

Master/Grand Master Pointing Retriever Test (MPR/GMPR)

PURPOSE

The purpose of APLA's Master Pointing Retriever (MPR) test is to provide a format for Pointing Labradors to demonstrate the highest level of natural abilities and trained behaviors for which the American Pointing Labrador Association tests. To accomplish this, all dogs entered are tested on Upland hunts and on both Land and Water Retrieves and Blinds. They are then scored on a noncompetitive basis in ten (10) categories. These categories are NOSE, COOPERATION, DESIRE, SEARCH, POINT, STEADINESS TO WING AND SHOT, LAND DOUBLE, WATER DOUBLE, LAND BLIND, and WATER BLIND. Nose, Cooperation, and Desire will be evaluated throughout all parts of the test. Search will be evaluated throughout all parts of the test except the Blind Retrieve. Point and Steadiness to Wing and Shot will be evaluated in the Upland Field. The tests are designed to prove at a high level the versatility of the Pointing Labrador as an all-around working dog, bred and developed at the highest levels both for upland bird hunting on a variety of species and for waterfowl hunting.

Testing will be scored on a noncompetitive basis on a zero to five (0 to 5) scale in one half (1/2) point increments in each of the ten (10) categories. Any dog scoring a 2.5 or lower in any category will fail immediately and will not be allowed to continue the test. A minimum total score of 42 out of the 50 possible points is required in order to pass the test. While the test is demanding, experience shows that qualifying scores are attainable for dedicated hunters/trainers/Handlers. There are no prerequisite APLA titles that must be earned prior to competing in the Master Pointing Retriever test.

GENERAL OVERVIEW

UPLAND

In the Upland Field, each bird contact should be looked at as an opportunity to perform to the APLA's MPR/GMPR standard, clearly showing natural traits of pointing.

The Upland Field will consist of approximately 10 acres of varied cover (as available). Four (4) chukar will be placed at random throughout the Upland Field. The Handler will be allowed a maximum of 20 minutes to hunt the field. The Handler must indicate to the Judges whether he himself wants to put up the birds, wants the Gunner to put up the birds, or wants to send the dog in to flush after a successful point. He must also indicate whether he wants any birds shot that the dog puts up without having pointed. The Handler and dog must hunt the entire field, efficiently searching for multiple birds. Multiple bird contacts are required **if upland conditions permit**. Once requirements are met in the Upland Field, time limit may be shortened at the judges' discretion or *may be shortened for the safety of the dog (heat, injury, etc.)*. The field party will consist of the Handler and dog, two (2) Judges, a designated Gunner, plus at most one Apprentice Judge. Spectators may be present in a designated area. With the consent of the Handler, other designated individuals may accompany the field party, such as a photographer or one other "guest". Should those individuals "bump" a bird in the field or

cause a dog to fail to hold a point, it is considered the responsibility of the Handler and the entry will not be considered for any type of protest or re-run. The guests in the field party may not give any type of verbal communication, directive, or support to the Handler and are required to remain in the holding area while birds are being planted. Should the guest offer the Handler guidance or help, there is a high risk of disqualification.

The ability of the dog to locate and point birds in the Upland Field will depend on the overall Upland Conditions, including (but not limited to) wind, scenting conditions, and how well the birds are holding. It is the responsibility of the Handler to organize the overall hunt to maximize both the number of bird contacts and the likelihood of birds being successfully pointed when found. The Judges will evaluate the dog's entire body of work in the Upland field, including evaluating for the natural pointing trait, after seeing enough of the day's Upland work to evaluate overall Upland Conditions, which may change throughout the course of the day. Failure of the dog to locate and point birds may be due to inadequacies in any or all of the following Categories: Nose, Point, Search, Cooperation, or Desire.

Note: There is no longer a requirement to "sit" and walk away from the dog in the Upland Field.

WATER

The Water Course will consist of water that may include surface vegetation or decoys and will provide retrieves of approximately 100 yards or less. A dead duck will be thrown from a concealed location simultaneously with a gunshot but preceded by a duck call. After a brief interval of 3 to 5 seconds this will be repeated in the same manner for the second bird thrown.

