

Becoming a Working Judge

by Sue Marino

The Working Dog Committee (WDC) of the Newfoundland Club of America (NCA) encourages water and draft test entrants to think about becoming an NCA judge for draft and/or water tests. Even though the requirements for becoming a judge are on the NCA website some people still have questions and apprehension about becoming a judge. This article will break it down to make it a little easier to understand and less intimidating for those who are interested. The WDC is also considering holding a Zoom meeting for the WDC to meet with anyone interested in attending to discuss becoming a judge. If you are interested please contact Sue Raney, WDC chair.



NCA water and draft test judges are just NCA members with a passion for the sport. They have probably exhibited many times, been in your shoes pass or fail, and hopefully been encouraged by the judges under which they earned their titles. They are approachable and happy to answer your questions about judging or the tests. Most judges are excited for the entrants, love to watch the

performances and are thrilled when an entrant completes an awesome performance, pass or not. Judges love it when an entrant is excited about the performance their dog had that day even if they did not pass. They have also shed happy tears when someone finally finishes that elusive VN title at a test or has overcome some other adversity to be back having fun with their dog.

If you are a working test fan you have probably sat at a test as a spectator cheering on the entrants wanting everyone to pass and, if so, you have what it takes to be a judge. There are a few other requirements necessary but if you have been an entrant at working tests you may well be on your way to completing the other requirements.



You need to have earned two new titles in either draft or water to apply to judge that sport. Two draft dog (DD) titles to judge draft or two (WRD) titles to judge water. You also need one AKC Companion Dog (CD) title which many entrants at working tests have already completed or plan to complete. One other requirement you may have already completed, if you are a working test fan, is serving as the chair, secretary or chief steward at a draft or water test. (There is a

shadowing option in the judge's requirements on the website). Serving in one of these three jobs helps you to learn what it takes to put on a test and understand the "behind the scenes" running of a test which is important for a judge to know. That's it! Once you have these requirements completed you can apply for the first step, becoming an Observer Judge.

To become an Observer Judge you just contact the person on the WDC who handles Observer Judges, currently that is John Jackman. You must send him proof that you have completed the above-mentioned prerequisites, such as copies of title certificates or copies of pages from a test catalog. Once he has them, he will have a judge's test sent to you for either water or draft, depending which sport you are applying to judge. This is where you prove the last requirement for applying to be a judge, being familiar with the regulations. This is probably the most important part of being a judge. You don't want to have to keep stopping to check the regulations throughout a test when you are judging, though it is certainly necessary occasionally when there is a gray area. No one is expected to know all the regulations by heart, even mentor judges, but you should know where in the regulations you would go to look up something. That is where this judge's test comes in.



It is an open book test meant to get you to open your regulations, read through them, become familiar with them and know how they are organized so that you can easily find something if you are looking for it. There



are 50 questions on the test from either the test regulations, the NCA Judges Code of Ethics (found on the NCA website) or, for draft only, the NCA Draft Test Equipment Guide and, since it is open book, you are allowed to get three wrong and still pass. If you get four or more wrong, you will have to study the regulations some more and retake the test in a month. As an NCA judge you will be asked to take the test once every 3 years because occasionally changes are

made such as recent additions of WRDX, DDX and BDD tests. Very few observers and judges fail these tests (because they are open book) and usually it is due to carelessness like not reading the question correctly. You have 3 months to return the test to the person listed on the test. Within two weeks of returning the test you will be notified if you passed.

Once an applicant has passed the written test, he/she may contact a test committee of an upcoming test to ask permission to observe at that test. (Observers are not permitted at National Specialty tests.) The judging panel at the test must consist of two mentor level judges or a mentor and partner level judge. There is a form on the NCA website that must be filled out, signed by the test chair and sent to the person on the WDC handling Observer Judges at least 30 days before the test. That's it, you are on your way!

The judges of the test will want to speak with you either by phone or at the test site, before the test, to go over regulations and procedures. At the test you will be given your own judging sheets to mark, just for experience and to discuss with the judges after the test. Also, after the test each judge will submit an evaluation of your observation to the WDC. Usually they will discuss it with you after the test, you can ask them to do so. You will also need to do a second observation, at least one month after the first with two different judges at a different location. (See Observer Judge info on the NCA website for more details). As long as all of the judge's evaluations are positive, and you have observed at two different locations under four different judges you will be notified by the WDC chair that you will be put on the provisional judges list and your accomplishment will be advertised in NCA E-Notes. Congratulations!

Becoming a judge may sound intimidating to you and you will probably be nervous the first time you judge but just remember you have probably been reading these regulations and working at or exhibiting at these tests for years and you probably know a lot more than you may think. Practice with friends, go over their equipment at draft practice or use the whistle and timer at water practice, it will soon become second nature.

Judging gives you some incredible opportunities to travel across the country and learn something new in each part of the country about working events. It's the best seat in the house to cheer on some amazing working dogs doing their best!

