

**Dogs NSW Members Retrieving Trial Rule Review Submission to  
National Retrieving & Field Trial Committee**

**Meeting held December 2<sup>nd</sup> 2023**

The meeting noted the following advice:

*Dogs Australia Board Meeting 21 and 22 October 2023*

*8 (k) Game – Definition of - Quail, Duck, Pigeon, Partridge, Grouse, Ptarmigan, Pheasant, Rabbit, and Hare, **inclusive of domesticated or replica variants of the above species.***

*This amendment will be effective 1 January 2024*

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**CURRENT RULE** (as at 1.1.2024)

**8 (k)** Game – Definition of - Quail, Duck, Pigeon, Partridge, Grouse, Ptarmigan, Pheasant, Rabbit, and Hare, inclusive of domesticated or replica variants of the above species.

**PROPOSED NEW RULE**

**8.(k)** Game – Definition of - Quail, Duck, Pigeon, Partridge, Pheasant, Rabbit and Hare, inclusive of domesticated and artificial variants of the above species. (Refer also to Rule No.7). Artificial variants of game should closely resemble the size and appearance of the species that they are replicating.

**RATIONALE**

Traditional game is becoming increasingly difficult and more expensive to acquire and store. While we are against the removal of traditional game completely we believe that artificial game needs to be an option for the long-term preservation of the sport.

**CURRENT RULE**

**8.(p)** Hard Mouth – A dog is deemed to be hard-mouthed when there is unmistakable evidence of any markings or damage on game retrieved due to biting or crunching by the dog. The penalty as defined on the score sheet should be relative to the marking or damage. In the event of Extreme Hard Mouth, the Judge may apply Rule 68 and disqualify the dog. Extreme Hard Mouth is where there is deliberate squeezing of game so that bones break, or the flesh is badly ripped and the Judge considers that the game is unfit for the table. Note: Game can be marked when thrown and this should be considered.

**PROPOSED NEW RULE**

**Rule 8 (p)** Hard Mouth – A dog is deemed to be hard-mouthed when there is unmistakable evidence of any markings or damage on game retrieved due to biting or crunching by the dog. The penalty as defined on the score sheet should be relative to the marking or damage. Game can be marked when thrown and this should be considered. In the event of Extreme Hard Mouth, the Judge may apply Rule 68 and disqualify the dog.

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Extreme Hard Mouth is where there is deliberate squeezing of game so that - flesh is damaged\_and the Judge considers that the game is unfit for the table.

If artificial game is used some dogs may readjust the hold once picked up, therefore, a judge must be aware how the dog carries the game and if excessive biting or mouthing of the artificial game is observed, then the applicable penalty or disqualification applies.

### **RATIONALE**

Hard mouth remains an undesirable quality in Gundogs. Judges often note and record the evidence of hard mouth before the retrieve has been completed with traditional game. The deletion of (bones break or the flesh is badly ripped),

Game may be damaged when it is thrown and landing on hard surfaces. Note If bones break this would not render the game as unfit for the table and this is what should be considered by the Judge.

If the flesh is ripped whether badly or not if the dog's teeth enter the carcass, this should render the Game unfit for the table and the dog should be eliminated from further competition and this should be reflected in the judges score sheet.

The inclusion of the word (damaged) to this rule, permits the judge to form his opinion with regards to Bones Breaking and/or Flesh Badly Ripped as to whether the Game is Fit or Unfit for the table and score the dog accordingly.

### **CURRENT RULE**

**11. (a)** Wounded Bird Retrieve - Bird to be thrown by Steward as in other retrieves, but to have line attached by which it is dragged for a distance of at least twenty (20) metres. Bird then picked up and fresh bird left in its stead.

(b) Wounded Rabbit Retrieve - Rabbit to be placed by Steward as in other retrieves, but to have line attached by which it is dragged for a distance of at least twenty (20) metres. Rabbit is then picked up and fresh rabbit left in its stead.

### **PROPOSED NEW RULE**

**11. (a)** Wounded Bird Retrieve - Bird to be thrown by Steward as in other retrieves, but to have line attached by which it is dragged for a distance of at least twenty (20) metres. Bird then picked up and fresh bird left in its stead.

