

USDC 2017-2018

Squirrel Hunt Rules

1. DEFINITIONS

- a. **Ultimate Squirrel Dog Club LLC**, referred to as USDC, will approve all events, keep record of winnings, issue championship degrees, and World Champion qualification. USDC will not be responsible for accounting for and disbursing of winnings, appointing judges, or determining event winners. USDC reserves the right to withhold recognition of winners and may decline to grant a club permission to hold events at their sole discretion.
- b. **Host Club**- A club hosting an event with the permission of the USDC. The host club will have complete authority to conduct events, determine winners, and distribute awards. The club will appoint a certified Hunt Director who will have full authority over the event. The club will rule on all questions concerning an event, including rule interpretation.
- c. **Hunt Director**- The Hunt director will be responsible for selecting judges, guides, and conducting events. USDC shall have the authority to correct gross errors by Hunt Directors at its discretion.
- d. **Guide**- The guide will be a responsible person who is able to keep the cast in the best possible hunting areas. The location where cast is taken should be an area where the cast can compete safely and hunt the full 90 minutes when possible.
- e. **Judge**- The Hunt Director will select a judge for each cast from among the entries he feels are most qualified to conduct the cast. He should have a good knowledge of the sport and the ability to honestly conduct the cast according to USDC rules. The judge will have complete control of the cast and will make all decisions. The judge will be responsible for carrying the scorecard and accurately recording the scores on the card. Any judge found to have scored any situation to the benefit of any individual or dog shall be subject to disciplinary action.
- f. **Non-Hunting Judge**- Any round being hunted for placement will have a non-hunting judge. The non-hunting judge is the only vote. If a handler disagrees with the call he may question the non-hunting judge call and it will be taken back to a panel. The judge must be a current USDC member.

2. GENERAL INFO

- A. **Hold Harmless Clause** – By your entry in a USDC event you agree to hold USDC, the host club, judge, guide, and Hunt Director harmless in the event of accident, error, or misapplication of the rules. Any owner or handler may file a written complaint concerning actions of the sponsoring club. USDC will investigate the complaint and

take appropriate action including, but not limited to withholding recognition of winners, and/or refusing to approve the club for future events.

- B. **Hunting Time-** All casts will hunt ninety (90) minutes, except the final cast where all cast members must agree to hunt only one (1) hour. Only (1) one member requesting to hunt (90) minutes is necessary. All events with over three (3) casts must hunt ninety (90) minutes in the first round to be considered for placement.
- C. **Time Keeping-** Judges should insure that all time keeping is accurate and that all cast members are informed concerning all time.
- D. **Call Acknowledgement-** The judge should acknowledge a handler's call by responding the dog's name and number of points received for the call.
- E. **Staying Within Hearing Distance-** When the dogs are turned loose, the cast is to walk slowly in the direction the guide wishes to hunt. The cast will make every effort to remain within hearing distance of all dogs. If they are unable to keep all dogs within hearing range, the judge may apply the time out rule by majority vote. The cast should stay as close to the dogs as possible at all times.
- F. **Cast Should Stay Together-** The cast must stay together and all cast members will go to all trees unless dogs are treed in different places. A handler may leave the cast to go to a split tree when time is up or all dogs have been declared treed. Each tree must be scored by a majority of the cast.
- G. **Cast Should Walk In To Tree Together-** The cast should go to the tree together to determine if all dogs called treed are treeing. Every effort should be made to allow Judge to reach the tree first. Dogs declared treed must be showing tree. (Note: Dog or dogs declared treed will be allowed to re-check the tree, meaning the dog will be allowed to drop down off of the tree, re-check, and then go back to showing tree.) A dog will be allowed to recheck the tree within an area of 30 feet from the tree.
- H. **Number of Cast Members-** All cast members must sign scorecard certifying it to be accurate. No handler can be considered for placement in the event if his scorecard has not been certified by signatures of all handlers on the cast.
- I. **If More than One Dog is Scratched-** Any time more than one dog is scratched from a cast at the same time, they will place in the order of their score at the time they were scratched. No dog scratched for fighting may advance as a cast winner.
- J. **Muzzles-** No dog will be allowed to compete wearing a muzzle during a cast.

