



VHDF-Canada

Bulletin No. 1

<http://www.vhdf-canada.ca/>

February 2020

President's Remarks

By Craig Wilson, Saskatoon

It's been another great year for the Versatile Hunting Dog Federation of Canada. We graduated three new field judges through the training program. Congratulations to Oksana Moshynska, Derek Oderkirk, and Todd Shury, and a big shoutout to Joe Schmutz for organizing and leading the trainings sessions.

We also offered another successful field test hosted by the Saskatoon Gun Dog Club. Thank you to Rick Schryer and the Saskatoon Gun Dog Club, as well as all the volunteers who made the test a success, and congratulations to the dogs and handlers who participated. Hopefully all the training and preparation paid off during the hunting season!

Annual Meeting

By Sheila Schmutz, Webmaster, Saskatoon

Hello Members of the Saskatoon Gun Dog Club Meeting &/or VHDF-Canada,



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The annual meetings for both groups will be Sunday afternoon, Feb. 9 in the Edwards School of Business, Room 189. A map of part of the UofS campus that shows this building, circled in blue is attached. Parking is free at meters on Sundays.

(Rick tried to book Cabella's but it was already reserved for several weekends)

The Saskatoon Gun Dog Club Meeting will begin at 1:30 PM.

The VHDF-Canada meeting will begin at 3 PM (and a reminder that all judges and apprentices are expected to participate).

Rick Schryer and Craig Wilson will circulate agendas and last year's minutes in due course.

Training days and other demos or events will be scheduled for 2020 at the Saskatoon Gun Dog Club Meeting.

Test date/s will be confirmed at this meeting also, but a VHDF-Canada test is tentatively scheduled for Sep 12-13 (the weekend after Labor Day) at the typical Alvena site. We will be looking for a Test Secretary.

Looking forward to seeing you all there!

Renew Your Membership Today!

<http://www.vhdf-canada.ca/Membership.html>

2019-Test Volunteers

VHDF-Canada depends on handlers bringing their dogs, volunteers to help run a test and judges giving their time and experience. The following people helped us make the test successful:

Test Secretary: Tyler McKay

Field Marshall: Al McKim

Birds: Lynn Oliphant, Joe Schmutz & Rick Schryer

Bird Planters: Sheri Hallwyler & Amber Sturlin

Gunners: Rick Espie, Guy Pulvermacher, Sam Sturlin and Rick Schryer

Backing dog: Sheri Hallwyler & Muddy Waters' Borealis

Food: Pat Piecowye, Sheila Schmutz, Pat Schryer

Handlers: Rick Hallwyler, Derek Oderkirk, Lynn Oliphant, Evan Paulhus, Les Piecowye, Joe Schmutz, Todd Shury, Sam Sturlin, Robyn Wiebe, Craig Wilson

Apprentice Judges: Derek Oderkirk, Les Piecowye, Todd Shury, Sam Sturlin

Judges: Rick Hallwyler, Oksana Moshynska, Lawrence Pellerin, Joe Schmutz, Rick Schryer, Craig Wilson

The 2019 and previous scores are available at <http://munster.sasktelwebsite.net/VHDFtest.html>



VHDF-Canada Approves Three New Field Judges

by Joe Schmutz, Director of Judging, Saskatoon

In 2019-2020, VHDF approved three new judges:

- Oksana Moshynska, Saskatoon, SK
- Derek Oderkirk, Viscount, SK
- Todd Shury, Saskatoon, SK

These newly minted VHDF-Canada gurus had satisfied the requirements including:

1. Being a licensed bird hunter with several years of experience in hunting with dogs.
2. Having handled a dog in at least two levels of VHDF-Canada testing.
3. Having attended a VHDF-Canada workshop and passed the associated Judge Exam.
4. Having served as an apprentice VHDF-Canada judge during which the apprentice's scores were compared to those of the approved judges and field notes were examined.

We congratulate Oksana, Derek and Todd for offering their time and expertise and we look forward to many years of their service to VHDF-Canada.

