

The English Cocker Gunning Program and Criteria (Final)

**Prepared by the ECSCA Gunning Committee Chairman, Tom Calabrese
And advisors: Dave Barto, John Lenninger, Mike Jew**

You are being asked by the Field Trial Committee (FTC) of the English Cocker Spaniel Club of America to ratify and adapt the following program. This is totally voluntary as no AKC requirement is in place requiring you to do so.

You will have three major responsibility changes should you accept the proposal. First, you will require those that gun or act as Gun Captains to conform to "the criteria" contained herein. Second, your club will need to weigh the performance of potential gunners/Gun Captains as you are underwriting their safety and ability. Third, your club will be required to report those individuals that have gunned in your Field Trials with the trial results.

The English Cocker Gunning/Gun Captain Program

1. Purpose:

The purpose of this proposal is to outline the guidelines for the Gunners and Gun Captains shooting at English Cocker Field Trials. The program relies on the "inside" knowledge Field Trial Clubs have in knowing those, among their contemporaries, who are safe Guns as well as how to shoot over English Cockers. It presumes these people have an extensive background in training sessions, or hunt tests and/or field trials. The potential candidates should have proven themselves to be safe and reliable.

Gunner's meeting these ideals would be candidates that the Field Trial Club would be proud to recommend to the Gun Committee. The accumulated list of names should represent the "top echelon" and any persons listed should be proud to be among the other names.

Certain basics must be required for individuals to be considered by your club.

The **first** is a valid Hunting License from any state and/or Canadian province.

The **second** requirement is to successfully complete the Springer Gun Seminar.

Third, the candidate would sign the Job Description included in this report acknowledging his acceptance of the responsibilities and duties outlined.

Fourth would be for the club to submit the application, signed and dated by the President of the Club (sample included in this report).

The integrity of the program rests on you, the Field Trial Club, and your sincere administration of the election of prospective Gunners and Gun Captains. Everyone appreciates safe and competent Guns, especially those hosting our Field Trial events. No one is more qualified to select qualified guns than those of you on the "front lines" of Field Trials. Your Field Trial Club should consider the following when considering a candidate:

- Has the trial club known this candidate for an appropriate length of time to make a recommendation of his capabilities?
- Has the trial club seen this individual shoot over Cockers?
- Has the trial club seen this individual shoot at Training sessions, Hunt Tests, Field Trials?
- Did the individual demonstrate the ability to shoot well and within the guidelines outlined in the Springer Gun Seminar?

- Would you certify to this Gunners safety?
- Would you certify to this Gunners objectivity when shooting at an event?

2. Background:

The Gun Committee began this program by reviewing the Gunning Program established by the Springer Spaniel Community and reviewing the 2006 FEC program. We compared both and noted the excellence of the "longer standing" and "tested" Springer Spaniel program. We accepted the limitations we faced as the Springer Spaniel Community had not kept records of Cocker Events so none of our exclusively "Cocker Gun attendees" would have accumulated enough points to earn a Q or G level. Further, the implementation of strict adherence to the Springer Program would cause many of our clubs undo difficulty to secure guns for their events. The 2006 FEC program, while excellent in many of its factors, drifted from the basic principle of safety to "shooting techniques" which we felt were more appropriate for a training seminar. Therefore, the committee adapted certain conclusions.

- The first was anyone qualified as a Q or G in the Springer Spaniel program would automatically be "Grand fathered" on the Cocker qualified list.
- Ideally we should try to strive towards a parallel criterion or plan like the Springer Spaniel community noting it will take several factors before we can adapt their procedures. One factor is keeping records of who shoots at Cocker Trials. A second factor would be to eventually have the Springer Spaniel Community recognize and award points for those shooting at Cocker Field Trials.

The committee was worried about the unlikely case where a field trial club faced an emergency in securing gunners. Therefore, we added provisions for the unlikely case that the club was unable to secure a Gun Captain to be used as a last resort.

3. Program Outline:

Purpose

To establish a method for the development of an ECSCA approved Field Trial Gun Captain registry. As a blanket requirement each participant must:

1. have fulfilled the job description guideline and,
2. be sponsored by a Mentoring Gun Captain, or an AKC licensed Cocker Field Trial Club or Springer Spaniel Field Trial Club sponsoring Cocker Field Trials.

Method

In establishing the ECSCA list of accepted Gun Captains the FTC would:

1. Grandfather the English Springer Spaniel list of Gun Captains as approved Cocker Gun Captains and Gunners.
2. A mentoring Cocker Gun Captain (G) could recommend a Gunner to the FTC/Gun Committee for approval to be elevated from Gunner to Gun Captain.
3. Sponsoring Field Trial Clubs could recommend an experienced Cocker Gunner to the FTC/Gun Committee for approval to be elevated from Gunner to Gun Captain.
4. In the unusual case that an approved Gun Captain is unavailable, special permission must be granted by the Gun Committee for the club to appoint a "Managing Gun Captain". The qualifications for this would include an experienced manager who is familiar with the operation and management of field trials and also the responsibilities of gun teams. However, this special permission does not automatically place this person on the "G" list. Note: this person would not necessarily have to gun the trial, but would be responsible to oversee the selection and supervision of the gun team prior to and during the trial.