K. Abuse of Dogs- Abuse of any kind shall not be tolerated while participating in any USDC event, including time outs.

L. Awards – A deadline will be announced and noted on the scorecard for the final cast to be back at the club house. Finalists will be the last three (3) or top (2) two cast winners who have not been eliminated. Any finalist's dog not on the grounds to answer roll call will be scratched from the final cast and will receive last place in the final cast. If the final is split, the finalist that is not present will also receive an equal split of the awards. If **all** members of the final cast agree, awards will be divided (split) equally. Only one (1) finalist vote is needed to hunt for it all. Where final cast has agreed to split the awards, the final cast can hunt for placement and Dog of the Year points or split Dog of the Year points.

3. **SCORING THE TREE**

A. Tree points awarded will be: 1st -125, 2nd -50, 3rd -25.

B. A dog must bark to be declared treed.

C. When dogs are declared treed, cast may move at a moderate pace close enough to see dogs working, but not closer than sixty (60) feet from the declared tree. Cast must wait two (2) minutes after dog(s) are declared treed before going to the tree, unless all dogs are declared treed or hunt time expires. The judge will advise when the search time is over and instruct handlers to recast their dogs. Handler may lead his dog away from the tree as far as needed (within reason) before recasting the dog.

D. One Minute Rule- One minute after the first dog is declared treed, the second tree will be closed. After second tree (50 points) is closed, third tree (25 points) is available for the final minute.

E. Search Time- After arriving at the tree and handling the dogs, up to five (5) minutes will be allowed to search the declared tree and other trees within sixty (60) feet of the tree that the squirrel could have timbered to. The full five minutes does not have to be used if handlers are in agreement on the scoring. These five (5) minutes will be allowed even if the hunt time has expired.

F. Split Trees-

a. Dogs will be awarded split tree points when dogs are treed more than 60 feet from base to base. If dogs tree within the 60 ft. area and more than one squirrel is found, the second squirrel must be seen in the actual tree that the second dog is treed on for the dog to receive split tree points. This can occur only after the first dog's squirrel is found for them both to receive plus points.

- b. Dogs treeing on split trees within the 60 ft. area will be scored as one tree when only one squirrel is seen in the 60 ft. area.
- G. Dogs returning to previously scored tree and handled the third time dog will receive 125 minus points. If dog is handled fourth time on the same tree dog will be scratched.
- H. Dog(s) coming into closed tree shall be tied to prevent interference with treed dog(s).
- I. A dog will be recast after scoring tree unless all dogs are declared treed. Separate trees should never be scored out of order unless all dogs are treed or handled.
- J. Dog(s) treeing “tree game” other than squirrel will be led away with points deleted. “Tree game” will be defined as follows: any game capable of climbing shall be considered “tree game”. Any type of fowl should not be considered as “tree game”. If dog(s) were declared treed on scorecard and only large fowl is seen, delete points.
- K. **Beating on Trees**, pulling vines, etc. will be allowed once the search time begins where allowed by law. If another dog comes in to an area being searched, it should be handled.

4. Questions

- A. Any handler has the right to question the scoring of any dog in the cast. Questions must be placed on the card at the time the dog is scored or should be scored. Questions must be submitted to the remaining cast members and resolved by a majority vote. If a handler is dissatisfied with the majority decision, that decision may be appealed to the Hunt Director to be heard after the cast is finished by placing a deposit of \$25. The deposit must be placed with the judge in the woods at the time of the question. The deposit will not be refunded later in the cast if the handler changes his mind. However, the handler may choose to drop the question and forfeit the deposit at the end of the cast. Handler may sign an IOU on back of scorecard. If IOU is not paid, handler is automatically suspended from entering other events until question fee is paid. No deposit is required when cast has voted, but does not have a majority.
- B. **Question Presentation-** A cast should not return to the clubhouse to have a question heard until hunting time is completed, unless the question pertains to a dog or handler being scratched from the cast.
- C. **Panel Hearing-** The Hunt Director will assemble a panel of three qualified people to hear the question. If the panel finds in favor of the question, the deposit will be returned and the scorecard changed to reflect the change. If the panel finds against the question, the deposit will be forfeited with half going to the club and half going to USDC.
- D. **Panel Appeal-** Any cast member, who believes a panel had made a gross misapplication of a rule, may request an appeal of the panel’s decision, if and only if, he can quote the specific rule violation to the Hunt Director or USDC Representative

immediately following the rendering of the panel's decision. Members will be charged a \$100 deposit for all panel appeal requests, which must be paid at the time of each request. When and only when, an appeal panel overturns the original panel's decision, will the appeal deposit be returned.

