

CHAPTER 7 - AKC NITE HUNT RULES (EFFECTIVE APRIL 1ST, 2005)

Section 1. General Information

A. Host Club: A club holding a licensed event must provide an AKC-approved Hunt Director and a Hunt Committee to conduct the event. A club must supply an ample number of Guides in accordance with Section 4 of these regulations. The club is responsible for dispersing any and all advertised awards and duly reporting the results of all licensed events according to AKC event policy.

B. Responsibility Clause: Persons entering licensed events do so at their own risk and agree to abide by all Rules and Regulations of The American Kennel Club. Anyone guilty of falsifying registration documents or falsely entering dog(s) in an AKC event will be subject to disciplinary action by the Hunt Committee and/or by The AKC.

C. Misconduct: The Hunt Director or Club can scratch any handler or dog for any unreasonable argument or misconduct. Any handler exhibiting unreasonable behavior or threatening bodily harm to any Judge, Guide, member of the cast, Hunt Director, spectator or any other participant, at any time, may be disciplined pursuant to *Dealing with Misconduct at American Kennel Club Events*.

Section 2.

A. Hunt Director and Hunt Committee: The Hunt Director shall be in charge of event operations. He or she will oversee the entry procedure, observe deadlines, select judges and guides, complete and submit along with the Hunt Chairman, all official reports, and in general shall manage the event. The Hunt Director may participate in the event where he or she is serving but shall not be involved in Hunt Committee selection for, or in the settling of questions or disputes resulting from, the cast in which he or she participates.

B. Hunt Committee: The club must provide a Hunt Committee of three members or individuals whose responsibility is to assure compliance with, and enforcement of, these Regulations. The Hunt Committee shall rule on all matters that cannot be resolved or that are not under the jurisdiction of the Hunt Director or the Judges. The Hunt Committee shall also act on disciplinary matters under the Regulations for AKC Coonhound Bench Shows, Field Trials, Nite Hunts, and Water Races.

Section 3. Taking Entries and Drawing Casts

A deadline for closing entries will be listed in approved coonhound publications and must be observed. (Contact AKC for list of approved publications.) The Hunt Director may select a Judge for each cast from the entries. All Guides and Handlers must be drawn publicly. No more than four (4) dogs can be drawn for each cast. Three dog casts may only be used when multiples of four cannot be achieved. (see also Chapter 2. *Eligibility of Dogs for Entry*.)

Section 4. Guide

The Guide has a very important duty in the cast. Clubs should utilize "Hunting" guides first followed by "Non-hunting" guides as required. Specific duties of the Guide:

- The Guide must be drawn to the scorecard in plain view of everyone.
- The Guide must first consider the safety of the hounds and hunters on the cast.
- The Guide must select the hunting territory with consideration to driving time in order to get the hunting time in and to return by the posted deadline.
- The Guide must have ample territory in which to complete the hunting time.
- The Guide must have permission to hunt the territory he/she has selected.
- The Guide must describe the hunting terrain and any known obstacles or dangers.
- The Guide may not select enclosures that are designed to contain raccoons.
- The Guide must assist in the recovery of all hounds when the cast is completed.
- The Hunting Guide must be able to solely guide the cast without assistance from anyone.
- The Guide must accompany the cast for the duration of the hunt except when approved by the Hunt Director.

Section 5. Judge

The Hunt Director selects Judges based on their coonhound hunting experience, physical ability, integrity, and knowledge of the AKC Nite Hunt Regulations.

- Judges should be mentally and physically mature enough to conduct the cast in accordance with these Regulations (Hunt Director's decision).
- Judge has complete authority and will make all decisions pertaining to the scoring of dogs and the overall conduct of the cast. Judge must insure that cast stays together and within judging distance of the dogs.
- Judge's decision may be questioned in accordance with Section 18. Questions.
- Judge may incur disciplinary action by the Hunt Committee when it is determined that the Judge made a prejudicial call in order to purposely credit or discredit any dog or handler.
- E. Judge has the right to make calls and otherwise conduct the cast without interference. Handlers found to be interfering with a Judge's ability to perform his/her duties will be subject to disciplinary action.
- F. Judge may appoint a handler, guide, or spectator to record scores at his/her discretion.
- G. Handler's use of light is subject to the discretion of the Judge.