Oksana, Derek and Todd now join the roster of old hands at judging for VHDF-Canada, including:

- Rick Hallwyler, Oregon City, OR
- Vance Lester, Perdue, SK
- Lawrence Pellerin, Saskatoon, SK
- Byron Pugh, Port Alberni, BC (Retired)
- Joe Schmutz, Saskatoon, SK
- Rick Schryer, Saskatoon, SK

There are three apprentice judges who plan to complete their requirements as time permits in the coming year. These are:

- Tyler McKay, Saskatoon, SK
- Les Piecowye, Saskatoon, SK
- Sam Sturlin, Oregon City, OR

The above are "Field" judges. VHDF-Canada also has a set of Blood Tracking judges with separate approval requirements including



L>R: Les Piecowye, Derek Oderkirk, Oksana Moshynska & Marcus, Todd Shury

having handled a dog in at least one Blood Tracking test, and served as an apprentice in a test. Blood Tracking judges are:

Brent Grabowski, Saskatoon, SK
Joe Schmutz, Saskatoon, SK
Matt Walpole, Guelph, ON

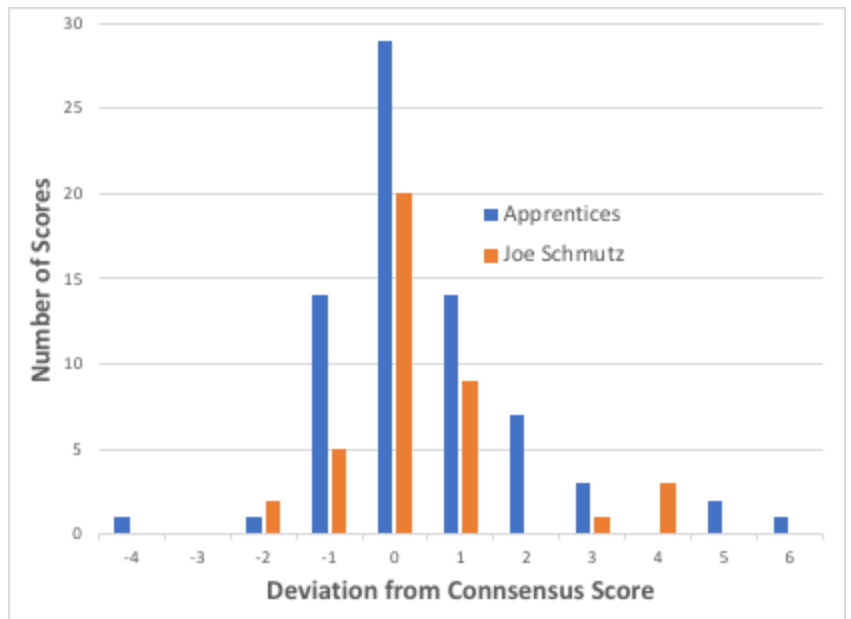
VHDF-Canada judges, like so many others in the dog world, make a significant contribution. They offer their valuable time and commitment on test day. There is also a degree of pressure associated with judging. No one wants to tell an owner who has spent countless hours preparing his or her dog that its performance in the test has been less than 100%. We all love our dogs and treat them subconsciously as an extension of ourselves. That's why a team of three judges and consensus building is so important as are sound and evidence-based judgement, professionalism, and a grasp of the relevant theoretical and foundational knowledge. The apprentice judging workshop is geared to help judges build this foundation.

Even VHDF-Judges are still human 😊 as are dog owners. We all do the best we can for the benefit of dogs and hunting.

How Consistent are Apprentice and Other Judges?

by Joe Schmutz, Director of Judging

VHDF uses a 12-point scoring system in which a score of 10 reflects full expected performance, and 11 & 12 exceptional; performance given the dog's age and or field conditions. With 12 scores, it is easy for judges to differ by one point or even two. Judges are expected to record their own score for each task and also record the team's consensus score once jointly decided. This feature allows us to look for parts of the test where variability is high and revisit these tasks to try to clear up inconsistencies in judges' interpretation. It also allows VHDF to examine an apprentice judge's performance. Of course, this all assumes that judges follow this procedure. A lead judge is selected for each team and she or he should remind judges of this practice.



I calculated and plotted the score deviation for the September 2019 test. In the bar graph, -1 means a judge's own score was 1 point below the consensus score. 0 = judge and consensus scores were the same and +1 = 1 point above.

The score distributions suggest several conclusions.