5. DISCIPLINARY REPORTS-

Any handler may be reported to the Hunt Director by another cast member, Judge, Guide, or club member for misconduct. The Hunt Director will send report to USDC with other hunt results. Misconduct report will be handled by USDC. Issue will be investigated and charges may be brought on others involved as well as member charged.

6. HANDLER-

- A. Membership Requirement-** Must be a current member of USDC and be in good standing. It is the handler's responsibility to know the rules contained herein and agree to abide by them. The handler also agrees to accept and abide by the decision of the Judge and Master of Dogs.
- B. Handler Conduct-** A handler must conduct himself as a gentleman and sportsman at all times. A handler becoming loud, aggressive, or belligerent may be scratched by majority of cast, non-hunting Judge or hunt Director regardless of the merit of his argument. A handler displaying unsportsmanlike conduct or failing to abide by these rules should be reported to the Hunt Director for a disciplinary hearing. The disciplinary committee may fine, place on probation, or suspend any member.
- C. Handler Interference-** Any handler found guilty of interfering with another handler's dog in any way that would affect his ability to compete may be subject to disciplinary action.
- D. Disciplining of Dogs-** A handler may not scold, encourage, or punish his dog during the cast.
- E. Handler Leaving Cast-** A handler may not leave the cast for any reason except to go to his dog on a separate tree after the tree is closed. The judge may give a handler permission to leave the cast to search for his dog during a time out. Handler will have one hour to retrieve his dog and meet at designated location. Any handler or dog delaying a cast for more than one hour will be scratched.
- F. Inspection of Scorecard-** A handler may inspect the scorecard at any time, provided Judge is not in the process of scoring dogs.
- G. Spectator Participation-** The local club may decide and announce if spectators will be allowed on casts, if agreeable with cast members. Handler shall be responsible for the conduct of spectators accompanying them on casts. Handlers may assist in the search for the squirrel, but cannot take part in the scoring of a split tree. Spectator must show squirrel to majority of cast or non-hunting judge.
- H. Scorecard Certification-** Each handler is responsible for the honesty of the scorecard and will sign the scorecard certifying it upon completion of the cast. Any handler who feels the scorecard is not accurate should make note of the reasons in the

appropriate place on the back of the card and sign his comments. *Important:* Handler must notify the Hunt Director of the circumstances leading him to sign in the gray area. Hunt Director may sign certifying card for any handler signing gray area without giving reason for signing in the gray area. A member who believes that the scoring of a cast is drastically wrong and cannot be corrected by bringing a question must inform cast the time of scoring of his intention to sign in the gray to disqualify the cast. If the cast is completed, any other handler may question the disqualification. Hunt director panel will hear reason for disqualification and may reinstate cast if handler did not have a justifiable reason. USDC reserves the right to review any scorecard submitted with signature(s) in the gray area for possible misconduct charges against any and/or all members of the cast.

- I. Remaining with Cast-** Each handler shall be required to remain with the cast for the entire hunt even though his dog may no longer be a part of the cast, unless all remaining handlers agree to his leaving, or he will be subject to disciplinary charges.
- J. Signature Requirement-** Any cast considered for placement in an event must have the signature of all cast members certifying it to be accurate. All casts must be completed with at least three (3) members to certify scorecard (In case of two dog cast, both handlers must sign the card to certify its accuracy.) The Hunt Director may sign card on behalf of a handler if a question is brought before the panel. Hunt Director may also sign on behalf of any handler who has not signed scorecard due to negligence.
- K. Signing Fraudulent Scorecard-** Any handler found to have signed a fraudulent scorecard may be suspended from all USDC events and potentially barred for life from registering dogs.
- L. Undeserved Credit-** Anyone found guilty of accepting credit for a different amount than he actually earned in a USDC event may be subject to disciplinary action.
- M. Intentional Mishandling-** A handler must compete to the best of his and his dog's ability. Any handler intentionally handling his dog in such a way as to allow another dog or handler to win may be subject to disciplinary action.

