

United Dog Sports

"Where dogs instinctively have fun..."

Shed Hunt Guidelines

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Shed Hunt

Introduction

Yearly, male deer, moose, and elk (with the exception of caribou both sexes grow antlers) shed their antlers. Prime shed or antler hunting season is typically February through April. Looking for shed antlers is an activity deer hunters and their dogs have participated in for generations. Hunters, accompanied by their dogs, spend hours walking in the woods across cornfields and through orchards looking for shed antlers as evidence that cervids have bedded down in a particular area.

Today, looking for shed antlers, or shed hunting, is a year-round walking activity that provides good exercise and conditioning for both dogs and their owners. It is a sport that can be participated in year round. Shed Hunt combines a dog's love of retrieving with his ability to scent objects. As a result, shed hunting tests owners' abilities to direct and control their dogs' inherent drives. yet little training and expense is required.

Pass/Fail/ Placement

This is both a pass/fail and placement sport. Dogs that complete the requirements in the allotted time will be awarded qualifying and/or placement ribbons. The fastest dog/handler team wins. Classes (or skill levels) will be designated by level of difficulty.

Skill Levels

There are five skill levels. From easiest to most difficult these are: Started, Novice, Open, Master and Professional. Skill levels are differentiated by time to complete the course, number of antlers placed on the course, number of antlers hidden, and the size of the course.

CLASS	Antler Number	Antler Number Hidden	TIME	Test Area Size
Started	1 White	0	2 Minutes	50 x 100 100 x 200 Feet

CLASS	Antler Number	Antler Number Hidden	TIME	Test Area Size
Novice	2 White	0	3 Minutes	50 x 100 100 x 200 Feet
Open	1 Brown 2 White	1	4 Minutes	100 x 200 Feet
Master	2 Brown 2 White	2	5 Minutes	100 x 200 Feet
Professional	2 White 3 Brown	3	10 Minutes	1-2 Acres

Working Characteristics

The desired working characteristics of a keen shed hunting dog are: speed, desire, independence, and a useful working search pattern. These dogs also carry antlers in their mouths firmly and, at the same time, gently.

Undesired working characteristics are:

- Dogs that, when released to search, wander aimlessly about the search area without focus.
- Dogs that repeatedly check back with their handlers looking for direction.
- Dogs that will not leave their handlers' sides.
- Dogs that repeatedly mouth/bite antlers while retrieving.

When working, the dog/handler team should present a picture of effortless free flowing teamwork. The partners share this responsibility equally. The handler chooses the general hunt areas and direction, while the dog balances responsiveness to his/her handler's commands with an instinctive independence to search the area with an all encompassing search pattern. Furthermore, efficient antler retrieves are direct, fast, deliberate pick up with a direct return to the handler's hand.

Dog Height

Class awards will be divided by dog's height at the withers: under 12 inches and 12 inches and over in height. Each height class will be awarded placement ribbons. All dogs will run in the same class regardless of height.

Trial Area

Trial areas must be secure enclosures and have good footing. The recommended size is approximately 100 x 200 foot (20,000SF) for all classes except Professional. An area as small as 50 x100 foot (5,000SF) can be used for Started and Novice classes. One to two acres for Professional level is needed.

The enclosed areas can be larger than the trial size. In this case, the test area should be marked with stakes and surveyor's tape marking the trial area within the fenced space. When running classes concurrently, each trial area must be separately fenced in. Each trial area should have at least one exit/entrance, but two is recommended.

Shed Hunt events may be held indoors and outdoors. Indoor equestrian arenas are recommended for indoor trials. Herding arenas are also recommended for outdoor trials. In either case, the test area must be as realistic as possible using natural footings. Dirt, wood chips, mulch, and grass are examples that can be used both in and outdoors. These footings are preferred to matted floors and artificial turf, but will be considered on a limited emergency bases. All levels below Professional can be held indoors. Professional level must be held outdoors.

Shed Hunt is an entry-level sport. Therefore, many dogs will not have the control and responsiveness of a well-trained hunting dog. This would require fencing for the safety of the participants. Such fencing must be at least 4 feet in height and enclose the entire trial area. The exception to this guideline in the Professional class. Professional level trial areas do not have to be fenced. Dogs at the professional level should be ready to work in a realistic natural hunting environment.