Section 6. Handler

Handler's duties involve calling his/her dog on strike and/or tree, physically handling (leashing) his/her dog as instructed by the Judge, and voicing his/her questions to the Judge, but only in an attitude of good sportsmanship.

- Handler must know the AKC Nite Hunt Regulations and how to apply them.
- Handler may not scold, encourage, punish, or otherwise interfere with any dog at any time during an AKC event.
- Handler may inspect the scorecard at any time, provided the request does not interfere with the Judge's duties.
- Judges must provide time(s) to Handler if requested.
- Spectators are permitted but are the responsibility of the Handler. The Handler may be scratched for the negative actions of his/her spectators. Spectators may be permitted to shine trees, majority decision, but may not participate in voting on any issue relative to the cast.
- Only the Handler of the dog may participate in the resolution of questions pertaining to his/her cast.

Section 7. Scorecard

- The Handler is responsible for accuracy of the scorecard and must sign the card either when leaving cast (Judge's permission) or when cast is completed.
- The Handler must sign the scorecard and attest to validity of the score even if questions exist.
- Three signatures are required in order for the scorecard to be accepted by the Hunt Director. Should fewer than three individuals remain to sign scorecard, the cast must return to Hunt Director. Deadline may be extended to fulfill required hunting time for that cast.
- Only the Hunt Director or Club officials may correct mathematical errors once scorecard is turned in.
- Only the Hunt Committee can revise the scoring or the order of finish of the card, based on its findings from a properly filed formal question.
- Any participant found to have signed a scorecard with knowledge that the score is not correct is subject to disciplinary action by the Hunt Committee.

- Scorecards not received by deadline will not be considered for championship wins. However, cash awards, if advertised will be paid to all cast winners, regardless of score.

Section 8. Dogs

- All dogs six (6) months of age or older that are registered with The American Kennel Club or recorded with AKC's Foundation Stock Service and are classified as coonhounds are eligible to participate in licensed events.
- All dogs, regardless of titles, hunt together whether registered, Nite Champion, Grand Nite Champion, or Supreme Grand Nite Champion. Dog(s) winning casts with a total score of plus will receive a win toward its next title.
- The club may require examination of the dog by a veterinarian.
- Dogs may wear tracking or training devices during the hunt. Only tracking devices may be utilized during time out periods to locate the dog and return it to the hunt. Training devices may not be used until hunting time is complete. Transmitters for training devices must be left in vehicle or in the possession of the Judge until hunting time is complete.
- Dogs participating in Nite Hunt events may not wear muzzles.

Section 9. Time Keeping

- Nite Hunts of one-hour duration may be held on Monday through Thursday nights. Two-hour hunts must be held on Friday and Saturday nights. All casts must hunt for the entire time.
- Dogs are not required to hunt entire hunting time if only one dog remaining in cast.
- Countdown watches are recommended for keeping hunting time.
- Should a decision to scratch a dog be formally questioned after a vote is taken, make note of remaining hunting time on scorecard and return to Hunt Director.
- Judge must inform all cast members of any timekeeping regulation that is being applied to the dog(s).
- Scorecard must be returned to Hunt Director by the posted deadline in order for the cast win to count toward the dog's AKC title.

Section 10. Time Out

- Time out should be called only when absolutely necessary. When possible, the entire hunting time should be used in one spot.
- Time out may be called by the Judge or by the majority of the cast when the Hunting Judge is used.
- Judge must note hunting time remaining when time out is called.
- One hour may be used to recover dogs during time out. A meeting place must be designated.
- Dogs declared treed before time out is called will be scored except in accordance with Rule 10, F-1.
- Reasons to call time out:
 - When dogs trail into place where there is danger to dogs or handlers. Cast may not attempt to cross swimming water to score or handle dogs.
 - A member of the cast is sick or has an accident.
 - When other dogs interfere with the cast. Interference is determined when dog(s) receive minus points because of other dogs.
 - When dogs get into livestock or trail onto posted land.
 - If new hunting ground is required to finish the cast.
 - When dogs trail out of hearing in different directions and cannot be judged.
 - When cast moves out of hearing of trailing dog(s) to score a tree. Go back to point dog(s) was last heard and put six (6) minute rule on trailing dogs. If not heard within six (6) minutes, delete strike points and recast dogs.