- Apprentice scores matched consensus most of the time, followed by 1 point off.
- The deviations of apprentices were no different from my own. In some cases, both apprentice scores and mine were significantly higher. This happened particularly in PE where two dogs run and one

person can't always see or be close enough to hear what goes on. In PE one judge is assigned to follow a dog while others stay back and out of the way. During discussion, this judge sometimes mentions behaviours others were not aware of.

- Apprentice judges were more often higher than lower.

This scatter of scores is not a concern although judges will no doubt try to be more vigilant and try and reduce deviations in the 3-6 score range.

A look over the deviations by subject suggests that deviations were highest in judging Pointing, Search Behind the Duck and the Marked Duck Retrieve. It might be useful for us to spend a bit more time going over these tasks in the judging workshop and during apprentice judging.

Judging Ability in VHDF: A Caution.

By Joe Schmutz, Saskatoon

Looking over the notes that Apprentice Judges wrote in their field books, I had the distinct impression that obedience looms high in the minds of judges, too high.

The reason VHDF was created was to return to the important priority of offering a tool for breeders over and above sport. Borrowing from the missions statement: "The Versatile Hunting Dog Federation promotes ethical hunting practices and conservation of game animals by enhancing the quality and ability of versatile hunting dogs through breeder and handler education, performance based testing" The words of Ed Bailey should always ring in a judge's mind, to ascertain what a dog is, not just what it does.

An over-reliance on obedience in arriving at a score was particularly evident in the retrieves of upland birds, ducks and drags. This over-reliance on obedience was also evident in the word choices of seasoned judges in previous years and bears re-consideration.

Take an example of two imaginary dogs retrieving a bird shot in the field portion of AHAE, the premier test for breeders of dogs still young at 1-3 years old. (In PE the dog is evaluated how well it functions as a hunting-team member. Here, obedience is given more weight than in AHAE but even in PE it can be overemphasized.)

Dog A

- Stands obediently to shot and fall
- Chukar landed 40 m out within sight of the dog
- Dog runs out on command
- At thirty yards the dog slows to search the ground, and expands its search circle
- Veering off-side it encounters feathers from a previous bird
- Dog investigates feathers for 1 min. then expands its search again until it finds the bird

Dog B

- Grabs the bird, repositions it slowly and returns to the handler.
- At 10 m dog makes eye contact and comes to sit and drops on command.
- Breaks at the shot but stops on command
- When sent, heads in a straight line veering a degree or two downwind
- Dog picks up the bird and turns immediately and heads back to handler
- Dog stands within reach and drops when the handler catches it with a quick grab.

I know perfectly well which of the two dogs I'd like to have a puppy from. While an element of obedience is no doubt heritable, Dog A showed primarily well-trained obedience. Wing clipped roosters like dogs that poorly mark a fall and lose concentration on the job. Such performances are more likely to give the rooster just enough time to run and hide. Dog B will give a wing-clipped rooster a 'run for its money.'

As VHDF judges we are asked to consider the age of the dog, the purpose of the test and especially value hunting ability over flare. We are asked to look deep into what a dog does and reflect what a dog is, as much as humanly possible.

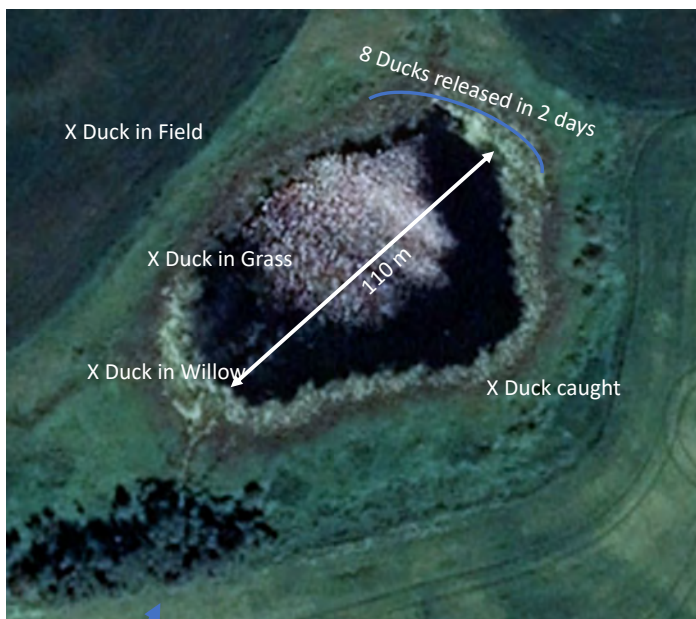
New Test Protocol for 'Search Behind the Duck.'

by Joe Schmutz, Director of Judging

Ever since the first year of VHDF testing in 2007 in Idaho and at Alvena, we have pondered the Search Behind the Duck portion of the test and wondered whether there was not a better way.