7. DOGS

- A.** Any dog entered must be able to participate without hindering other dogs in the cast.
- B.** The dog must be USDC registered in the true owner's name. All awards will be presented to the registered owner of the dog.
- C.** Anyone guilty of falsely registering or falsely entering any dog with incorrect papers may be scratched, fined, and/or placed on suspension and/or probation.
- D.** The handler must allow his dog to be examined by a veterinarian, if requested by hunt Director or be permanently suspended.
- E. Tracking Systems/Training Systems-** Tracking Systems – Tracking Receiver/Transmitter (handhelds) paired with collars that are not capable of producing any type of tone, vibration or electronic stimulation may be powered on

and used at all times. Audio alerts on tracking receivers (handhelds) must be muted. Tracking Receiver/Transmitter (handhelds) paired with collars that are capable of producing any type of tone or electronic stimulation may not be powered on, or used by handler, their spectator or anyone else on the cast or at the truck during hunting time. Tracking System Use during the cast is intended for the personal use of the handler and the safety of the handlers' dog only. No information obtained from tracking devices will be permitted for use in scoring situations in the woods or at panel question hearings. **As always, dog must be heard before handler, majority of cast or non-hunting Judge can take a tree call** and all time-out requirements in rule still apply. Handlers must agree to allow the Judge to check their tracking system for any electronic stimulation, vibration, or tone capability at any time requested. Anyone found to have modified tracking or training equipment to disguise electronic tone or stimulation capability will be scratched. These rules are to be strictly enforced. Any time a handler is scratched for tracking equipment infractions; misconduct charges MUST be filed and sent to USDC.

8. POINT SYSTEM

- A. Tree Points:** 125 points for 1st tree, 50 pts. For 2nd, 25 for 3rd tree.
- B.** A dog must bark to be declared treed.
- C. Points Received for Tree Call-** One (1) minute after the first dog is called treed, the second tree will be closed. All dogs treed after the one (1) minute will receive 25 points. After two (2) minutes the tree will be closed.
- D. Treed on Closed Tree-** Any dog declared treed after a tree is closed must receive 125 points. If the dog is actually treeing on closed tree, tree points will be deleted.
- E. Separate Tree-** The Handler should not call treed for a separate tree. The Judge should award separate tree points as soon as he is sure the dog(s) is/are on separate tree.
- F. Movement on Tree-** Judges will pay close attention to the location of dogs called treed to be sure the dogs do not move. If in doubt as to whether or not the dog is moving, it is best to hold the cast on place to watch for movement.
- G. Coming into Scored Tree-** Any dog coming into a tree that is being score will be handled.

9. POINTS WILL BE PLUS

- A.** When a dog trees, and a squirrel (excluding flying and ground squirrels) is seen by a majority of the cast. In major events, a tree will be scored plus when the squirrel is seen by a non-hunting judge.
- B.** Dog(s) declared treed may receive plus points for a timbering squirrel or a squirrel on the ground only if squirrel is seen.
- C.** When squirrel is seen in declared tree or in a tree the squirrel may have timbered to within sixty 60 feet of the declared tree.

- D. Upon arrival at the tree, the judge will determine what dogs are showing tree and what dogs are not and score them accordingly.
- E. If squirrel is caught and dog(s) were not declared treed, no points will be awarded. Dog must be called treed prior to the catch in order to receive points.
- F. No scoring of a mass in a tree, dark spot, or whatever “appears” to be a squirrel. It must be certain that a squirrel has been seen in order to receive plus points.

