

A PROPOSAL TO THE KENNEL CLUB UK BY THE FIELD TRIAL GROUP  
30<sup>TH</sup> JUNE 2020

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A large, light grey logo consisting of the letters 'F', 'I', 'T', 'I', and 'G' in a bold, sans-serif font. The letters are spaced out, with vertical lines separating the 'I's. The entire logo is enclosed within a thin, light grey rectangular border.

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THE FIELD TRIAL GROUP

The Spaniel Championships in the UK are the pinnacle of our sport, to that end we hope to conduct a meaningful discussion with the Kennel Club to:

- Create a set of standards that can be adopted and met in each year
- Ensure openness, honesty and transparency in the championships that sets the standard and a precedent for clubs up and down the country.

We have been very clear from the outset that these proposals are not to undermine the efforts of those that give up their time to run the championship. Therefore, this proposal does not contain a long list of logistical items but simply a set of proposals that seek improvement in a total of four areas. The fact remains that running the admin and logistics of a championship can be a thankless task and it can be easy to unpick efforts.

Many feel through fear of reprimand unable to speak out. The Field Trial Group was formed as a mechanism to allow people to voice concerns, the ultimate aim was to then collate all of the concerns and turn them into positives – a set of standards that could be abided by and presented to the Kennel Club. This approach removes hearsay, accusation and rumour. We hope these proposals can be adopted by the Kennel Club and associated working parties. In addition, we hope they may welcome The Field Trial Group some involvement in ensuring their delivery.

## ONLINE PRESENCE AND MARKETING

Throughout this proposal a common thread is the lack of transparency. One of the ways to address this is to create a **dedicated** website or area within the KC website (subdomain) for Championships across the UK. Without having already held consultation of the different groups- this may be one combined site or one for each sector ie Springers / Cockers.

This website could then be used but not limited to addressing the following areas:

- Communicating at various levels with clubs, societies, competitors, judges & supporters via a secure login and membership system.
- A secure area for detailing, voting & proposing as an \*example\* once guns had been selected, they could be listed and a vote or ballot conducted.
- An up to date record of competitors and dogs that have qualified
- Easy to access information on the event for attendees

- Ability for competitors to register attendance and pay the fee to attend the championships
- Better exposure for sponsors and supporters which could improve income which in turn can be re-invested in the event.
- Coverage of the event is primarily done externally, whilst coverage is good (just as you would expect with media coverage) the championships must take ownership of the content and have a primary site. This also then controls media enquiries and increases sponsorship sales and advertising potential – a much needed and valued income stream.

Please be aware that a full specification would have to be created for such a site with real thought and care given to what information would be placed on the front end. Shooting can be a sensitive area and care would need to be given on how information is displayed, previous sponsors such as BASC could be invaluable in this. In addition, funding is likely to be an issue, although the site could generate an improvement in sponsorship income which could be sought first.

### SELECTION AND ADMINISTRATION OF GUNS

Finding guns can be incredibly difficult, especially those that have the experience and confidence to shoot over a dog. It can be a highly pressured responsibility and to that end the Field Trial Group suggests the following standards when confirming guns for the championships.

1. Any gun wishing to shoot shall register their interest securely online sending full details of experience. An online form will collect contact information, full details of insurance and no fewer than 2 references. Contact details for the references to be provided and verified. The references must refer to shooting over dogs in field trials.
2. A current shotgun certificate shall be produced on the day to the organisers.
3. Agree in writing that they will at all times adhere to the Code of Good Shooting Practice and to shoot positively at all times giving all competitors the best opportunity.
4. The selection of guns will be made by a secure online ballot with visible tracker of progress. A consultation on who would be invited to vote would need to take place, but this could extend to working parties and other groups if required.

5. All guns will confirm and sign to state they have no conflict of interest in any of the dogs running in the event and have not done so in the preceding 12 months.
6. Every successful gun must will be made aware that during the entirety of the event they may not assume or take up any other role within the organisation or otherwise of the said event.
7. Once a gun has been selected, they will be excluded from registering for the next three years.
8. The working party or organisers would reserve the right to place guns if at the absolute request of the hosts or owners. In these special circumstances such requests would be published, and suitability assessed.

One of the most difficult hurdles to overcome is that of the wishes of the estate and gamekeepers in gun selection. When securing ground, it is our view that most will understand the selection process and be happy to adhere to the standards as outlined above and also accept how they are selected.

### APPOINTMENT OF CHAMPIONSHIP JUDGES

The process for selecting judges has always been that all societies and clubs nominate 4 A Panel judges in each year to judge each championship. It is a fairly simple system that then allows for votes to be counted.

