

Why Take the NAVHDA Natural Ability Test.txt

In reading through your Reservation, I see you are an avid hunter, but do not plan to run your puppy in the North American Versatile Hunting Dog Association (NAVHDA) Natural Ability Test (<https://www.navhda.org/testing>). I am hoping to convince you to check into joining your local NAVHDA Chapter (<http://www.navhda.org/membership-chapters/locate-chapters-and-members>) to see what it is all about and to run your puppy in the Natural Ability Test.

In 2007, when we got our first Munster, KD, we knew almost nothing about NAVHDA. We planned to join the Small Munsterlander Club of North America (SMCNA), which requires a dog to pass a NAVHDA test prior to breeding. Taking the Natural Ability Test with KD turned out to be one of the best things we've ever done. Through NAVHDA, we have since met a lot of people very much like ourselves who care about the environment, nature, conservation, hunting and, most of all, versatile hunting dogs. Now most of our best friends are NAVHDA members. They are not professional trainers, just a group of men and women (and their kids) who get together monthly to help each other train their dogs because they want a well-trained dog to hunt with.

The NA Test has since been invaluable as a means of getting a young dog ready for his/her first hunting season. Everything a dog must be proficient at to do well in the Test is something every upland and waterfowl hunter wants their dog to be capable of. The Test gives you specific things to work on and a specific date by which you need to have your dog prepared. For the NA Test, you really aren't so much "training" as you are "preparing" and "exposing" your dog. He/she must swim without much hesitation, cooperatively search a field for birds, point birds when found, and track a crippled bird. Dogs are scored on pointing, tracking, searching, swimming, cooperation, use of nose and desire to work. The Test is not a competition, but an evaluation. Dogs are judged against a Standard and all dogs may get a maximum score. It is an all-day event for 5-10 dogs, their handlers and spectators. Because of the non-competitive nature of the Test, the participants root for each other, help and support each other and generally just have a good time. Judges are volunteers who have gone through a lengthy apprentice program.

Chapter Training Days generally take place monthly in the off-season, which gives you something fun (and productive) to do with your hunting dog when you can't be hunting. It keeps your dog tuned up for hunting during the off-season. Our dogs absolutely love going to Training Days, because it gives them the opportunity to hunt birds in the Spring and Summer. The dogs learn to patiently and quietly wait their turn while chained or crated, which is beneficial for all hunting dogs to learn. Training Days also expose a dog to lots of other dogs, people and gunfire.

I've never known anyone who wasn't happy they prepared for and ran the NA Test with their puppy. You'll find no matter how much training experience you have, by spending time training with so many different people, you'll become a better trainer. Every time I go to a Training Day, I pick up some bit of new information about canine nutrition and/or health, or a different training technique. Members are also a valuable resource for the best places to train and get training birds in your area.