(b) Wounded Rabbit Retrieve - Rabbit to be placed by Steward as in other retrieves, but to have line attached by which it is dragged for a distance of at least twenty (20) metres. Rabbit is then picked up and fresh rabbit left in its stead.

**(c) Replica game must not be used in wounded game retrieves.**

### **RATIONALE**

While artificial/replica game can be scented by dogs there is insufficient scent for these exercises to be correctly executed.

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## **PROPOSED NEW RULE**

**19 A** A Triple blind Retrieve shall consist of three separate blind retrieves. The items of game may be cast at different angles and, may include land and water and must be separated in accordance with the specification in Rule 8 (r). One retrieve must be at a short distance.

## **RATIONALE**

Triple blinds have been set at trials previously and are an excellent test particularly if the conditions do not allow for sighted marks to be thrown such as heavily timbered areas.

## **CURRENT RULE**

**33.** All events shall be restricted to dogs six months of age and over. The age of a dog shall be computed from its date of birth to the date on which the Trial commences. Should finalisation of the Trial be delayed, then the increase in age shall not affect the eligibility of any qualified contestant.

## **PROPOSED NEW RULE**

**33.** All events shall be restricted to dogs six months of age and over. The age of a dog shall be computed from its date of birth to the date on which the Trial commences.

## **RATIONALE**

Obviously if a trial is delayed then the dog will be older and with no maximum age limits this will have no effect on the dog's eligibility for the trial

## **CURRENT RULE**

**34.** Registered (Main and Limited) desexed Gundogs shall be permitted to compete in Retrieving Trials in all States and/or Territories of Australia.

## **PROPOSED NEW RULE**

**34.** Main Register, Limited Register and Associate Register Gundogs shall be permitted to compete in Retrieving Trials in all States and/or Territories of Australia.

## **RATIONALE**

The existing rule suggests that all competing dogs must be desexed regardless of registration status. The amended rule allows associate register gundogs to participate in retrieving trials. Dogs are only eligible for associate registration when desexed and MR/LR desexing should be at the discretion of the owner.

Eligibility of Associate registered gundogs is consistent with RATG and reflects commitment of the retrieving community to grow and preserve the sport.

## **CURRENT RULE**

**37. Novice Stake** is a Stake confined to Gundogs that have not won five (5) Novice Stakes or any other Stake (Beginners' Tests are excluded) or have gained Championship Points and/or been awarded an AARD title. The only form of retrieve in a Novice Stake is a Single Mark Retrieve. A "Walk-Up" is not permitted in a Novice Stake.

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## **PROPOSED NEW RULE**

37. Novice Stake is a Stake confined to Gundogs that have not won five (5) Novice Stakes or any other Stake (Beginners' Tests are excluded) or have gained Championship Points and/or been awarded an AARD title. The only form of retrieve in a Novice Stake is a Single Mark Retrieve. A "Walk-Up' **to a maximum of 70 metres with the game to be cast directly in front of the dog and handler is** permitted in a Novice Stake.

## **RATIONALE**

We think a walk up is an excellent marking test and is included in RATG which is an introduction to retrieving. We think inclusion of this will help prepare dogs for restricted and all age as well as provide some new concepts for career novice dogs and handlers.

## **CURRENT RULE**

**38. Restricted Stake** is a Stake confined to Gundogs that have not won five (5) Restricted Stakes or have gained Championship Points and/or been awarded an AARD title. At least one Blind Find Retrieve shall be included in a Restricted Stake. A Blind Find Retrieve should preferably be picked up after, rather than before, a Mark Retrieve, Double Rise Retrieve or a Two-Bird Retrieve.

Where a Blind Find Retrieve is to be retrieved first, the angle of separation between the Blind and other items of game shall be at least 60 degrees.

## **PROPOSED NEW RULE**

**38. Restricted Stake** is a Stake confined to Gundogs that have not gained Championship Points and/or been awarded an AARD title. At least one Blind Find Retrieve shall be included in a Restricted Stake. A Blind Find Retrieve should preferably be picked up after, rather than before, a Mark Retrieve, Double Rise Retrieve or a Two-Bird Retrieve.

Where a Blind Find Retrieve is to be retrieved first, the angle of separation between the Blind and other items of game shall be at least 60 degrees.

## **RATIONALE:**

This rule change enables competitors to remain in the Restricted Stake indefinitely as long as they do not advance and successfully compete at All Age level.