Feedback has been that whilst this system has been deemed to work to some extent it fails in terms of transparency, fairness and in some cases engagement with the clubs and societies has not been pro-active. The Field Trial Group propose a new system of selection.

### Stage One

Address concerns around the current list of A Panel Judges. It appears that many judges no longer participate in judging or trialling and sadly some of them are no longer able to do so.

The list of judges must represent what is deemed to be a list of reputable, active judges, else, any proposals put forward are not addressing the basis for selection which in this case is the A Panel. We believe that this will also assist everyone across the board in their reliance on the list.

We acknowledge the use of the word 'reputable' and comment only that A Panel status, selection and retention be reviewed by the Kennel Club. The

reporting structure Feedback has shown that many handlers have felt that incidents concerning judges have often gone un-reported through fear of backlash. Competitors should feel comfortable to raise concern without being deemed to have impugned a decision. The Field Trial Group will aim to address this as another proposal over the next six months to try and create a system that could protect both a judge and handler in future trials.

- All A Panels shall be contacted, and their details updated or removed as appropriate. It is felt that judges that have served for many years but are no longer able to judge are placed in a different category – similar to an honorarium.
- The new website or subdomain inadvertently also creates a system to allow for annual renewals of A and B Panel Judges. Once a judge confirms they are willing to judge (Stage Two (1)) they can also ensure all contact information is correct and in addition how many trials they have judged in past 12 months. Assessment of ACTIVE judges then becomes much easier.

## Stage Two

Once an official list has been confirmed:

1. The Kennel Club will write to all A panel judges to invite them to be considered to judge the Championships. Judges will simply have to confirm they are both **able** and **willing** to judge on the chosen date should they be selected.
2. All judges are placed into an online draw similar to a number generator. This process selects 5 judges.
3. The result will be confirmed at a yearly FTLC meeting with the first 4 judges drawn formally invited to judge with the 5<sup>th</sup> being asked to be reserve.
4. If the reserve judge does not fulfil his role during that event he should be automatically invited to officiate as judge at the following year's event. In this instance only the top 4 judges within the ballot go forward to the following year or if they do judge 5 will be selected and so on.
5. Judges selected will not be eligible to be put into the ballot again for a further 5 years.
6. The criteria for judge's selection will be:
  - Will have at least 5 years minimum experience as an A Panel Judge by the date the championship is held.

- Will have competed with a dog in field trials (Novice and/or Open) within the last 5 years as a handler
- Will have judged a minimum of 5 open stakes in the preceding consecutive 5-year period. \*

Please note item 6 pays regard to Page 3.196 of the Kennel Club Yearbook J regulations 6. Judges a.Appointment

\*As per Stage One the website can maintain his or her judging record in order to verify the amount of trials judged. Verification of this would need to take place annually or alternatively could be reported back by clubs and societies.

7. Any judge invited to judge the championship will not have owned or part owned, trained or kennelled any dog in the past 12 months that may be participating in the Championship. The responsibility of declaring such a conflict of interest falls to **both the judge and handler** and may result in one or the other stepping down.

### GROUND SELECTION

It is well recognised that selection and confirmation of ground for the Championships can make or break its success. The following guidance is put forward by The Field Trial Group around ground selection.

1. A formal written agreement to be signed to protect from cancellation and any other unforeseen incidents including the agreed fees and costs for the event
2. Full report provided outlining access, health and safety, facilities and rules and regulations surrounding each event
3. One nominated individual from each working party to keep a close liaison with Estate staff and keepers etc. This ideally should be a non-competitor.
4. The nominated individual to also confirm that they either have no conflict of interest in any dog competing or in the case of a jointly owned dog, confirm in writing that they will fulfil their duty to the event following all rules and regulations.
5. Only members of the current working party to visit any estate designated for the event and with appropriate notice to the rest of the WP given.

Each of the above sets of standards have been created based on the evidence, input and statements both publicly and in confidence of members of The Field Trial Group. It is entirely possible that many of the above standards and reporting structures are already in place, however, we hope that The Kennel

Club and working parties will be open to a discussion on how they could be fully adopted. We are confident that this could restore confidence in the championships in the UK and secure the sport for generations to come, there will be many more mountains to climb in the years ahead.

The Field Trial Group hopes to remain a valuable conduit between the Field Trial fraternity and the Kennel Club allowing a safe environment to voice concerns but will always be true to its aim – to seek positive change.

This proposal is accompanied by pledges of support that are in accordance with data protection as outlined here: <https://www.gov.uk/data-protection> .



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