



631 FW 5, Field Trials

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5.1 Objectives. The objective of permitting field trials on Service lands is to encourage practices and techniques which enhance the tradition and quality of the hunting experience and reduce the incidence of downed but unretrieved game.

5.2 Policy. Field trials may be permitted on Service lands provided the activity meets the Service's compatibility standard.

5.3 Responsibilities. Field trials must be approved at the Regional Office level prior to the issuance of a Special Use Permit by the project leader. (See 055 FW 5 or 5 RM 17, Administration of Specialized Uses.) The Regional Office will assure that all policies and guidelines contained in this chapter will be followed. Operations which deviate from these guidelines must be approved in advance by the Regional Director.

5.4 Permit Requirements and Fees. Any group sponsoring a field trial on Service lands must have a Special Use Permit (Form 3-1383) issued by the project leader. The permit should specify conditions of use such as access routes, specific areas of activity, type of target animals, litter cleanup during and after the trial, use of firearms, and sanitation facilities. Special use permit fees may be charged for field trial activities. (See 055 FW 5 or 5 RM 17, Administration of Specialized Uses.)

5.5 Areas and Facilities. Field trials should be contained in an area that will accommodate the trial without undue disturbance to field office operations. Permission should be granted for only one trial at a time in order to avoid conflicts of time and space. There will be no permanent physical facilities constructed or located on Service lands for the support of field trial activities. Existing kennels, club houses, stables, etc., should be phased out at the first opportunity. Any necessary portable facilities must be removed from the field office at the end of each field trial. All costs for temporary facilities and the conduct of a trial are the responsibility of the permittee.

5.6 Conflicts with Wildlife. Field trials have the potential to adversely impact wildlife resources. To minimize such disturbance, the trials will not be held where wildlife is concentrated, or during the local breeding season. Firearms will be permitted only if such use is necessary and will not interfere with wildlife use on that part of the field office. No wild animals may be killed during field trials on Service lands.

5.7 Target Animals. Live or dead birds may be used for field trials. However, only indigenous wildlife species or established exotic species may be used. All target animals used in field trials on Service lands must have a health certificate that provides reasonable assurance of the absence of specific pathogens listed below:

A. Botulism (Type C)

B. Avian Cholera

C. Duck Plague (Duck Virus Enteritis)

D. Aspergillosis

Target animals should be brought to the field office in disposable crates (e.g. cardboard boxes) that have not been used before. Such crates must be properly disposed of after use. (See 701 FW 7 or 7 RM 17 for policy and procedures concerning disease control and prevention.)

5.8 Types of Field Trials.

A. Retriever Trials. Generally, one or more land and water tests are set up in retriever trials using dummies (floats similar to boat bumper guards), dead ducks, or live, shackled ducks, pheasants, or pigeons to be retrieved by the dogs. The trial sites typically include water areas with a variety of cover, and field areas with different heights and density of vegetation. Often, it is desirable to have a field mowed or an entry into the water cleared to create ideal conditions. Retriever field trials involve shooting, and the sites for the various age classes should not be so close together that the noise from one event distracts dogs participating in others.

B. Hound Trials. Hound trials often require considerable space. Raccoon trials are conducted at night and involve a "cast" being made by a dog, hunter, and judge. In this test the dog races against the clock in vociferous location and treeing of a raccoon. The animal is not killed in the process and firearms are not a part of the test. Beagle trials vary with locality in the way they are conducted and may involve one dog or a pack of dogs competing in a "brace".

C. Bird Dog Trials. Bird dog trials include breeds such as English Setters, Irish Setters, Pointers, Brittany and Springer Spaniels, German Shorthair Pointers and Weimaraners. The trials may involve a shooter, judge, and the use of pen-reared quail, pigeons, or pheasants. The dogs compete on a circuit that may encompass up to three hundred acres.

5.9 Sources of Information. The American Kennel Club has rules and regulations pertaining to field trials for most breeds of dogs. Additionally, the American Field Publishing Company regulates trials for bird dogs. Information is available from the American Kennel Club, 51 Madison Avenue, New York, New York 10010 and American Field Publishing Company, 222 West Adams Street, Chicago, Illinois 60606.

Several National Wildlife Refuges host field trials each year and, thus, are good sources of information. A list of these refuges should be available from the Regional Office.

For information on the specific content of this policy, contact the National Wildlife Refuge System. For additional information about this web page, contact [Krista Bibb](#), in the Division of Policy, Performance, and Management Programs.

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