When fencing is erected, it must be tight. This will deter dogs from escaping. Farm field fence is recommended. Non-electrified portable electric netting or snow fence is also suitable fencing. Although Shed Hunt is a walking sport, gates should be large enough to allow handicap wheelchairs and scooter access.

Blind

Shed Hunt is a hide and seek sport. Therefore, a blinded on deck area must be provided for the dog/handler teams waiting for their turn to compete. This will allow antlers to be hidden without being seen by the competitors.

Seating should be available in each "on deck" area. It is suggested that teams be seated in these areas as they wait for their turn. This way, the steward or judge will know when the next team is ready to compete. The on deck area should also provide a quiet place for handlers to gather their thoughts just prior to competing. Size of on deck area TBD.

When dogs are in the on deck area, they should be kept quiet as to not disturb dogs in the trial area. Only the on deck dog is required to be in the on deck area, but other teams waiting to compete should be in close proximity. These teams must also be blinded from the test area so that their handlers cannot watch other competitor's runs.

Walking the Course

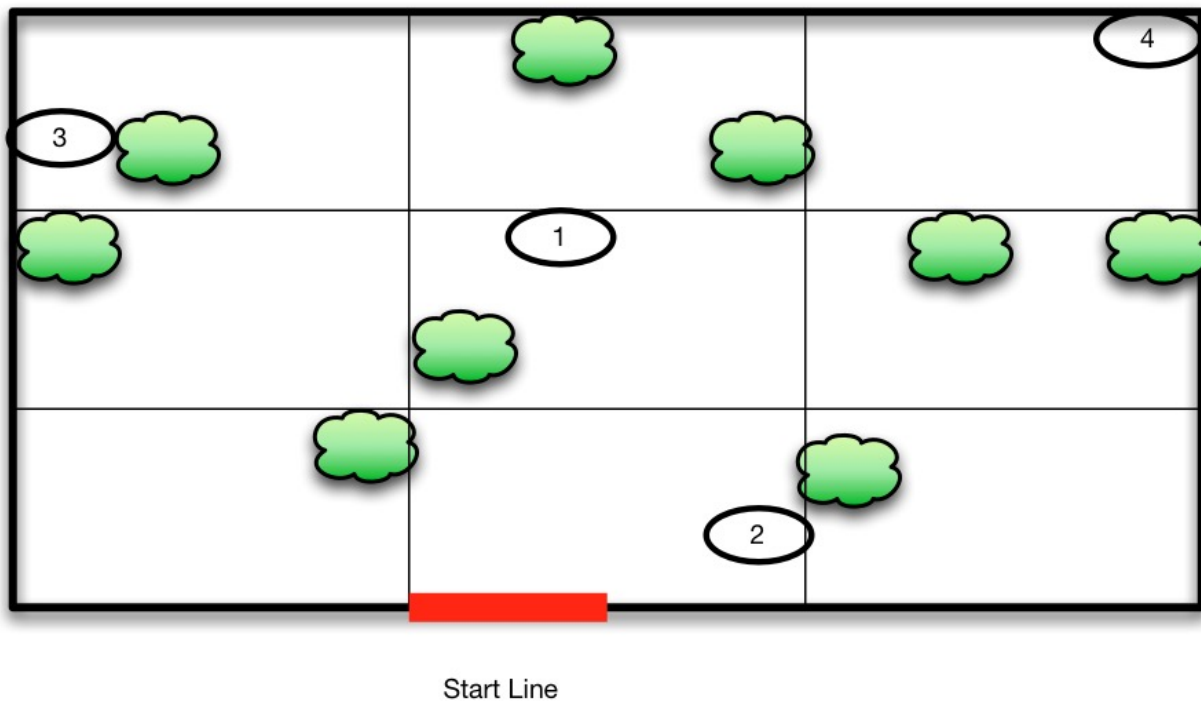
Handlers are not allowed to walk the course prior to running the dogs. When a sponsor allows spectators to follow behind on a run, handlers that have not yet run their dogs on the course are not allowed to walk the course.

