefing before the test; failure to attend results in disqualification from the event.

Training or Correction

The Hunt Test Committee and the Judges will not permit training, severe correcting or disciplining of dogs on any part of the grounds. At the beginning of each test, a designated exercise area will be provided. No training will be allowed on the test grounds, including the designated exercise area. Handlers or guests that violate these rules may be asked to leave the property.

Responsibilities:

Owners and handlers are reminded that they are responsible for their own dog's actions and that good sportsmanship is expected at all times. If dogs (or humans!) exhibit inappropriate behavior or aggression, the dog and handler will be directed to leave immediately and may be excluded from future MSDA activities. Such decisions are made exclusively by the event chair, or other event committee member in the chair's absence. All attendees are required to sign liability releases for both MSDA and Mt. Ararat Farms. These are included on the entry form.

Event Emergency and Veterinarian Information

For All Emergencies Call 911

Veterinary Emergency Services Open 24/7:
BluePearl Pet Hospital Christiana Newark
106 Geoffrey Drive, Newark, DE 19713
302-322-6933

Animal Emergency Hospital, 24-hour Emergency Vet
722 Baltimore Pike, Bel Air, MD 21014
410.420.7297. (30 minutes south on 95)

MSDA Club Scratch Policy

Completed entries may be cancelled for any reason until entries close at 11:59 PM on April 1. Refunds, less a \$5.00 processing fee per dog, will be provided to the original form of payment.

Entry fees paid for a dog withdrawn after 11:59 pm on April 1 because of coming in season, injury, illness, or death, shall be refunded, less a \$5.00 processing fee per dog. A veterinary certificate is required for all such refunds. Requests and documents must be presented prior to the test. There will be no refunds for "no shows" or late cancellations for other reasons.

No entry fee will be refunded if the test cannot be opened or completed by reason of riots, civil disturbance, an act of God, public emergency, act of a public enemy, or any other cause beyond the control of MSDA or the Hunt Test Committee.

Event Waitlist Policy

If the maximum number of entries is reached, dogs may be wait-listed before or after the closing date. No fee will be charged for being added to the waitlist. However, all entry fees must be paid before the dog may be run in the test.

Upon a withdrawal before closing or scratch after closing, dogs will be added until 5:00PM Eastern Time (ET) on Thursday, April 10.

Accommodations

MSDA has not worked out special hotel rates with the hotels listed below and is not endorsing these particular hotels. Please check directly with hotels regarding rates, dogs in room, and deposits that may be required.

Accommodations in alphabetical order:

- Best Western Chesapeake North East, MD 410.287.5450
- Comfort Inn & Suites, North East, MD 410.656.8807
- Home 2 Suites, Aberdeen, MD 410.272.0203
- La Quinta Inn and Suites, Aberdeen, MD 410.618.3009

PLEASE NOTE: the hunt test property is located just north of the Susquehanna River Bridge (a.k.a. the Thomas J. Hatem Memorial Bridge) on I-95. If you stay in a location south of the bridge, there is an \$8 toll every time you cross the bridge heading northbound.

Lunch Information

Lunch will be provided.

Tailgate Information

Join us for sips and snacks and drinks at the Ribbon Ceremony.

Event Location / Map / Directions

Mt Ararat Farm
Port Deposit, MD



Directions to Mt. Ararat Farm, Port Deposit MD

From I-95...

1. Take exit 93 for MD-222 toward Perryville/Port Deposit
2. Turn right at the light at the top of the exit ramp onto MD-222 N/Perrylawn Dr
3. Follow 222 North ½ mile to the 2nd traffic light and turn left onto Bainbridge Rd (still MD-222)
4. Travel 1.3 miles (you'll pass the burned out Jumbo Jimmy's Crab Shack on the left) to Mt. Ararat Farm Rd

Signs will be posted at this point with specific direction to the field.

GPS coordinates: 39°35'59.4"N 76°05'25.7"W

If you have any questions about MSDA's Master Gundog Challenge, please feel free to contact to Steve Surprenant at Surprenant@mdsportingdog.org.