## **CURRENT RULE**

40. (a) A Championship Retrieving Trial Stake is a Stake confined to Gundogs that have been placed first in a Restricted Stake or first, second or third in an All Age Stake or have the title All Age Retrieving Dog (AARD). Proof of Eligibility must be included with the entry for a non-titled dog.
- (b) A Championship Retrieving Trial Stake shall consist of not less than five (5) Runs, with at least thirteen (13) items of game to be retrieved. At least two (2) Blind Find Retrieves are to be included. A dog must be tested for steadiness from behind a Hide on at least two occasions.

## **PROPOSED NEW RULE**

40. (a) A Championship Retrieving Trial Stake is a Stake confined to Gundogs that have been placed first in a Restricted Stake or first, second or third in an All Age Stake or

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have the title All Age Retrieving Dog (AARD). Proof of Eligibility must be included with the entry for a non-titled dog.

(b) A Championship Retrieving Trial Stake shall consist of not less than five (5) Runs, with at least thirteen (13) items of game to be retrieved. At least two (2) Blind Find Retrieves are to be included. A dog must be tested for steadiness from behind a Hide on at least two occasions.

(c) A Championship Retrieving Trial Stake must not include artificial/replica game.

### **RATIONALE:**

Championship Retrieving Trials should provide for dogs to be tested on all elements of the rules, including all run types and game.

### **CURRENT RULE**

41. (a) A National Championship Retrieving Trial Stake is a Stake confined to Gundogs that have been placed first in a Restricted Stake or first, second or third in an All Age Stake or have the title All Age Retrieving Dog (AARD). Proof of Eligibility must be included with the entry for a non-titled dog.
- (b) A National Championship Retrieving Trial Stake shall consist of not less than eight (8) Runs with at least seventeen (17) items of game to be retrieved. At least two (2) Blind Find Retrieves are to be included and a dog must be tested for steadiness from behind a Hide on at least two (2) occasions.

### **PROPOSED NEW RULE**

41. (a) A National Championship Retrieving Trial Stake is a Stake confined to Gundogs that have been placed first in a Restricted Stake or first, second or third in an All Age Stake or have the title All Age Retrieving Dog (AARD). Proof of Eligibility must be included with the entry for a non-titled dog.
- (b) A National Championship Retrieving Trial Stake shall consist of not less than eight (8) Runs with at least seventeen (17) items of game to be retrieved. At least two (2) Blind Find Retrieves are to be included and a dog must be tested for steadiness from behind a Hide on at least two (2) occasions.
- (c) A National Championship Retrieving Trial Stake must not include artificial/replica game.

### **RATIONALE:**

National Championship Retrieving Trials should provide for dogs to be tested on all elements of the rules, including all run types and game.

### **CURRENT RULE**

57. (a) Shall be required to assist the Judge in all duties in connection with the Trial.
- (b) At the Judge's request shall inspect any dog for sexual causes or any other cause which interferes with the safety or performance of its opponents.
- (c) Shall assemble and control all dogs and also be responsible to see that all dogs participate without delay in their proper order.
- (d) May acquaint all competitors with the procedure required by the Judge.

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(e) In some tests the Judge may consider it necessary to request an additional Steward or Stewards to observe and report as required.

### **PROPOSED NEW RULE**

57. (a) Shall be required to assist the Judge in all duties in connection with the Trial.  
(b) At the Judge's request shall inspect any dog for sexual causes or any other cause which interferes with the safety or performance of its opponents.  
(c) Shall assemble and control all dogs and also be responsible to see that all dogs participate without delay in their proper order.  
(d) May acquaint all competitors with the procedure required by the Judge.  
(e) In some tests the Judge may consider it necessary to request an additional Steward or Stewards to observe and report as required.

(f) Shall ensure that game to be used for the trial is in a fit and proper condition, is sufficiently thawed if previously frozen, and is without obvious damage or decay.

### **RATIONALE:**

This has broad relevance to dead and artificial game. Dead game that is coated in faeces, re-used or thawed too early presents health and hygiene risks for judges, stewards and competitors. Frozen game does not “emulate as closely as possible those which would be found whilst hunting”. Artificial game items should not be mouldy, degrading or damaged.

