

Advanced Pointing Retriever Test (APR)

PURPOSE

The purpose of APLA's Advanced Pointing Retriever Test (APR) is to provide a format for Pointing Labradors to demonstrate a significantly higher level of natural abilities and trained behaviors than are evaluated in the Certified Pointing Retriever Test. The tested abilities and behaviors are important components of a proficient hunting companion.

To score well in this test, the dog must respond to its Handler's commands and must have had enough exposure to hunting situations to demonstrate that it is a good working pointing retriever. There are no prerequisite APLA titles that must be earned prior to running in an APR Test.

The test will have four working series: Upland Work, Land Retrieves, Water Retrieves, and a Blind Retrieve. 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 eight (8) categories. Any dog scoring a two (2) or lower in any category of testing will fail immediately and will not be allowed to continue the test. The eight scoring categories are: NOSE, COOPERATION, DESIRE, SEARCH, POINT, LAND RETRIEVES, WATER RETRIEVES, and BLIND **LAND** RETRIEVE. 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 will be evaluated in the Upland Field. A minimum total score of 24 out of the 40 possible points is required in order to pass the test.

GENERAL OVERVIEW

UPLAND

In the Upland Field each bird contact should be looked at as an opportunity to perform to the APLA's APR standard, clearly showing natural pointing traits. The Upland Field will consist of approximately 5 to 10 acres of light to medium cover (as available). Four (4) chukar will be used for the test. These four birds will be placed at random throughout the Upland Field. The Handler must indicate to the Judge 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. Handlers will be allowed a maximum of twenty (20) minutes to hunt the field. 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". But 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.

WATER

The Water Course will consist of open water as available (surface skim ice or surface vegetation are acceptable) and will provide retrieves of approximately 75 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 EIGHT SCORING CATEGORIES

NOSE

Consistency of effective use of the nose in finding birds and across all bird contacts will be used to determine the overall quality of the nose. While use of the nose in hunting in the Upland Field is especially important, nose will also be judged on Land and Water Retrieves. Scenting conditions (including direction, shifting, or absence of wind) will be taken into consideration by the Judges.

COOPERATION

In all situations, 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. At the Advanced level, a dog is not required to be steady to wing or shot in the Upland Field, but a dog that chases un-shot birds must be quickly brought under control by its Handler. Scores will be heavily downgraded for a dog that runs with disregard to the Handler either when searching the Upland Field or when chasing birds. All retrieves must be delivered to hand.

Handlers at the APR level can make an initial send and a second attempt to send the dog once per series (not including cases of confusion deemed by the judges) and can recall the dog to re-send if needed. A No Go is called when a dog refuses to leave the handler's side after being released on both the initial send and the re-send attempt. If a No Go is called by the judges, then the dog would score a zero (0) in the Cooperation category and fail.

DESIRE

The dog must demonstrate a 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 constant 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 efficiently within the area of the fall. Aimless running or walking will not be confused with searching either in the Upland Field or during Marked Retrieves.

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. A bird must be produced from the point to allow the point to be scored. Creeping on point, or willful flushing or catching birds (except after a command to flush upon completion of a successful point) will result in a lower pointing score. Birds that are determined by the Judges to be running and are flushed within gun range will not lower the dog's pointing score. Advanced dogs do not have to be steady to wing and shot (i.e., they do not have to wait for the judge to release them on the retrieve).

LAND RETRIEVES

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

In the Upland Field, the dog should mark the fall; however the Handler may assist the dog with hand or whistle signals. The Handler may re-position 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. On those occasions when the Gunner fails to down a successfully pointed bird, 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 sees fall within the boundaries of the course. Advanced dogs do not have to be steady to wing and shot in the Upland Field (i.e., they do not have to wait for the judge to release them on the retrieve) but for simulated retrieves, they must begin the simulation in close proximity to the handler's side. Use of slip leads is not permitted for any retrieves.

For the Double Land Retrieve, ducks should be thrown, with each mark approximately 75 yards or less. The dog may be brought to the line on a lead, but the lead must be removed and put away prior to the start of the series. The dog must remain steady until the Handler is instructed by the Judge to make the retrieve. Approximately a three (3) second delay 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. The Judge may ask the dog to re-heel if the dog creeps without it being considered 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 (NOT applicable in the Upland Field), 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 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 will 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.

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 land and water marks, 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 RETRIEVE

This is a marked Water Double, with two marks of approximately 75 yards or less, with each line crossing a significant amount of water. Thrown dead ducks, landing either in water or on land, will be used for the marks.

Dogs may be brought to the line on a lead, but the lead must be removed and put out of sight prior to starting the series. The dog must remain steady until the Handler is instructed by the Judge to make the retrieve. Approximately a three (3) second delay 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 considered 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 (NOT applicable in the Upland Field), 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, 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 will 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.

Efficient and willing swims to and back with the duck should be completed by the dog. Judges are looking for retrieving desire and swimming abilities as well as the efficiency of a reasonably direct line. 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.

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If it is necessary to handle on more than one of the four land and water marks, 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.

BLIND LAND RETRIEVE

The Blind Land Retrieve must occur before the dog is worked in the Upland Field, unless weather conditions or other circumstances dictate that the Upland Field must be run as the first series of the day, then the Blind Land Retrieve will be run as a separate series after the Land and Water Retrieves, thus making it the last series of the test. Judges should have the flexibility to make this call as conditions dictate.

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 40 to 50 yards from point of origin to the marked location of the bird. Cover should be light to medium (as available). No shot will be fired for the blind.

For the Advanced Test, Blinds may not be located between, or close to, the marks used in any of the Land and Water Retrieves to unduly influence or create any suction to the Blind Land Retrieve. No significant amount of water, and no swimming, will be required as part of the land blind. The dog must be handled to the Blind, without being turned loose to hunt the bird.

While the Land Blind may be run in conjunction with the land and water retrieving series, it may also be run as a separate series, and should not be related to or be influenced by any of the land and water marks.

The Judges will describe to the Handlers an acceptable corridor within which they expect the Handler to keep the dog. The Blind Land Retrieve will be judged on how well the dog makes progress to the bird (being handled as necessary to insure reasonably direct progress within this corridor), as well as how well the dog makes a good effort to obey the Handler's commands.

TITLES (Advanced)

A dog that earns a qualifying score will be given a qualifying score ribbon. A dog previously titled as a Certified Pointing Retriever (CPR) who earns a qualifying score in the Advanced Pointing Retriever test, or a dog who earns two qualifying scores in the Advanced Pointing Retriever test, will be awarded the title of Advanced Pointing Retriever (APR). Additional qualifying scores in Advanced tests will be awarded a ribbon, but no additional title is earned.

"Approved by the Board July 26, 2019, effective January 1, 2020. Amended by the Board October 21, 2020." Amended by the BOD May 17, 2023. Amended by the Board February 21, 2024. Amended by the Board February 19, 2025.

Revision History

Replaced "re-send" with second attempt Feb 2025
Ducks "should be" used for retriever series Feb 2024
Removed shot for blind – May 17, 2023
Pheasant replaced by chukar – August 27, 2023
Blind update – Dec 6, 2023 (paragraph 1, 3, 4)