

In the Field

Submitted by Bruce Toenjes

PREPARING FOR THE NATIONAL HUNT

The National Hunt is always a special time. Handlers and hounds come from all over, so we get to renew friendships with handlers that we don't see at our regional hunts.

One of my favorite things about the National Hunt is seeing such a variety of hounds – hounds we don't regularly see. The hunt often has twice as many hounds as a typical hunt. So many hounds! Another reason I enjoy the National Hunt is we usually have a number of new handlers and new hounds trying our sport for the first time. Many of the experienced handlers and judges really enjoy seeing the new hounds and puppies in the field for the first time.

If you are one of the new handlers at the National (or at any other hunt), you will be joining a welcoming group of people. You will find that everyone is ready to answer questions and give a hand. Hopefully you have signed up of the Novice Learning Experience (NLE) or the Puppy Learning Experience (PLE). These programs, held on the afternoon of the practice day, will help you and your hound get some mentoring with experienced handlers and field time with experienced hounds. You should also take full advantage of the practice day, and take your hound out on the field. I recommend finding an experienced handler with experienced hounds and see if you can run your inexperienced hound with his or her pack. This is the best way to learn.

I typically try to practice twice on the practice day. When my hounds were younger and inexperienced, I would try to take them a third time on practice day if there was an opening, but never more than three times: more would be too hard on the hounds. More practice runs of a shorter length of time are usually better than fewer runs of longer time. Often a large hunt like National will limit practice runs to one hour. I will have a practice run longer than an hour only if it is a beautiful day and I am practicing by myself (not at a hunt test) – so I won't tie up the field. It is also good to take your hound on a practice run on each field, if the Hunt is being run on more than one field. That helps you and your hound know what to expect on each field once the judging starts.

If this is your first hunt, you may have questions about etiquette at the hunt site and in the field. Most of the etiquette is just common sense. When you arrive, you will want to park around the edges of the club grounds. Go to the clubhouse or hunt headquarters and sign up for practice time. You are usually free to set up an awning or canopy to protect you and your hounds from the sun and rain. Many handlers also bring exercise pens. If you have a grooming table, bring it and a comb, to remove the burrs and debris your hound will inevitably accumulate on your runs.

Let's talk poop. Bring your poop bags. You are expected to pick up after your dog in the club area everywhere outside of the fenced hunt field. We



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often hold our events at Beagle clubs, and you may find that the Beaglers don't pick up as well as the PBGV owners, but we need to do our best to keep the club site clean.

Inside the fence is a different story. If your hound poops inside the fenced hunt field, you are not expected to bag and remove the poop (although you are free to do so). Instead, you are expected to extend the courtesy of moving the poop off the walking path – a task typically done with a branch or stick.

A great way to learn is to observe other hounds. Between your practice runs, and during the two days of hunt tests, take every opportunity to watch as many runs as possible. Watch a variety of hounds and a variety of handlers. Your presence on the field for others' runs will be appreciated because as a member of the "gallery" you can help watch for bunnies, and yell "Tally Ho!"

Now you are on the field with your hound for the first time. What do you do? Let your hound go. Be patient. Remember: less is more. Talk to your hound much less than you think is needed. Most new handlers have the tendency to talk to their hounds when the hound comes out of the brush, or when the hound comes back to them. This is not the time to be encouraging your hound to be your shadow. Praise your hound only when they go into cover, not for coming out of cover. Praise your hound for returning only when you recall. Otherwise, let your hound go, and just watch. Move your hound only when directed by a judge, to prevent disruption with another hound, or to bring your hound to a known path of a bunny (which we call "a line"). Let your hound explore, sniff, and hunt.

Expect that for the first ten minutes your hound will be running off energy, especially if your hound does not have experience being off lead in the woods.

This will get you started. Hopefully you will do the NLE/PLE program. Watch other runs. More than likely, your hound will love the experience, and you will be hooked.

