



AMERICAN  
KENNEL CLUB™

## Performance Events Department

May 2025

To: **All Clubs Licensed to Host Retriever Hunting Tests and Retriever Hunt Test Judges**

Subject: **Amateur Handler Limit / Handler and Judge Relation**

This is to inform your club of two changes to the *Regulations & Guidelines for AKC Hunting Tests for Retrievers*. Below is a brief summary of each item and how they will appear in the next reprinting of the regulation book as shown per underlining. These changes will go into effect **for events approved as of July 1, 2025**.

The first change establishes the maximum number of dogs an amateur can handle or enter which is three dogs per test when using the Amateur Set Aside program. The Amateur Set Aside Program is used only for Master Tests. The intent of the program is to help amateurs participate in master level tests and not be shut out when entries fill quickly. Unfortunately, there have been issues of abusing the intent of the amateur set aside where individuals are intentionally taking up a rather large or the entire portion of the set aside amount. This undermines the importance of amateur involvement in retriever hunt tests. This new regulation will prevent this abuse from continuing.

### **Chapter 1, Section 4. Amateur Set Aside Entries.** (3<sup>rd</sup> paragraph)

Entries reserved for amateurs shall open one day prior to general opening at 8:00 pm in the time zone where the event is being held. If the amateur entry limit is reached in the 24 hours prior to the general opening, entries shall stop until the general opening. Additional amateur handled dogs are eligible to enter at the time of general opening. If the amateur entry limit is not reached prior to the general opening, the unused amateur entry slots may be filled by any handler at the time of the general opening. If a dog is entered under the amateur set aside provision and the amateur handler is not able to attend the event, the dog may participate provided it is handled by another amateur. The maximum number of dogs an amateur can enter or run in the Amateur Set Aside process is three dogs per test. Any handler/owner misusing the amateur set aside provision will forfeit the ability to enter in this manner and may be subject to a fine from AKC.

The second change addresses the awkward situation of a pro being under judgement from his client. To remedy this conflict of interest and better define the relationship between handler and judge, the following language will appear in the Regulations.

### **Chapter 1, Section 6. Judges' Eligibility.** (end of the section)

A dog is ineligible to be entered under a judge if that judge has been a client receiving any professional retriever training or associated services provided by the dog's handler within one year from the start date of the hunting test.

**Handler/Judge Relation.** An individual is not eligible to handle a dog in any licensed or member test, if within one year from the start date of the test, there has been a business relationship between the handler and the judge where it might reasonably appear that the judge is influenced by factors other than the merits of the dog. In the case of a professional handler, this condition cannot be circumvented by having an associate handle the dog(s). A business relationship includes a client – professional handler relationship.

This regulation update has been posted to the [Retriever Hunting Tests News And Updates](https://www.akc.org/huntingtests/news-and-updates/) webpage. Please send any comments or questions to: [huntingtest@akc.org](mailto:huntingtest@akc.org) If you send a request to update your email address, please provide your name, city and state.