Section 11. Scoring System

Judge to acknowledge Handler's call by repeating the dog's name and number of points for which dog is called. Points will be determined by coin flip when called positions cannot be clearly determined by Judge.

- Tree Points
 - One set of strike points as follows: 100 points for dog declared struck first; 75 points second; 50 points third and 25 points fourth. All dogs must be loose and competing in order for first strike of 100 points to be awarded.
 - One (1) minute time to be kept each time dog(s) are released. No dog to receive strike points during that minute unless immediately followed by a tree call. Fifty (50) strike points will be recorded for dog(s) barking at the time one (1) minute rule expires. Remaining dogs, when struck receive 25 points. This rule will only be in effect when all dogs are loose and competing for strike.
- Tree Points
 - 125 points for dog declared treed first; 75 points second; 50 points third and 25 points fourth.
 - After the first dog has been declared treed, the second dog must be declared treed within one (1) minute to receive 75 points and will have one (1) minute more to receive 50 points. Dogs declared treed after two (2) minutes but before five (5) minutes expire receive 25 points. Dogs declared treed after five (5) minutes receive 125 tree points and are scored accordingly.
 - Upon arrival at the tree, if the Handler requests the Judge to listen for his dog on a separate tree, the dog's tree points are moved to 125 and scored accordingly.
 - A dog struck after first dog is declared treed may not receive strike points unless treed on a separate tree.

Section 12. Plus Points

- Points will be plus when raccoon is seen in tree or in place of refuge by Judge or by majority of cast when Hunting Judge is used.
- Dogs declared treed at place of refuge when raccoon is seen to receive plus strike and tree points. Dog(s) not declared treed receive strike points only.
- No tree points to be awarded when dog(s) catch the raccoon. If Judge sees a raccoon he will award strike points only.
- One set of strike points in case of split trees. Score each tree individually.

Section 13. Minus Points

- Points will be minus:
- When dog(s) strike and do not tree. One of the dog(s) that is declared struck must bark within six (6) minutes in order for strike to remain open. When six (6) minutes expires, a new set of strike points is opened.
 - Both strike and tree will be minused, when dog(s) tree and no raccoon is seen, or when off game is seen. Dogs not declared treed and are handled at such tree will receive minus strike points only.
 - When a dog that is declared treed leaves the tree. If he continues to trail, only tree points are minus. He may receive tree points if he goes back on tree before five (5) minutes have expired.
 - When a dog quits a trail that is being worked. Any dog re-struck after being minused to receive a maximum of 25 strike points.
 - When a dog that has been struck, but not declared treed, is handled at a plus or minus tree. Minus strike points.
 - When none of the dogs declared treed bark within two (2) minutes. This rule is to be applied until the cast reaches the tree even though the five (5) minutes may have expired.

- G. When Judge can clearly determine dog(s) to be running off game.
- H. When Handler calls a dog and the dog is determined to be babbling (barking where there is no evidence of a track). Dog to be scratched on second offense.
- I. After first minute, handler must strike on or before the third bark or be minused. Judge is to ask for call and each time request is ignored, minus points will be assigned according to available position(s).
- J. When handler calls another handler's dog or his dog that is not opening. Once minused, points become available to other handlers in the cast.

Section 14. Circle Points

- Circle points are awarded to give the dog the benefit of the doubt and are counted only in the breaking of ties.
- A. Circle points will be awarded when dog(s) strike and tree up a TREE where the raccoon or off game cannot be seen, yet it is evident the raccoon could be there.
 - B. No trees to be climbed or dens to be molested. Mirrors may be used to search dens.

Section 15. Deleted Points

Points will be deleted in the following situations:

- A. When time out is called or overall hunting time expires. For dogs declared treed before time out is called or hunting time expires, see Rule 10, Time Out.
- B. When dog(s) return to a tree that has been previously scored. All tree rules to apply. When a Judge determines it to be same tree, delete points.
- C. When two (2) cast members vote to minus and two (2) cast members vote to circle tree. Delete strike and tree.
- D. If off game is seen, yet a hole or place of refuge exists that could hide a raccoon.
- E. When a dog strikes after a dog has been declared treed, record strike points but delete unless dog trees on separate tree.
- F. When cast walks away from trailing dog to score tree, cast to return to place trailing dog(s) were last heard and start six minutes. If six (6) minutes expire, delete strike points of trailing dog(s) and recast rounds.
- G. When dog(s) are handled but not declared treed at circled tree, their strike points will be deleted.
- H. When dogs strike and tree in a place of REFUGE (any place other than a tree) and no raccoon is seen, delete strike and tree points. Strike points are deleted for dogs present but not declared treed.