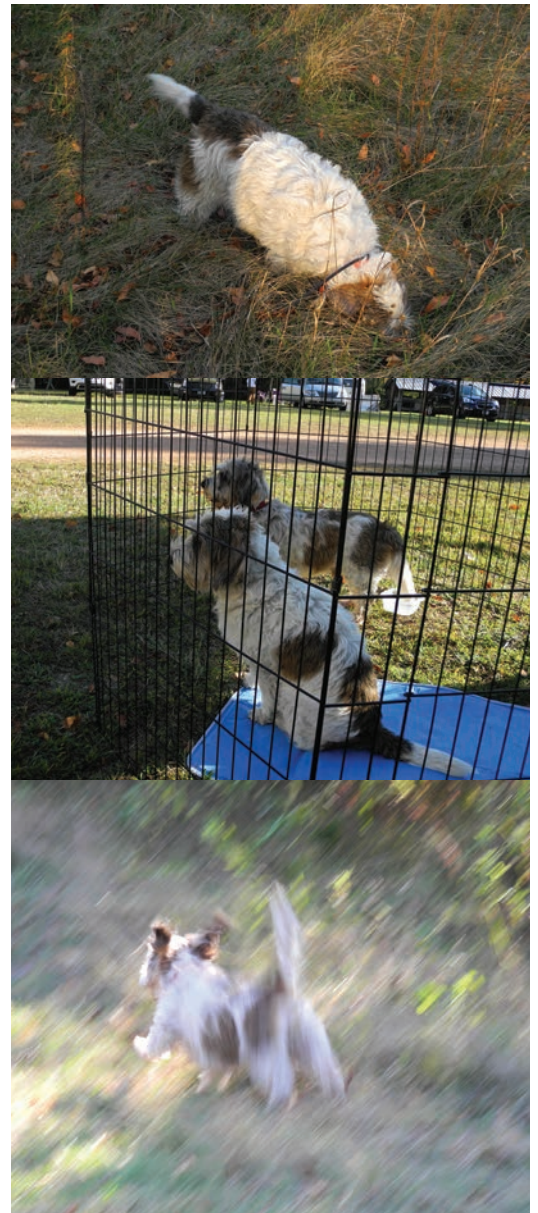
HELP WANTED: JUDGES!

Would you like to see more hunt tests? If we are going to grow this sport, we need more tests, or at least to maintain the number of tests that we have now. There are some factors that limit how many hunts we can have, and where we can have them. Weather is a limiting factor: we can't hold hunt tests in the summer because it is too hot. Location is a limiting factor: we have to find beagle clubs that are willing to host us, have open weekends, and have good rabbit populations. And we have to have enough judges.

A judge can't judge every run. Often judges have their own dogs to run, or are prohibited by the rules from judging certain dogs (for example, being a co-owner or having handled the dog in the last year). Judges are human, and they need breaks. Even in a best-case scenario, a hunt test requires at least four or five judges, and that would require working those judges hard.

We have a limited number of qualified judges. Our judges have scheduling conflicts because of work, medical or personal matters. We also have to be prepared for last-minute injuries or emergencies that prevent judges from fulfilling their duties – something we have been very lucky in avoiding, so far. And let's face it – none of us are getting any younger. Judging four runs and running your own dogs twice in a day is a full load.

What can you do to help? Become a judge! You can become a judge once you have a hound with a Junior Hunter title. You can work on your judging qualifications before your hound earns that title. Take a look at the Judges Certifica-



WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

**WELCOME TO THE NEWEST MEMBERS OF THE
PETIT BASSET GRIFFON VENDEEN CLUB OF AMERICA**

**Jessie Parson Bohannon and
Cody Bohannon**

220 E 65th Street, 16D
New York, NY 10065
Associate Member

Don and Jan Goetz

505 Cheltenham Ave,
Franklin, TN 37604
Associate Member

Anne and David DiChristofaro

37 Rice Street
Warwick, RI 02886
Associate Member

Linelle Marshall

12077 Breckenridge Rd.
Groveland, CA 95321
Associate Member

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tion Procedure on the Hunt page of the PBGV Club of America web site (www.pbgv.org). You can start the process at your next event, or go watch a Beagle or Basset Hound event, and write your observations to fulfill one of your requirements. We need you!

Send in your thoughts for the next issue. Experienced hunters and judges, share your observations. Hunters, send in your questions. Let's improve and grow this sport. See you on the hunt field. Tally Ho! ♦

Looking for Stories to Publish in *Saber Tails*

Tails from the Clown Hound Files

We are always looking for stories of hilarity about our zany, cooky, crazy manipulative pups.
Let us know if you have a story to share!

My PBGV...My Hero

Has your PBGV done something remarkable? Awhile back, we featured an article by Matt Worthy and Paul Han about how their two PBGVs alerted them to a fire in the attic. The house burned to the ground, but Matt and the girls were able to escape thanks to his incessantly barking dogs.
Do you know a PBGV that has done something heroic?

Therapy Dog

Do you have or know of a PBGV that participates in visiting schools, senior centers, hospitals or participate in other service work?

Recipe Corner

Do you have a recipe for treats or food that your PBGV really love? Please share!

Roving Reporter

Are you attending a big dog show, a hunt or a play date and would be willing to provide a write up and some photos?

Please contact Gloria Swaine at SaberTails@pbgv.org