According to the test protocol, a live flightless duck is thrown into water at about twenty meters. The dog does not see this and is sent in a direction where it has the best chance to cross and take up the duck's track in the water. This format, as is the case for much of the VHDF test protocol, was adapted from the German Jagdgebrauchshund Verband (JGHV) system. This system needs no justification. It is over 100 years old and has given us several breeds of fine versatile dogs that are still desired and exported worldwide.

The test protocol is comprehensive in a sense that the dog has to begin with an independent search until it encounters the fresh track, when it is meant to shift to tracking mode and follow the track deliberately. There is a chance component that does make judging difficult. If the dog takes a path that does not lead to the duck track the handler can help the dog, but this is not always successful.



Site used for Search Behind the Duck, in VHDF-Canada Test near Alvena, Saskatchewan in Sept. 2019

When a dog does not encounter the duck track by virtue of the search path it has chosen, an actual search behind the duck cannot be expected. The dog cannot be faulted as long as it is actually searching. In the end, a score is entered for the Search Behind the Duck subject but it was really an independent search. Lawrence Pellerin brought this issue to our attention at the apprentice-judging workshop and quite rightly so.

In the 2019 Alvena test we decided to try another approach. In the early days of NAVHDA, a flightless duck was released at the water's edge out of sight of the dog. Once the duck is well out of sight, the dog is shown the feathers at the beginning of the duck's track. NAVHDA abandoned that procedure, in favour of an independent water search.

The attractive feature of a duck released from shore is that one can be certain that the dog knows there is a track, knows there is a duck's scent. If the dog then loses the track and makes little effort to get back to it, this can be scored accordingly. An added advantage is that the duck is released by hand and keen to high-tail it out of there leaving a well-splashed trail on the water at least at first.

The scores out of 12 points given to 8 dogs that were shown the track on shore were two 5s, one 6, one 7, two 8s, one 9 and one 10. One PE dog, Aiko von Sundorph, found the duck that stayed in the cattails bordering open water. Aiko latched onto the track, stayed with it and thus gave the duck little time to leave the pond as at least three other ducks did.

We know the location of those three escapees because Rick Schreyer went with Cue to search after the test and found two more ducks that had gone through the cattail belt and deep into the grassy border of the pond. A third duck had walked right out of the marsh well out in a stubble field where Cue caught up with it.

We discussed the results of the revised shore-release method and were pleased with the way we could judge it. At a later meeting of judges and apprentices, it was decided unanimously to incorporate the shore release method into the VHDF-Canada testing protocol (see minutes provided by VHDF-Canada Secretary Sheila Schmutz).



Meeting to discuss a change in Search Behind the Duck Test Protocol.

After a trial run at the September test, VHDF-Canada Judges, apprentices and other VHDF-Canada members met to decide whether the altered track from shore should become standard procedure. We felt on the one hand that it is useful to have one and the same protocol used by VHDF-Canada and VHDF-US. The pro track-from-shore-vote, however, was unanimous, see minutes below.

A) Minutes from the VHDF-Canada Judge's Meeting

Friday, September 21, 2019 at 7 PM in Amigo's back room

In attendance: Pat Schryer, Rick Schryer, Amber Sturlin, Sam Sturlin, Lawrence Pellerin, Sheri Hallwyler, Rick Hallwyler, Oksana Moshynska, Craig Wilson, Joe Schmutz, Sheila Schmutz and Derek Oderkirk.

Regrets: Tyler McKay, Todd Shury and Les Piecowye.

Joe Schmutz had sent an email explaining that the goal of the meeting was to decide whether the shore-release method should be used in future VHDF-Canada tests in favour of the thrown duck:

- 1 Is the laying of a track with duck feathers at the edge of a pond more suitable to judging tracking in water than the *status quo* of expecting a dog to enter water hoping that it crosses the duck's track.
- 2 Do we need to revisit as a group how we judge the various water components? How do they fit together?