Course Design

When natural landscape does not provide enough cover (e.g. non-wooded grassy area like a pasture, mowed field, or an indoor venue), cover must be added to the course. Such cover would be built and supervised by the judge the day of the trial. It should be designed so that dog/handler teams have enough space to move about the course.

Antlers must be hidden from sight in a manner similar to the way animals naturally shed their antlers. Course designers should keep in mind that seasons change and that wind can play an important part in shed hunting. When sheds must be covered they should not be completely hidden (See photos).

Antlers must be spread out throughout the trial area. Ideally ground cover should be varied and include medium height grass and some brush. When possible the amount of cover should increase as the difficulty between classes increases. In all Started and Novice classes, the cover should be no more than a mowed field. In the Open and Master classes, the cover shall be taller field grass to lightly wooded areas. In the Professional classes, any type of cover can be used. For example open crop fields, taller grass pastures, lightly wooded areas to heavy wooded areas, are all acceptable ground covers.



Example course set up. Numbers represent antler placement. Green objects are added natural obstacles like: trees, brush, corn stalk, banners, etc.

Possible Course Cover

- Hay/straw
- Evergreen trees
- Brush
- Wood chips or mulch
- Branches with and without leaves

- Corn stalks
- Dried leaves

Antlers/Sheds

For the safety of dogs participating in Shed Hunt we have chosen to use soft artificial antlers. We have chosen Dog Bone Antlers™ and Dog Bone Scent™ as the official dummy antlers for UDS competitions. In competitions, both white and brown antlers will be used. (See chart for the number and colors of antlers used in each class). Event sponsors will need total of 6 antlers: 2 white and 4 brown antlers.

When the ground is snow covered the colors shall be reversed. All sheds shall be marked with a number to aid in identifying missing antlers at the end of the competition.

The Start Line

The start line is a minimum of 4 foot in length at the edge of the trial area. The start line must be clearly marked at each end. Teams may not leave the start line until released by the judge.

Performance Guidelines for All Levels

Entering the Test Area and Releasing the Dog

Handlers must bring their dogs into the trial area on lead. The dog may wear a flat buckle collar, harness or run naked during the competition. To begin, a dog/handler team positions itself at the start line. Once on the line, the handler announces to the judge: his class, dog's name, and entry number. Once the judge is ready, the dog is put in a stationary sit position. The leash is removed from the dog's collar or harness and placed securely in the handler's pocket. Or in the case that the lead is a hunting lead (Jäger lead) the lead is draped over the shoulder and across the handler's body and securely attached. The handler announces to the judge, "ready" meaning that they are ready to compete. The dog must hold his/her position until the judge gives the "go" command. Time starts when the judge gives the "go" command. At that time, the dog is released to search the area.

In novice, the dog may be held in place at the start. In all other classes, the dog cannot be physically held in place. If the handler grabs hold of the dog to keep him or her on the start line, the team will receive a one-minute penalty. If a team leaves the box before being verbally released, it will be considered a false start. The judge will call the team back to the start line with the timer running. The handler/dog team will be assessed a 30 second penalty, to be added to the team's overall time at the end of the run. If the dog breaks the start line a second time, the dog/handler team is excused from the class and given a NQ score.

Once released, the handler may walk the course. But handlers must walk ahead of their dogs while the dogs are working. Once the dog has located an antler, the dog must pick it up in its mouth and retrieve it to its handler's hand. Once the dog picks up an antler, the handler must stop his/her forward motion. The handler must be at least 20 feet away from the dog at the time the retrieve starts. Handlers cannot approach their dogs in order to receive the antler. In Started and Novice classes backing up to at least distance of 20 feet is permitted to receive the shed. In Open, Master and Professional classes, the handler is not allowed to back up to receive the shed.

The dog brings the shed to the handler and offers the antler to its handler. The handler may then retrieve the antler from the dog's mouth. The judge will then announce to the handler "good retrieve" when the judge is satisfied with the shed has been delivered to hand. The dog may then be sent to find the next

shed. The handler will carry the retrieved antlers during the competition. Handlers may carry bags or backpacks to securely carry the antlers or carry them by hand. If carrying by hand, the handler may place the collected sheds on the ground, in order to use both hands to receive the shed from the dog's mouth. Handlers must collect found sheds before advancing on to the next shed.