### **CURRENT RULE**

59. (a) Shall be responsible to ensure that all game is humanely dispatched and that at the commencement of any Stake all game is in a fair and reasonable condition. In any Retrieve the condition of the game for that retrieve shall be substantially the same for each dog.

### **PROPOSED NEW RULE**

59. (a) Shall be responsible to ensure that at the commencement of any Stake all game is in a fair and reasonable condition. In any Retrieve the condition of the game for that retrieve shall be substantially the same for each dog.

### **RATIONALE:**

The current rule is no longer consistent with the way game is managed by organising committees and is also inconsistent with the expectations for game stewards at trials.

### **CURRENT RULE**

72. No thermal vest shall be worn and nothing whatever may be administered to a dog while it is in the hands of the Judge.

### **PROPOSED NEW RULE**

72. No thermal vest shall be worn and nothing shall be administered to a dog other than minor First Aid eg a bandage while it is in the hands of the Judge.

### **RATIONALE:**

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This amendment permits minor First Aid to a dog such as a bandage etc. if required.

### **CURRENT RULE**

77. (a) The judge shall give instructions on the conduct of each Run, and these instructions must be obeyed.

These instructions must comply with the Rules for the Conduct of Retrieving Trials for Gundogs, including the application of points allocated and deducted therein. The ruling of 'No score' or "elimination" must only be invoked in response to situations where this penalty is specifically stated in the Rules.

(b) Competing dogs shall be kept in a marshalling area from which they cannot see retrieves in progress.

### **PROPOSED NEW RULE**

77. (a) The judge shall give instructions on the conduct of each Run, and these instructions must be obeyed.

These instructions must comply with the Rules for the Conduct of Retrieving Trials for Gundogs, including the application of points allocated and deducted therein. The ruling of 'No score' or "elimination" must only be invoked in response to situations where this penalty is specifically stated in the Rules.

(b) Competing dogs shall be kept in a marshalling area from which they cannot see retrieves in progress.

(c) Procedural instructions may be given to the handler by the judge during the run. This may be at the request of the handler.

### **RATIONALE:**

This amendment by addition of (c) insists the handlers are made fully aware of the judges instructions. Judges must understand with big number of entries that handlers may genuinely forget what is required.

### **CURRENT RULE**

80. The Draw is the selection by ballot of the order in which dogs in a Stake are required to compete in the first Run. In a National or State Championship it is permitted to divide the field into equal sections still allowing for running of the dogs in the drawn order on the first Run. The Draw will be made by the Trial Committee entrusted with the management of the Trial. The Draw must be made in public either before or on the day of the trial. The subsequent running order, if convenient and practical, after the first run has taken place maybe rotated to ensure fairness to competitors.

### **PROPOSED NEW RULE**

80. The Draw is the random selection by ballot of the order in which dogs in a Stake are required to compete in the first Run. In a National or State Championship it is permitted to divide the field into equal sections still allowing for running of the dogs in the drawn order on the first Run. The Draw will be made by the Trial Committee entrusted with the management

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of the Trial. The subsequent running order, if convenient and practical, after the first run has taken place maybe rotated to ensure fairness to competitors.

### **RATIONALE:**

A public draw is no longer consistent with the way most clubs utilise electronic entry systems. A randomised draw can be generated by online entry providers.

### **CURRENT RULE**

**84.** The Game Steward shall when directed by the Judge, cast game in the area and in such a manner as previously directed by the Judge, and where applicable from a position out of sight of the handler and in such a way that does not distract the dog.

Insofar as possible, where UHF radios are in use to set up a Run, no communication between the Judge and the Stewards shall take place via the radios while the dog is retrieving and outside the Control Area. Exceptions would include notification of incorrectly cast game, an injured dog, or situation which interferes with the Run for that dog.

### **PROPOSED NEW RULE**

**84.** The Game Steward shall when directed by the Judge, cast game in the area and in such a manner as previously directed by the Judge, and from a position out of sight of the handler and in such a way that does not distract the dog.

When UHF radios are used, communication between the Judge and the Stewards may take place but in such a way that does not distract the dog or handler.

### **RATIONALE:**

This amendment permits judges the use of UHF radios during the conduct of the run, as long as the radios are used in a manner which does not interfere with dog or handler during the conduct of the run. Radios are of real benefit when judging.