Section 16. Scoring the Tree

- A. Five-minute Regulation – Dog(s) may not be declared treed unless they are already declared struck. Dog(s) declared treed must not move from that spot and must remain treed for a period of five (5) minutes unless all dogs are declared treed. Cast should begin moving toward the tree as soon as possible, allowing Handler that has not yet treed to listen for his dog until five minutes have expired. Handlers may be given permission to go to their dogs that are declared treed on split trees.
- B. Split Tree Determination – If dog(s) tree in different places, Handlers may not declare dogs split treed. The Judge will award separate tree points after making the determination. He/She will change the called position(s) on the scorecard, if split trees are obvious, before scoring the trees. The Judge must recall the time within the five (5) minutes that each dog was called treed when considering moving points up on split trees.
- C. Arriving at the Tree - The Judge will be the first to arrive at the tree, followed closely by the handlers. All dogs must be leashed after Judge has determined which dogs are showing tree and which are not. Dog(s) must remain on leash until recast to new area or to dog(s) that are opening on trail.
- D. Shining Tree – Handlers may use eight (8) minutes to search a tree. Time will begin when the Judge gives permission to start shining. Shining time will cease when the tree is scored, or eight (8) minutes have elapsed. The Handler with the most to lose or gain by the scoring of the tree may search alone for the first two (2) minutes at his/her request. Beyond two (2) minutes all handlers should assist in scoring the tree. No handler may remain outside general area of tree in order to hear dog not at tree. If no dog is declared treed but not handled nearby, Handlers may blow squallers, pull vines, etc. at any time during the scoring of the tree.
- E. Connecting Trees – If multiple trees are involved in scoring and are connected they will be scored as one. Determine this before starting time. There should be an obvious avenue the raccoon could have traveled, not just touching leaves or twigs.
- F. Scoring Split Trees – If all dogs are declared treed with some being on separate trees, they may be scored in the most convenient order. In this case, all dogs must remain on leash until all dogs have been scored.
- G. Releasing After Scoring Tree – Dogs to be released after being led a maximum of one (1) minute after scoring the tree. Dog(s) may be released sooner if all handlers with dogs on leash agree. At this time, if all dogs are handled or no other dogs are struck, dogs will be cast and a new strike opened. If other dogs not handled are struck but not opening, the six (6) minute regulation must be applied. The handled dogs may not be released until one of the dogs that is struck opens even if there are less than six (6) minutes remaining in the cast.

Section 17. Dog/Handler will be Scratched from Cast

- A. Aggression: Any dog showing obvious aggression toward another dog during hunting time will be scratched. When dog(s) are scratched for aggression it MUST be noted on the back of the scorecard and reported to the Hunt Director and AKC. Handlers will not be permitted to withdraw to prevent their dog from being scratched for aggression without already having handled the dog. No dog may be scratched for aggression while on the leash or confined in a dog box. Dogs that are scratched for fighting three times in a one year period from the first offense will not be permitted to participate in AKC Coonhound events for a period of one year from the date of the third offense.
- B. Babbling: Hounds determined to be babbling will be warned on the first offense and scratched on second offense.
- C. Score Manipulation: Handlers attempting to avoid deserved minus points or to obtain undeserved plus or circle points for themselves or other handlers will be scratched and be subject to disciplinary action by AKC.
- D. Livestock: Any hound chasing or molesting livestock will be scratched.
- E. Interference with Judge: Handlers are not permitted to interrupt judges during the judging process by offering advice. Handlers trying to influence judges in this fashion will be given a warning on the first offense and scratched on the second.
- F. Misconduct by Handler: Handlers using a loud, unreasonable and/or aggressive manner while presenting their case either on a cast or at the club will be scratched. The Hunt Committee will address all misconduct cases on the night of the event. For further reference see *Dealing with Misconduct at American Kennel Club Events – Guide for Event Committees*.
- G. Bitches in Season: Bitches in season will be scratched. Male dogs exhibiting uninvited mating behavior during the progress of the cast will also be scratched.
- H. Tree Call Refusal: Any dog(s) obviously treeing in the same spot for a period of five (5) minutes will be scratched, unless called treed. If the dog(s) stop barking for more than two (2) minutes or leave the tree, the five-minute clock will be stopped. Anytime a dog is declared treed in that area the five-minute clock will be stopped. Handler should always be permitted to make a tree call before his dog is scratched.
- I. Failure To Hunt: Judge will scratch any dog that fails to show hunting activity during any continuous fifteen-minutes of hunt time. If the dog goes hunting for a continuous five (5) minute time period, or the