There was a lengthy discussion on both points. Only judges and apprentices were able to vote, although others provided good comments during the discussion.

The vote was 8 to 0 in favour of releasing a duck on shore for Search Behind the Duck.

The vote was 6 to 2 in favour of having a separate Blind Water Entry test, which was part of the former Search Behind the Duck protocol. Two people wanted Blind Water Entry scrapped.

Joe Schmutz was asked and agreed to write the sections of the VHDF-Canada AHAE & PE test rules that cover these aspects and submit them to the judging corps and Webmaster prior to the 2020 training season.

Sheila Schmutz, Secretary

21 January 2020

B) The Following is a Proposed Revision of Test Protocol that incorporates the new approach of release of the duck on shore in AHAE and PE, and a revised protocol for Blind Water Entry that has become a stand-alone test. Text crossed out is intended for deletion, and text underlined to be added.

AHAE Protocol Search behind the Duck:

- (1) A live flightless duck is released from shore into the water, leaving some feathers at the start of the track ~~within 20 meters or 65 feet from the starting point~~. The dog should not see the duck being released.
- (2) The dog is shown the feathers and sent to retrieve ~~the duck from a starting point where it should find the scent trail within 20 meters~~.

~~(3) The dog should search for and find the duck independently of the handler once it has found the scent trail. The handler may influence the dog to the scent trail once the dog is in the water.~~

(4) If the dog finds the duck and the task turns into a sight chase, the judges may request to have the duck shot by the handler or a gunner. Safety is paramount at this point, and great care must be taken to only shoot the duck if a safe shot is presented. If the duck is shot and the dog has located the duck it should retrieve to hand.

(5) The dog does not have to catch the live duck to receive a good score. If the dog encounters other ducks, the work may be scored accordingly.

AHAE Blind Water Entry

~~(1) During the test subject of "Search behind the Duck," the dog will also be scored on the blind water entry. Scoring of the blind water entry begins when the handler sends their dog into the water during the search behind the duck. Scoring of the blind water entry ends when the dog acknowledges the scent of the duck track. The handler is given the approximate location of the start of the scent trail from the released duck, and is to then send the dog into the water to search for the start of the track.~~

(2) ~~This is not a test of the dog's ability to be handled to the area of the bird. This is a test of the dog's water aptitude and its desire to find and recover game from water. A dog that readily enters the water and moves to expand its search is an asset in hunting waterfowl. The dog with a high level of water aptitude, will readily enter the water on command, and search for game scent. The handler may aid and encourage the dog; however, over handling or constant influence will lower the score.~~

~~(3) The dog should enter the water after one command and enter the marsh or open water into which it is scent move away from the handler and toward the location of the scent trail. A dog that readily enters the water and moves to expand its search, should readily find the scent trail. Further influence to get the dog into the water should be questioned, penalized. Immediate water entry is the key element of this subject. Dogs that are willing and eager to enter the water should find the scent trail with little difficulty.~~

PE Search behind the Duck

~~(1) A live flightless duck is released from shore into the water, leaving some feathers at the start of the track. The dog should not see the duck being released. The duck is then hazed out of the area into cover. A live flightless duck is released into the water within 20 meters or 65 feet from the starting point. The dog should not see the duck being released.~~

~~(2) The feathers are shown to the dog when it is sent to retrieve the duck ~~from a starting point where it should find the scent trail within 20 meters.~~ The dog should enter the water or marsh with one command. Additional commands at entry should be questioned ~~penalized.~~~~

~~(3) The dog should search for and find the duck independently of the handler ~~once it has found the scent trail.~~~~

(4) If the dog finds the duck and the task turns into a sight chase, the judges may request to have the duck shot by the handler or a gunner. Safety is paramount at this point, and great care must be taken to only shoot the duck if a safe shot is presented. If the duck is shot and the dog has located the duck it should retrieve to hand.

(5) The dog does not have to catch the live duck to receive a good score. If the dog encounters other ducks, the work may be scored accordingly.

(6) Any live or dead ducks caught by the dog should be retrieved to hand.