5. The list of Approved/Accepted Gun Captains would be maintained by the Gun Committee and published on the "Fieldcockers" website for all clubs to access.

4. Job Descriptions:

Field Trial Gunner/Gun Captain Job Descriptions

Field Trial Gunner, Reports to: Field Trial Gun Captain

Purpose

This position is responsible for the safe and quality performance as a member of the Field Trial Gun Team. The Field Trial Gun ("Gunner") is invited by the Gun Captain and participates with the field trial management, judges, planters and handlers to ensure a successful event.

Primary Function and Responsibilities

- The "Gunner" at the direction of the Field Trial Gun Captain, reviews the trial gunning plan, course outline, rotation, etc., and any other pertinent issues prior to the start of the field trial.
- All Field Trial Guns must utilize a 12 gauge double gun, in accordance with AKC Field Trial guidelines. The double gun should be in excellent operating condition and only factory ammunition should be utilized. i.e. reloads must not be used.
- The "Gunner" should look to the Gun Captain as a mentor and must be resilient and positive after honest performance review by the Gun Captain.
- The "Gunner" must have the ability to (1) "read" Spaniels and recognize when it is making game, (2) understand how wind direction will affect a dog's scenting and the "manner" it finds its game and (3) capable to adjust shooting to the cover.
- Prior to taking a shot, the "Gunner" must have the ability and discipline to determine without question that the area (in to which he/she will shoot) is clear and safe to shoot before shooting. If there is any doubt whatsoever as to the area being clear the Gunner must not take the shot. There can be no compromise to safety; additionally the "Gunner" has the ability to determine when to allow the bird(s) not to be shot.
- The "Gunner" must cleanly and consistently kill the birds flushed by the Spaniel. Each shot should be in a sportsmanlike manner, again, with no compromise to safety. The "Gunner" shoots for the dog, giving each and every dog a retrieve which will provide a fair test of the dog's marking and retrieving skills.
- The "Gunner" willfully requests a substitution at the first sign of fatigue or under par shooting performance.
- The "Gunner" should come prepared to the trial with good quality field gear and Prepared for all weather conditions. It's not possible to shoot ones best in inclement weather with poor equipment.

Knowledge and Skill Guidelines

- Has experience in training spaniels in hunt tests and/or field trials.
- Has completed the Spaniel Field Trial Gun Safety Seminar.
- Has extensive experience shooting over spaniels in club training sessions.
- Has experience shooting in practice for local "pros".
- Has a history of safe shooting conduct.
- Be knowledgeable of ECSCA green book
- Be knowledgeable of AKC Rules and Regulations for Field Trials.

Field Trial Gun Captain, Reports to: Field Trial Committee Chair

Purpose

The position is responsible for the management and function of the Field Trial Gun Team in accordance with the guidelines of the ECSCA and the AKC. The position provides the leadership that fosters safety and maximizes the contribution of the Gun Team toward a successful field event. This Gun Captain manages all aspects of the field trial gunning, and works in conjunction with the field trial management, judges, planters and handlers to ensure a successful event.

Primary Function and Responsibilities

- The Gun Captain is responsible for the gun team personnel, utilizing a positive and motivating approach that maximizes each gunner's contribution to the field trial. This responsibility includes the selecting the gunners for the event, on-site review of gun performance and discharging team member(s) as necessary.
- The Gun Captain functions as a mentor to the gun team participants. He/She sets a trial plan, oversees the gun team activities and makes recommendations for the improvement of gun participants.
- The Gun Captain offers support to the Field Trial Committee in course design focusing of event safety, and fostering a shooting environment which allows for the Cocker's field trial evaluation.
- The Gun Captain records the gunners and stakes in which they participated with the Field Events – Field Trial Committee.
- The Gun Captain makes constructive recommendation(s) to the Field Trial Committee for the improvement of the trial and/or future trials with regard to gunning safety.
- The Gun Captain is responsible for many other trial gunning issues. Some include coordinating with Field Trial Committee and advising his/her gun team regarding the local regulations and game laws, reviewing the expected number of entries to establish manpower requirements, selecting appropriate shells and shot size, coordinating the acquisition of shells with field trial committee, team rotation schedule and instructing the gun team on the proper "zones of fire."

Knowledge and Skill Guidelines

- Have a minimum of ten years of spaniel experience in hunt tests and/or field trials.
- Have completed the Spaniel Field Trial Gun Safety Seminar.
- Have extensive trial gun experience.
- Be knowledgeable of ECSCA green book
- Be knowledgeable of AKC Rules and Regulations for Field Trials.
- Have good management skills including outstanding leadership, competence in oversight and supervision of guns, and ability to communicate confidently.

5. Application form

Application Submittal Process:

The sponsoring Mentor or Cocker Field Trial Club should prepare the application, including the narrative relating to knowledge, experience and safety. The completed form should be dated and forward to:

Tom Calabrese (eaglerare@verizon.net)

or mailed to:

Tom Calabrese, Chairman Cocker Gun Committee
4926 Newton Road
Hamburg, New York 14075

Once the application has been received, it will be distributed to the members/advisers of the Gun Committee for review and approval. Please allow 4 weeks from receipt for response.