dog barks and is declared struck, the fifteen minute rule will be stopped. No dog to be walked to avoid the fifteen (15) minute rule penalty.

- J. Time Out Limit: When a time out MUST be called, a time and place for handlers to meet must be designated. At the end of time-out (one hour), handlers must have their dog in hand at the predetermined location or be scratched.
- K. Failure To Recast From Scored Tree: A dog may return to a previously scored tree one time without penalty. Any dog handled at the same tree three times during the hunt will be scratched.

Section 18. Questions

Handlers have the right to question a Judge's actions in two ways, by formal and informal questions.

Informal question – The Handler asks the Hunting Judge to poll the cast when he/she disagrees with a call that has been made or he/she feels should have been made. At that point Hunting Judge will call for a vote of the cast. Informal questions only apply in Hunting Judge situations. All cast members must vote.

Formal question - A formal request by a Handler to have a hearing before the Hunt Committee. When said Handler is dissatisfied with the decision of the Judge and the subsequent vote of the cast members he/she must ask that a "formal question" be noted on the card and deposit \$20 with the judge.

The Formal Question procedure is as follows:

- A. The Judge will place a question mark "?" by the score in question and the cast will continue to hunt the full hunting time. Only situations involving dog(s) being scratched may be taken back to the Hunt Director before the hunting time expires.
- B. At the end of the hunt, all cast members must go with the Judge to the Hunt Director who will present the scorecard along with the Judge and all members of the cast to the Hunt Committee.
- C. The Hunt Committee will hear the question in plain view of all. The Hunt Committee will go into conference and will announce its decision to the cast. The decision shall be final with no appeal. If the Hunt Committee rules in favor of the Handler posting the question, the \$20 deposit will be refunded. If not, the deposit will be retained by the club. Should the handler posting the question decide to drop the question at any time, the club will retain the \$20 deposit. There are no refunds.
- D. A cast member believing that prejudicial conduct has occurred in conjunction with the handling of the question must submit a complaint in writing. Anyone can write the complaint provided the complainant signs it. No fee is required. For such instances, refer to *Dealing with Misconduct at American Kennel Club Events – Guide for Event Committees* for more information.

Section 19. Determining Cast Winners

All ties must be broken in the woods to determine the cast winners. All cast winners with plus points to receive a win toward their targeted titles.

- A. Cast Winners: A dog will win over other dog(s):

1. Dog with most plus tree points
2. Dog with most plus strike points
3. Dog with most circle points
4. Dog with least minus points
5. Dog leading at the time all dogs are scratched

- B. Hunts with cash awards: All dog(s) to be paid for their cast win regardless of score.

C. Sudden Death Tie-breaker: If tie cannot be broken in accordance with Item A of tie-breaking rule, dogs to go into sudden death until tie is broken. No time out to be called to enter sudden death. Sudden death winner decided by the scoring of a tree or by dog drawing minus points. Sudden death must end in order to return scorecard to the Hunt Director by the posted deadline. If a tie cannot be broken by sudden death, the Hunt Director is to flip a coin to determine winner. Card must be returned by posted deadline in order for cast win to count toward AKC title.

Section 20. Championship Titles: AKC will award titles to coonhounds participating in AKC licensed or member coonhound events as follows:

Nite Champion - Registered dogs must win five casts with plus points.

Grand Nite Champion - Nite Champion dogs must win five casts with plus points.

Supreme Grand Nite Champion - Grand Nite Champion dogs must win five casts with plus points.

From the AKC Coonhound Events Management Team:

We've worked hard to provide a concise yet easy to understand set of Nite Hunt rules for your enjoyment.

If rules and their interpretations is your bag, join the discussions online in The Judge's Corner, a special rules section on the Message Forum of the brand new AKC Coonhound web site.



www.akccoonhounds.org