C) At the September 21 Meeting there was also Discussion about

1. How to structure the Blind Water Entry test without making the entire test much longer, and
2. How to judge it in relation to Waterlove in HAE and Blind Water Retrieve in PE.

A summarizing scheme of the three tests is as follows:

	HAE Waterlove	AHAE Blind Water Entry	PE Blind Water Retrieve
Expectation	Enter water twice with encouragement.	Enter water when sent and begin to search.	Take a line toward likely cover and retrieve a duck placed out of sight.
Possible hunting scenario	Dog is comfortable working in water.	Dog shows initiative toward an independent and self-directed search.	Dog's search pattern can be directed toward a duck out of sight of the dog.



13 Years of VHDF-Canada Testing Near Alvena, Saskatchewan

By Joe Schmutz

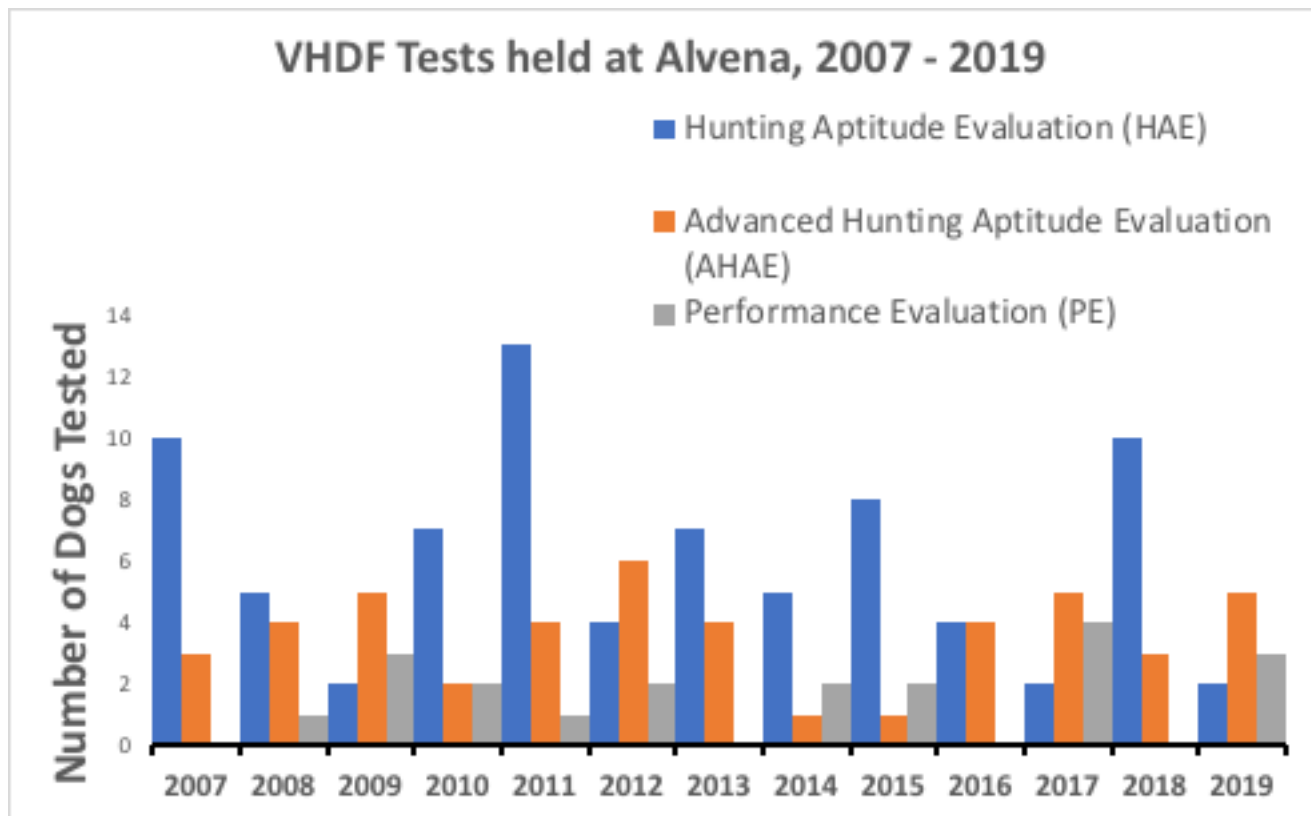
The Versatile Hunting Dog Federation was created at a meeting in Nampa, Idaho, in December 2006. We were pleased to have the old versatile dog gurus on side with Bodo Winterhelt present at the meeting and Ed Bailey helping to fine tune the testing protocol.