THE TEN SCORING CATEGORIES

NOSE

Quality and use of the nose will be judged throughout the test. The dog must prove not only that it has a good nose, but that it can use it to efficiently find birds. In the Upland Field, the dog should indicate scent where game is present. The distance that the dog first encounters the scent cone and where the dog establishes point are good indications of nose. Repeated non-productive points may be an indicator of a poor nose. Both in the Upland Field and in marked Retrieves, quickly finding downed game in heavy cover also shows a good nose. (Weather and other factors will be taken into consideration in scoring.)

COOPERATION

In all parts of the test, the dog should respond to commands or signals given by the Handler. In the Upland Field the Handler will determine the overall pattern of the search, but a well-trained dog will need little assistance in hunting within this general pattern. Scores will be heavily downgraded for a dog that runs with disregard to the Handler during any part of the test.

All retrieves must be delivered to hand.

For all retrieves and blinds, the Handler is allowed an initial send (sending command from his location). Failure of the retriever to leave the line on the initial send will normally result in a No Go being called by the judges and the dog will receive a score of zero (0) in the cooperation category and will fail. The only exception to this, and the only time a dog in the master series is allowed a second attempt or re-send, is in cases of confusion as deemed by the judges. Examples of confusion are listed in the General Rules.

DESIRE

The dog must demonstrate a strong desire to hunt, to retrieve, and to work with its Handler. Desire can be evaluated through the enthusiasm, self-motivation, and body language displayed by the dog as it performs its work. Scores will be downgraded in this category for a dog that requires repeated verbal encouragement to hunt or retrieve or for a dog that seems intimidated by its Handler.

SEARCH

In the Upland Field, the Handler must determine the overall pattern of the search with the clear intent to find four birds. Within this overall pattern, the dog should enthusiastically demonstrate purpose and pattern while using its sense of smell, showing a natural ability to locate birds on its own. On all retrieves, the dog should go quickly to the area of the fall, and search with purpose in the area of the fall. Aimless running or walking will not be construed as search for any bird, whether in hunting or in retrieving.

POINT

The dog should search, locate and point naturally as many of the birds as possible in the Upland Field. Judges are to allow for all styles of point but for top scores, the point must be intense and unmistakable. Intensity shows that the dog has confidence that he or she has located the bird, but intensity should not be judged on a time limit. The wind could fluctuate or the distraction of the Judges and Handler approaching could change the dog's intensity level. The dog must clearly show a natural instinct to point scent as opposed to sight. Dogs "blinking" or intentionally leaving the area of game are to be strongly faulted.

To establish point, the dog must become motionless in a standing position (movement of the head or tail is allowed). The dog must clearly establish a natural point on its own prior to any type of command, signal, or cue given by the Handler. Only after the Judge has started the ten (10) second count may the Handler give a quiet, non-intimidating, steadying command. The dog must remain on point for a minimum of ten (10) seconds. The dog may re-position itself while on point, but upon re-establishing point, the ten (10) second count will be restarted. Repositioning which results in a staunch point indicating that the dog has confidence in bird location will not lower scores. However, repositioning to crowd the bird may lower the pointing score. The Handler may not reposition the dog once it has established point until the dog is released for the flush or retrieve. A bird must be produced from the point to allow the point to be scored. Creeping on point or willful flushing (except after a command to flush upon completion of a successful point)

will result in a lower pointing score.

Throughout the Upland hunt, any dog that willfully flushes game without command will be severely faulted. The dog may run into the bird from the upwind side, not aware of its presence and "bump" the bird without being penalized. A dog that "bumps" a bird on the downwind side (this is considered a willful flush) will be penalized in Nose, Search, or Pointing. Birds judged to have "flushed wild" well in front of a working dog should not be scored as bumped birds.

Throughout the Upland hunt, a dog that actually willfully catches birds will be failed, unless it is determined by the Judges that the bird flushed directly into the dog's face or that after being flushed, the bird stayed in close proximity to the dog on point and was incapable of flight or other extraordinary circumstances existed. In the event that the handler chooses to have his dog flush, any caught bird, regardless of the bird's behavior, will result in failure.

STEADINESS TO WING AND SHOT

Steadiness to Wing and Shot will be judged on what has been exhibited in the Upland Field. For the dog to receive top scores, cooperative and willing work will be required.