### **CURRENT RULE**

**88.** On instruction from the Judge, and only then, shall the handler order his dog to retrieve the game. The instruction should be given by the Judge to all handlers prior to the commencement of a Run, so as to eliminate interference with the dog whilst it is at the Firing Point.

Note: The dog must not be held or forcibly restrained by the handler whilst the dog is in competition.

### **PROPOSED NEW RULE**

**88.** The handler may order their dog to retrieve the game without further instruction from the judge provided that the judge's instructions have been communicated prior to the commencement of the Run.

The dog must not be held or forcibly restrained by the handler whilst the dog is in competition.

### **RATIONALE:**



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Reworded for clarity and to remove the conflict between the first and second sentences of the current rule.

## **PROPOSED NEW RULE - PROCEDURE FOR CONDUCTING TRIALS**

**93A** Replica Game may be used by a club within the following strict guidelines:-

- No blending of traditional game and replica game on any run excluding diversionary items
- A club may choose to run all stakes on replica game including diversionary items
- The 'replica game' retrieving trial must be advertised accordingly
- Replica game must be provided by the club
- A retrieving trial schedule and advertisement must indicate if replica game will be used.

### **RATIONALE:**

Clarity and simplification

### **CURRENT RULE**

**94.** The principal points to be considered by the Judge in assessing the merits of performances in competitive work shall be the ability to mark, sagacity, and use of nose, steadiness, dash, perseverance, attention, control, courage, style, retrieving and cleanness of delivery. Retrieving to which supreme importance must always be accorded, should be with tender mouth and right up to hand. The dog must not injure game, retrieve decoys, drop the game, or retrieve without being ordered to do so. Points should be allocated for each retrieve. (See Judging Sheet.)

### **PROPOSED NEW RULE**

**94.** The principal points to be considered by the Judge in assessing the merits of performances in competitive work shall be the ability to mark, sagacity, and use of nose, steadiness, dash, perseverance, attention, control, courage, style, retrieving and cleanness of delivery. Retrieving to which supreme importance must always be accorded, should be with tender mouth and right up to hand. The dog must not damage game, retrieve decoys, drop the game, or retrieve without being ordered to do so. Points should be allocated for each retrieve. (See Judging Sheet.)

### **RATIONALE:**

This amendment clarifies that dead game cannot be injured but it can be damaged. During the conduct of Retrieving Trials, live game is not used and cannot be used to test dogs.

### **CURRENT RULE**

**103.** If a prize-winner is disqualified, the dogs next in consecutive order of merit, if so placed by the Judge, shall be moved into the higher places in the prize list and such placings shall there upon become the awards, subject to the qualification that the Judge must certify that such dogs are worthy of occupying that position.

### **PROPOSED NEW RULE**

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**103.** The dogs will be placed First, Second or Third in the prize list by the Judge in consecutive order of merit and such placings shall there upon become the awards, subject to the qualification that the Judge must certify that such dogs are worthy of occupying that position.

### **RATIONALE:**

This amendment will result with one of the following,

1. Dogs will be placed First, Second or Third in the prize list and cannot be placed Second without a First place and Third without a Second place as has been attempted by certain individual judges in the past.
2. If the judge cannot certify qualification of the dogs which have finished the trial, therefore the judge cannot/does not award placings in the prize list.
3. The dogs have all been eliminated from competition.

### **CURRENT RULE**

**106.** (a) The title of Qualifying Novice Dog (QND) may be awarded to any dog that has completed five (5) Novice Stakes to the Judge's satisfaction, (and awarded by at least two different judges) having shown that they are steady to shot, under reasonable control and not "hard-mouthed" nor gun shy. The records required to apply for a Qualifying Novice Dog title are the responsibility of the owner/handler. The title of Qualifying Novice Dog is not retrospective and can only be awarded on basis of results obtained from 1 January 2010.

(b) The title of Qualifying Restricted Dog (QRD) may be awarded to any dog that has completed seven (7) Restricted Stakes to the Judge's satisfaction, (and awarded by at least three different judges) having shown that they are steady to shot, under reasonable control and not "hard-mouthed" nor gun shy. The records required to apply for a Qualifying Restricted Dog title are the responsibility of the owner/handler. The title of Qualifying Restricted Dog is not retrospective and can only be awarded on basis of results obtained from 1 January 2015.