Handlers may verbally praise and encourage their dogs during their run. But cannot use commands, signals, or body motions to indicate the specific location or direction of the hidden antler. However, handlers may continue to command the dog to "find" the shed during their run. Handlers may not bring food or toys into the trial area to reward dogs for good work.

Harsh verbal commands or physical force used to discipline dogs are prohibited. Under no circumstances can a handler abuse or threaten any dog. Handlers cannot deliberately touch their dog at any time, except to praise the dog with a quick pet when finding an antler. If the handler touches the dog at any other time while competing on the course, he or she will receive a non-qualifying score.

No training is allowed on the course. Teams who do not successfully find all the sheds hidden on the course are not allowed to continue looking after time has elapsed or after they have received an NQ. A dog's collar and leash must be attached to the dog prior to the exiting the trial area.

Time warning

A 30 second warning will be announce during each run marking time remaining. Handlers may self-time while competing. Time is stopped when the final antler is retrieved to the handler's hand or the allotted time has expired. Handlers may not carry any electronic communications devices during the competition. This includes, but is not limited to, cell phones, pagers, and smart watches, fitbits, etc. When time has expired on the clock the handler will be notified by the word "time".

Handler Assistance

If a handler is unable to physically remove the antler from his/her dog's mouth due to injury or disability, an assistant provided by the handler may receive the antler from the dog and carry found antlers. Assistants handle the antlers and interact with the handler's dog at his/her own risk. Assistant must be listed on the entry form and agree to the hold harmless statement. The assistant will walk with the handler throughout the competition.

Replacement of antlers

After each dog has completed his/her run, the found antlers are re-scented and placed back on the course. Antler hiding places will be switched after each run. When antlers are hidden on the course and are not found, they may stay in their hiding places for the next dog.

Tie Scores

In the event of a tie score, the tie will be broken by time. If the tie still remains a run off will occur. One antler will be hidden in the same location for both dogs. The antler should be hidden for 5 minutes before the first team is allowed to hunt. This will give the scent time to saturate the area making the test equal for both teams. A coin will be tossed and called to determine which team runs first. The fastest time wins. If a tie still occurs, after the run off the judge will flip a coin to determine the winner.

Scoring Guidelines

Qualifying (Q) Scores. A team receives a qualifying score when all of the requirements of the entered class are completed within the allotted course time without incurring any errors, resulting in an NQ score.

Non-Qualifying (NQ) Scores

A Non Qualifying (NQ) score will be given to teams that do not meet the minimum criteria for each class level. Each dog that does not find and retrieve all shed (s) on the course in the allotted time will receive a non-qualifying score.

Handler Error

Handlers must walk the course. Failure to walk the course will result in a NQ score.

A handler that moves (walks) forward to receive shed will receive a NQ score.

Handlers' feet must be stationary when receiving the shed failure to do so will result in a NQ.

Handlers closer than 20 to the dog when retrieving will receive a NQ.

Open, Master and Professional classes the handler may not back up to receive the shed handlers that back up will receive a NQ score.

Handlers may not deliberately touch their dog at any time. Handlers will receive a NQ score.

Dog lack of control

If the dog breaks the start line a second time, the dog/handler team is given a NQ score.

If a dog refuses to be caught by the handler within a reasonable amount of time, either during a run or after the run is completed, the judge may withdraw a dog's qualifying score.

A dog can be deemed not under control when refusing to sit on the start line.

Dogs that will not bring the shed to hand, or release the antler to the handler will receive a NQ score.

Open, Master and Professional class dogs are not allowed to jump at the shed when the handler is carrying the retrieved sheds. As a result, lack of control will be marked on the score sheet and the run will be scored as a non-qualifying run.

If a dog drops a found antler he/she will receive a NQ score in Masters and Professional classes. In Started and Novice, and Open the dog may drop the antler on the retrieve and still qualify.

Titles

Dogs upon completion of class level requirements will be awarded titles.

Started Shed Dog. SSD (s)

Novice Shed Dog NSD (s)

Open Shed Dog OSD (s)
Master Shed Dog MSD (s)
Professional Shed Dog PSD (s)
A small s after the title Indicates select status
Champion Shed Dog CHSD
Grand Champion Shed Dog GCHSD
Register of Merit Shed Dog ROMSD