Steadiness to Wing begins any time the dog sees a bird flush, or any time a member of the Field Party is sent in to flush a pointed bird. Dogs at the Master level are expected to be Steady any time they encounter a bird, whether it is flying or running, and regardless of whether it was purposefully flushed or a wild flush. A downgrade in Steadiness will occur if a dog willfully chases after a moving bird.

After pointing a bird, the dog may reposition itself without crowding in, but only as needed either to see the bird being flushed or to see the flight of the bird. Dogs must remain standing at point for the full ten (10) second count and shall not be directed to sit until the bird is being produced. Voluntary sitting in anticipation of the bird will not be downgraded. A sit command may be given at the time at which the bird is produced by the Handler or the Gunner (if the bird takes flight or takes off running, the bird has been produced). A downgrade in Steadiness will occur if a sit whistle or sit command is given before the bird is produced. During the flight of the bird or prior to someone going in to flush the bird, the Handler may quietly steady the dog, but may not reposition the dog from where it established point. If a shot is fired, the dog should remain steady. Throughout, the Handler may, in a non-intimidating way, reinforce the dog's steadiness. Excessively loud or intimidating commands may result in failure. The Handler may also reposition himself a short distance, but only enough to get a reasonable view of the flight or fall of the bird or to keep his dog in view during its retrieve or if it breaks. A dog that has been commanded to flush a successfully pointed bird but willfully catches the bird after it has started to take flight, or chases down and catches the produced running bird will be failed.

If a bird has been shot, approximately a three second delay will occur from the time the bird is down until the Judge instructs the Handler to make the retrieve. The dog must remain steady until commanded to retrieve by its Handler.

If at any time the dog breaks, the Handler must quickly get it under control. If directed by the Judges, the Handler must call the dog back to a heel position. A Controlled Break will significantly decrease the dog's score for steadiness. A Controlled Break is defined as the dog showing intent to retrieve before being released by the Judges. Either an Uncontrolled Break or two Controlled Breaks in the Upland Field will result in a zero (0) score for steadiness.

LAND RETRIEVES

Scoring in this category will reflect work performed on the Upland Field as well as during the Double Land Retrieves. Retrieves must be efficient.

In the Upland Field, the dog should mark the fall; however, if necessary, the Handler may assist the dog with hand or whistle signals. Excessive handling in the Upland Field will lower the score for Land Retrieves.

On those occasions when the Gunner fails to down a successfully pointed bird within the Upland Field, a retrieve will be simulated by firing the gun and throwing a dead bird. The dog must retrieve all cleanly killed game and all birds from simulated retrieves that it should see fall within the boundaries of the course.

For the Double Land Retrieve, ducks should be thrown, with each mark approximately 100 yards or less. (At the Judges' discretion, either the Double Land Retrieve or the Double Water Retrieve, but not both, may involve a "walk-up" in which the birds are thrown as the Handler and dog approach the line from which the dog will be sent.)

The dog must be brought to the line off leash. The dog must remain steady until the Handler is instructed by the Judge to make the retrieve. A delay of approximately three (3) seconds will occur from the time the second bird hits the ground until the Judge instructs the Handler to make the retrieve. The Handler may quietly speak to his dog in a non-intimidating fashion while waiting for the Judge to signal him to make the retrieve. The dog must stay in close proximity to the Handler's side until the Judge's signal is given. If the dog does not stay in close proximity to the Handler's side, the Judges will instruct the Handler to re-heel the dog before giving the signal to make the retrieve. A judge may ask the dog to re-heel if the dog creeps without it being a Controlled Break. Excessive creeping may result in a Controlled Break or a lower score in cooperation.

If at any point the dog starts to break before the Judge's signal is given, the Handler may stop the dog using whistle commands and/or strong voice commands. If the Handler has to give a whistle command or a strong verbal command to hold the dog at his side, the Judges may ask that the dog be re-heeled to its Handler's side, and it is a Controlled Break. A Controlled Break is defined as the dog showing intent to retrieve before being released by the Judges, and having to be stopped from doing so by a strong voice and/or whistle command from the Handler. Each Controlled Break will significantly lower the Cooperation score. An Uncontrolled Break will result in a zero (0) in Cooperation. Two Controlled Breaks on the four marks of the Double Land Retrieves and Double Water Retrieves or two Controlled Breaks in the Upland Field will also result in a zero (0) in Cooperation.