In every year since then, a VHDF test has been held on our land near Alvena. A NAVHDA test was also held there also in 2010. The tests are hosted by the Saskatoon Gun Dog Club. VHDF trains and provides the judges, and publishes the test results, as NAVHDA does.

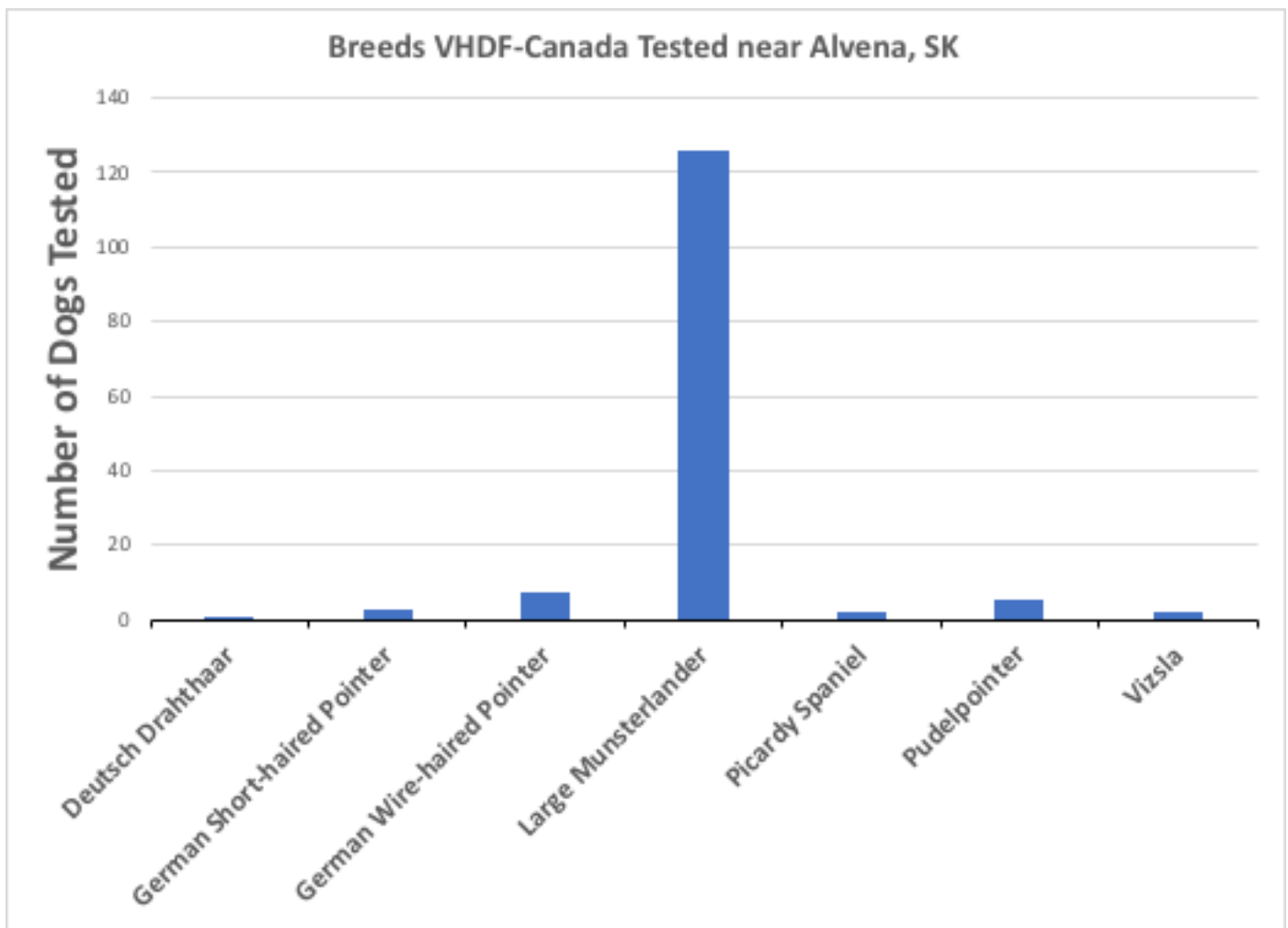
The quarter section has a mix of aspen, native prairie and tame grasses. The many ponds make it particularly well suited for field testing of versatile dogs.