10. POINTS WILL BE MINUS

- A. **Empty Tree-** When dogs tree and the cast can plainly see that no squirrel is there, and there is no possibility that a squirrel may have timbered or have gone to a hole within 60 ft. of the declared tree.
- B. **Leaving Tree-** When a dog(s) has been declared treed and the dog(s) leaves the tree. A dog will be able to recheck the tree within an area of 30 ft. from the tree it was declared treed on.
- C. **Sixty Second Rule-** After a dog is declared treed, at least one of the dogs declared treed must bark at least once every sixty (60) seconds on the tree or be minused.
- D. **Calling a Dog That Has Not Barked-** When any handler trees his dog that has not barked or trees another handler’s dog, the judge will award points called and minus them.

11. CIRCLE POINTS

- A. Points will be circled when a dog trees up a tree where there could be a squirrel, effort should be made to score a dog.
- B. If it is obvious that dogs are following a timbering squirrel by their actions (running along and looking up trees) and end up treed in den or large tree, within the 60 ft and squirrel is not seen, circle points will be awarded if the other dogs were declared treed.
- C. When dogs tree in a place of refuge, other than a tree, points will be deleted if no game is seen.

12. POINTS WILL BE DELETED

- A. If time out must be called.
- B. When the judge orders dogs to be called off because of livestock or nearness of a highway, buildings, Danger etc.
- C. **Treeing on Dead Tree-** When dog is called treed after tree is closed. Points will be deleted if this is the dogs first time at a tree. Other dogs will be warned for his second time returning to a previously scored tree. The points will be 125 minus if dog is in fact treed on a previously scored tree for the third time and scratched the fourth time. Other dogs treed will be warned for his second time returning to a previously scored tree and scratched the fourth time handled.
- D. **Dangerous Obstacle-** When dogs are treed across deep water or other dangerous obstacle, after all efforts to reach dogs have been exhausted and the cast cannot reach the dogs, all points should be deleted and the time out rule applied. *Under no*

circumstances should any cast member attempt to cross water deep enough to require swimming.)

- E.** When dogs tree in a hole in the ground or a place of refuge and no game is seen, points will be deleted.

13. DOGS WILL BE SCRATCHED

Dogs or handlers will be scratched for interfering with another dog or handler's ability to compete. Dogs or handlers should be scratched as a last resort. Every effort should be made to allow dogs and handlers to compete. Reasons to scratch are as follows:

- A.** If dog fails to hunt for fifteen (15) consecutive minutes. Dogs failing to go hunting during any fifteen (15) minute period of hunting time will be scratched. The handler has the right to walk dog in the direction guide wishes to hunt. A dog must be actively hunting game for a period of five minutes to break the fifteen (15) minute rule, unless hunting time expires.
- B.** If dog interferes with other dogs by growling, face barking, fighting, smelling females, males riding other dogs, or any other way. For fighting on first offense or additional offense if problem continues.
- C.** If seen by non-hunting judge or majority of cast, chasing domestic animals or livestock.
- D.** If dog is seen by non-hunting judge or majority of cast running "non-tree game" on the first offense dog will take 125 minus points and will be scratched on the second offense.
- E.** If dog trees continually for three (3) minutes and is not called by handler, on second offense. Dog will receive 125 minus points on first offense and be scratched on second offense. Dog must stop treeing for 1 minute to break the 3 minute stationary rule.
- F.** When handler calls his dog that has not opened or calls another handler's dog, on second offense.
- G.** If dog becomes lost or delays cast for more than 1 hour, when time-out is called.
- H.** If handler encourages, discourages, or abuses dog.
- I.** If handler shows unsportsmanlike conduct or uses excessive profanity.
- J.** If handler is under the influence of alcohol or nonprescription drugs. Abusive manners are not to be tolerated.
- K.** Any dog that continuously opens on trail for a period of two minutes will take 125 minus points on first offense and be scratched on second offense. This rule is not intended to be used on the dog that occasionally barks on the ground throughout the duration of the cast. Dog must be silent for a continuous 30 seconds to break the 2 minute rule.
- L.** If scorecard is returned after the deadline.
- M.** For going back to the same tree (as in the exact same tree) and handled the second time dog will receive a warning. If the dog is handled three times on the same tree the

dog will receive 125 minus points. If dog is handled forth time on the same tree dog will be scratched.