Dogs may pick up the birds in whatever order they or their Handlers choose. But dogs that hunt the area of the fall, fail to recover the bird and leave the area of the fall to search another fall area are said to have switched. A dog that switches lacks perseverance and will be scored a zero (0) in the retrieve.

Judges are looking for retrieving desire as well as the efficiency of a reasonably direct line.

Both the Land Double and the Water Double are marking tests. Handling will not be required if the dog can mark the fall and remember the location of both birds. Should the Handler elect to handle, handling must be crisp and precise. Once the Handler chooses to handle, the burden of bird recovery switches to the Handler. In other words, the dog must be handled directly to the fall, not just put in the area and allowed to hunt.

If it is necessary to handle on more than one of the four marked retrieves of the land and water retrieves it is normally expected that the dog will be failed on retrieving.

All birds retrieved will be examined for evidence of hard mouth. Should a dog exhibit hard mouth, it will receive a zero (0) in Land Retrieve. Evidence of crushed bone structure, canine tooth penetration or audible crunching while the dog has a bird in its mouth are sufficient to result in a zero (0) score in Land Retrieve.

WATER RETRIEVES

This is a marked Double Water Retrieve, with two marks of approximately 100 yards or less, with each line crossing a significant amount of water. Thrown dead ducks, which may or may not land in the water, will be used for the marks. (At the Judges' discretion, either the Double Land Retrieve or the Double Water Retrieve, but not both, may involve a "walk-up" in which the birds are thrown as the Handler and dog approach the line from which the dog will be sent.)

The dog must be brought to the line off leash. The dog must remain steady until the Handler is instructed by the Judge to make the retrieve. A delay of approximately three (3) seconds will occur from the time the second bird is down until the Judge instructs the Handler to make the retrieve. The Handler may quietly speak to his dog in a non-intimidating fashion while waiting for the Judge to signal him to make the retrieve. The dog must stay in close proximity to the Handler's side until the Judge's signal is given. If the dog does not stay in close proximity to the Handler's side, the Judges will instruct the Handler to re-heel the dog before giving the signal to make the retrieve. A Judge may ask the dog to re-heel if the dog creeps without it being a controlled break. Excessive creeping may result in a Controlled Break or a lower score in corporation.

If at any point the dog starts to break before the Judge's signal is given, the Handler may stop the dog using whistle commands and/or strong voice commands. If the Handler has to give a whistle command or a strong verbal command to hold the dog at his side, the Judges may ask that the dog be re-heeled to its Handler's side, and it is a Controlled Break. A Controlled Break is defined as the dog showing intent to retrieve

before being released by the Judges, and having to be stopped from doing so by a strong voice and/or whistle command from the Handler. Each Controlled Break will significantly lower the Cooperation score. An Uncontrolled Break will result in a zero (0) in Cooperation. Two Controlled Breaks on the four marks of the Double Land Retrieves and Double Water Retrieves or two Controlled Breaks in the Upland Field will also result in a zero (0) in Cooperation.

Dogs may pick up the birds in whatever order they or their Handlers choose. But dogs that hunt the area of the fall, fail to recover the bird and leave the area of the fall to search another fall area are said to have switched. A dog that switches lacks perseverance and will be scored a zero (0) in the retrieve.

Judges are looking for retrieving desire and swimming abilities as well as the efficiency of a reasonably direct line. Efficient and willing swims to and back with the duck should be completed by the dog. Bank running not on the line to the fall and water entry other than in a direct line from the Handler will severely downgrade the dog's score.

Both the Land Double and the Water Double are marking tests. Handling will not be required if the dog can mark the fall and remember the location of both birds. Should the Handler elect to handle, handling must be crisp and precise. Once the Handler chooses to handle, the burden of bird recovery switches to the Handler. In other words, the dog must be handled directly to the fall, not just put in the area and allowed to hunt.

If it is necessary to handle on more than one of the four marked retrieves of the land and water retrieves, it is normally expected that the dog will be failed on retrieving.