### **PROPOSED NEW RULE**

**106.** (a) The title of **Qualifying Novice Dog (QND)** may be awarded to any dog that has completed five (5) Novice Stakes to the Judge's satisfaction, (and awarded by at least two different judges) having shown that they are steady to shot, under reasonable control and not "hard-mouthed" nor gun shy. The title of Qualifying Novice Dog is not retrospective and can only be awarded on basis of results obtained from 1 January 2010.

(b) The title of **Qualifying Restricted Dog (QRD)** may be awarded to any dog that has completed seven (7) Restricted Stakes to the Judge's satisfaction, (and awarded by at least three different judges) having shown that they are steady to shot, under reasonable control and not "hard-mouthed" nor gun shy. The title of Qualifying Restricted Dog is not retrospective and can only be awarded on basis of results obtained from 1 January 2015.

(c) A title or qualification can only be applied for if one award or qualification is received is using game that is not replica game.

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## **RATIONALE:**

Retrieving is the only sport that requires competitors to maintain their own records for title eligibility. Dogs Australia Qualifying Certificates should be provided for every stake. These should have been created as new title was created. This amendment links with the proposed change of Rule 113.

While we are against the removal of traditional game completely, to keep the integrity and preservation of Retrieving Titles and qualifications one must be achieved using game.

## **CURRENT RULE**

**107.** (a) The title of Novice Retrieving Trial Dog (N.R.D.) and/or Restricted Retrieving Trial Dog (R.R.D.) may be awarded to those dogs that have had three wins in those Stakes or those that are no longer eligible to compete in those Stakes because of wins in those Stakes or wins/placings in higher Stakes.

(b) The title of All Age Retrieving Dog (A.A.R.D.) may be awarded to those dogs that have completed ten (10) All Age Stakes judged by at least three different Judges. Once a dog has been granted title of AARD it can only compete in All Age or Championship Stakes.

## **PROPOSED NEW RULE**

**107.** (a) The title of Novice Retrieving Trial Dog (N.R.D.) and/or Restricted Retrieving Trial Dog (R.R.D.) may be awarded to those dogs that have had three wins in those Stakes or those that are no longer eligible to compete in those Stakes because of wins in those Stakes or wins/placings in higher Stakes.

(b) The title of All Age Retrieving Dog (A.A.R.D.) may be awarded to those dogs that have completed ten (10) All Age Stakes judged by at least three different Judges. Once a dog has been granted title of AARD it can only compete in All Age or Championship Stakes.

(c) A title or qualification can only be applied for if one award or qualification is received is using game that is not replica game.

## **RATIONALE:**

While we are against the removal of traditional game completely, to keep the integrity and preservation of Retrieving Titles and qualifications one must be achieved using game.

## **CURRENT RULE**

**113.** A Qualifying Certificate (QC) is not a prize or a title, but may be awarded at the discretion of the Judge in any Stake, consisting of at least three (3) retrieves, to dogs that have completed the Stake, to the Judge's satisfaction, having shown that they are under reasonable control and not "hard-mouthed", nor gun shy.

Note: A Qualifying Certificate may be awarded to a dog only once. If a dog is eligible to receive the award in a later Trial, no Certificate will be awarded.

## **PROPOSED NEW RULE**

- 113.** A Qualifying Certificate (QC) will be awarded by the Judge in any Stake, consisting of at least three (3) retrieves, to dogs that have completed the Stake, to the Judge's satisfaction, having shown that they are under reasonable control and not "hard-mouthed", nor gun shy.

**RATIONALE:**

The Qualifying Certificate was created prior to NRD, QND, RRD, QRD, and AARD titles being created. The purpose was to provide a mechanism by which dogs with fundamental retrieving skills could be recognised on pedigrees. It is no longer necessary. In its current form, this particular rule obstructs the creation of Dogs Australia qualifying certificates that allow competitors to evidence eligibility for all the titles listed above. It also causes ongoing issues with language used in the rules referencing eligibility for the titles listed above. Amendment of this rule will allow the creation of Dogs Australia qualifying certificates for all the lower titles, providing national consistency within our sport but also between this sport and every other Dogs Australia sport. Ours is the only sport that requires competitors to get judges' signatures on a little piece of paper they carry around or for clubs to create their own certificates.

**MOTION**

**THAT All references to 'ANKC' in the Rules be amended to read 'Dogs Australia'.**