As the 2007-2019 bar graph shows, dogs ran in both Hunting Aptitude (HAE) and Advanced Hunting Aptitude Evaluation (AHAE) each year. Even the demanding Performance Evaluation (PE) was used in 9 of the 13 years. Of the 146 dogs tested, 79 (54%) were entered in HAE, 47 (32%) in AHAE and 20 (14%) in PE.

The breeders and hunters in the Saskatoon Gun Dog Club deserve to be applauded for this level of dog testing and preparation. AHAE and PE tests expect a level of performance from a dog that approximates closely the level at which we hunt. Dogs with this high standard under their belt are a joy to hunt behind and they more often than not produce offspring of the same calibre.



The breed graph shows that Large Munsterlanders comprised 86% of the 146 dogs of 7 breeds tested. This simply reflects the role of breeders in keeping a testing organization viable. Three LM breeders, Bear Hills, Prairie Sky & Sunnynook, encouraged owners to use these tests. The second most common breed with 5% is the German Wire-haired Pointer, at a time when Arjen and Anneke Kielstra raised wirehairs in the De Leijen Kennel.



The newest breed to come to test at Alvena is the Picardy Spaniel. Todd & Wendy Shury are now raising their first Belle Chasse litter. Oksana and Igor Moshynska are planning their first Vizdom litter of Vizslas also in 2020. These are encouraging signs for the Saskatoon Gun Dog Club.



The spinoff benefit of having a testing organization is that the impetus exists to have training days allowing owners to prepare their dogs for tests. These training days are of course open to all club members. Participants gain access to birds for training and know-how. Hunters thereby have better trained dogs which enhances their enjoyment in the field and contributes to game conservation.

Blood Tracking Initiative: Annual Progress Report 2020

By Nell McKim, Humboldt

In the past year there have been some interesting developments regarding the Blood Tracking Initiative. In February 2019, Guy Pulvermacher and Nell McKim attended the Saskatchewan Wildlife Federation Convention in Moose Jaw to explain and defend the Blood Tracking resolution for the third time. It was very disappointing when the vote showed only 51% support. Considering that in the previous two years the degree of support was 49% and 52%, the decision was made not to pursue Sask Wildlife Federation backing on this issue. Subsequently, a planning meeting was held to establish how we should move ahead. Our new efforts would focus on addressing the Wildlife Advisory Committee (WAC) directly to encourage legislative changes.

In August, Nell attended a Blood Tracking workshop sponsored by the Big Game Blood Trackers of Ontario where new information was gathered from the interesting tracking demonstrations, videos and discussions presented that day.

In November, Joe's hard work paid off when he received an invitation to meet with the WAC. Joe, Guy and Nell prepared a short presentation including informative handouts, power point display, and a brief video showing an exemplary track, all followed by a lively discussion and question period. The members of the WAC will take the Blood Tracking issue back to their various organizations for consideration, and we look forward to the results of their decision at the spring WAC meeting. In the meantime, we are making arrangements to meet with any WAC groups who would like more information about Blood Tracking.

This project is proceeding slowly, just as it did in other provinces where Blood Tracking became approved. In Alberta, the development of Blood Tracking legislation is underway at last, but it may still take another year or two to complete.

The January/February edition of Outdoor Canada (West) magazine is on newsstands and was sent to all Sask Wildlife Federation members. On page 12, check out the Scent Sense column which makes the case for the usefulness of Blood Tracking - starring Willow, and written by Nell McKim. Hopefully it will encourage discussion and create more support for Blood Tracking in Saskatchewan.



Dan Myck, a BC big game hunter said: "As it is lawfull in BC, I have trained our dog Zoe to bloodtrail using drags and spray bottles, it's a fun game of hide and seek that she enjoys. The rule in BC is that a dog must be leashed when hunting big game and she accompanies me on almost all of my days in the field. It's going on 7 seasons now and I haven't had to look for a blood trail or walk a grid in search of an animal as Zoe leads me right to them."