All birds retrieved will be examined for evidence of hard mouth. Should a dog exhibit hard mouth, it will receive a zero (0) in Water Retrieve. Evidence of crushed bone structure, canine tooth penetration or audible crunching while the dog has a bird in its mouth are sufficient to result in a zero (0) score in Water Retrieve.

THE DIVERSION BIRD

Either the Land Double, Water Double, Land Blind Retrieve, or the Water Blind Retrieve will include a "diversion bird." This will involve the simulated shooting and throwing of a dead duck. This location should be well away from either of the lines to the marked retrieves or the blind retrieves. The throw will occur while the dog is returning to the Handler on either its second retrieve of the double or upon returning from the blind, and the throw will be preceded by an attention getter (voice, popper, or some form of call).

The arc of the diversion bird should be readily visible to the working dog as it returns to its Handler, but the bird should not fall so near as to make the temptation severe. The bird should land at least 10 yards from the return line of the dog and should be placed so that the dog can easily see the bird as it lands.

The goal is to demonstrate the dog's willingness to complete the assigned retrieve before carrying out the diversion bird retrieve. The dog will be failed if it switches and picks up the diversion bird or picks up the diversion bird without dropping the assigned

retrieve bird, thus having two birds in its mouth before completing the assigned retrieve. No intimidating gestures or commands may be given to prevent a switch or to prevent the dog from picking up the diversion bird while holding the assigned retrieve bird in its mouth. However, the dog may be whistled or otherwise quietly called off the diversion bird. If the dog drops the bird it is carrying, even without picking up the diversion bird, it will be penalized in retrieving, perhaps severely.

After the return with the marked retrieve it is carrying, the dog will be sent to retrieve the diversion bird (handling if necessary). If the dog is handled to the diversion bird, the dog must be handled directly to the fall, not just put in the area and allowed to hunt. Handling to the diversion bird is not counted as a handle to a mark, but is judged similarly to a blind retrieve.

BLIND LAND RETRIEVE

A dead duck should be used for the blind. The Judges will identify the location where the bird is located. The distance of the land blind will be about 100 yards or less from point of origin to the location of the bird. (At the discretion of the Judges, a shot may be fired.) The dog must be handled to the blind, without being turned loose to hunt the bird.

This is a test of how well the dog handles, so the Handler should “challenge the line to the blind”. That is, the dog should be handled to keep a reasonably tight line to the blind.

BLIND WATER RETRIEVE

A dead duck will be used for the blind. The Judges will mark the location where the bird is located. The distance of the water blind will be about 100 yards or less from point of origin to the marked location of the bird. (At the discretion of the Judges, a shot may be fired.) The dog must be handled to the blind, without being turned loose to hunt the bird.

This is a test of how well the dog handles, so the Handler should “challenge the line to the blind”. That is, the dog should be handled to keep a reasonably tight line to the blind.

TITLES

The tests for Master Pointing Retriever and Grand Master Pointing Retriever are identical and run together. A dog who earns a qualifying (i.e., passing) score in the Master Pointing Retriever test will be awarded a Master qualifying score ribbon. If a dog already holds the Advanced Pointing Retriever (APR) title, the first qualifying score in the Master Pointing Retriever test will be awarded the Master Pointing Retriever (MPR) title. In all other cases, two qualifying scores in the Master Pointing Retriever test will be required to be awarded the Master Pointing Retriever (MPR) title. Once a dog holds the MPR title, the next qualifying score earns a Grand Master qualifying score ribbon and the GMPR title. Each additional qualifying score adds “.5X” to the title through to a maximum of 4XGMPR. Certificates of title will only be awarded for MPR, GMPR, 2XGMPR, 3XGMPR, and 4XGMPR. A dog may be entered in additional tests, and each

additional qualifying score will be awarded a ribbon. However, no additional titles are earned or recognized in the Master category beyond 4XGMPR.

"Approved by the Board July 26, 2019, effective January 1, 2020. Amended November 3, 2020 and August 17, 2022. Amended August 19, 2023. Amended February 21, 2024. Amended February 19, 2025

Revision History:

Update Cooperation - Feb 2025

Ducks "should be" used for retriever series Feb 2024

Diversion re-written – August 2023

Replaced pheasant with chukar – August 27, 2023