- N. Any dog that has been scratched for fighting three (3) times in a twelve (12) month period will be barred from any USDC events for a period of not less than one year from the last offense.
- O. Any dog that continues to bark (babble) to the point of interfering with the work of other dogs will be scratched on the second offense. This is not intended to include the dog that comes off the leash and barks a few times nor is it to include the dog that barks occasionally on track. Refer to rule 13K.

14. TIME-OUT

- A. Time out may be called by Guide, non-hunting judge or by the majority of the cast when dog(s) or cast members are in danger, when interference occurs, or it is required to move in order to finish the hunt.
- B. A time out may be requested by handler of lost dog. If this occurs, other handlers should be cooperative and catch and leash their dogs at the first opportunity; when they come by hunting or at the next tree, etc.
- C. A time out for a lost dog will be no more than one (1) hour. If handler and lost dog have not returned to the cast within the one hour limit, dog(s) will be scratched.
- D. No score can be achieved during a time out.
- E. A called time-out will apply to all dogs in the cast.
- F. A time-out will not be used to search a tree.
- G. In case of accident or sickness.

15. TIES

All ties are to be broken for a cast winner. The proper procedure to break a tie is as follows:

- A. The dog with the most total plus points.
 - B. The dog with the least minus.
 - C. The dog with the most plus 1st trees.
 - D. The dog with the most circle points.
 - E. The dog with the most plus 2nd trees.
 - F. The dog with the most 1st tree circle points.
 - G. The dog with the most 2nd tree circle points.
 - H. If still a tie, then the dogs involved in the tie will continue to hunt until a dog is called treed or a dog is scratched or withdrawn. The tree score will determine the winner.
- At this point tied handlers may elect to split awards.

16. ENTRY REFUSAL

USDC or a sponsoring club has the right to refuse entry to any dog or handler. However, no handler will be barred on the basis of religion, race, color, national origin, sex, or physical impairment. Any handler denied entry must be given a hearing if it is requested in writing before entry is refused.

17. CAST WINNERS

- A.** The final score is determined by subtracting all minus points from all plus points. All circle points count as zero as a final score.
- B. No tree points-** A dog who has no tree points (circle or plus) cannot place over a dog who has treed and has received circle or plus points on tree, regardless of final score.

18. ORDER OF PLACEMENT

After determining the final score, the order of placement is (This pertains to placing in a cast or cast winners placing in the final three.)

1. Most plus points: If more than one dog has the same amount of plus points as a final score, see tie breaking rules.
2. Total score of zero: All circle points count as zero final score. If more than one dog has a final score of zero (no plus and no minus), see tie-breaking rules.
3. Least minus points: (Example: Dog A has 200 circle points and will have a final score of zero. Dog B has 400 circle points and 25 minus and will have a final score of minus 25. Dog C has 200 plus, 300 circle, and 275 minus for a total score of 75 minus. Dogs will place: Dog A with 0, dog B with 25 minus, and dog C with 75 minus)
4. In any Open event of nine (9) entries or less any awards normally due any disqualified cast may be disbursed at the club's discretion. However under no circumstances may awards from disqualified cast be added to other places.

19. DRAWING OF CASTS

It is very important that all judges, guides, and handlers draw for their cast. Any person who owns more than one dog entered in an event may request a separate draw provided USDC registration papers are in order and are presented to the Hunt Director to prove ownership.

20. GOOD JUDGEMENT RULE

These rules are written and intended to identify and reward the dog that hunts and trees a squirrel and stays until his handler comes. At times it will be necessary to use good judgement rather than a literal interpretation of these rules toward this end. It is written within the scope of these rules for the Judge and/or Hunt Director to rule on a situation not specifically covered in detail by the rules.

21. CELL PHONES

Cell phones and other personal communication devices may be carried on a cast, but **MUST REMAIN ON SILENT** until the hunt time is completed. The exception to this rule is if an emergency occurs on the cast, requiring the use of a cell phone to call for help. Spectators must also keep phones on silent until hunt time is completed.