



AMERICAN
KENNEL CLUBSM

Doug Ljungren
Assistant Vice President
Performance Events

January 16, 2009

To: All Pointing Breed Parent Clubs That Held Field Events in 2008

Subject: **The Use of GPS Tracking Collars at Pointing Breed Field Events**

The GPS tracking collar is a new piece of equipment available to the sport. The introduction of this new technology raises the question of whether GPS tracking collars should be allowed in AKC Pointing Breed field events. The Performance Events Department is preparing to make a recommendation to the AKC Board of Directors. The purpose of this letter is to request input from the Pointing Breed parent clubs that held field events in 2008.

Background

The current Performance Events policy with regard to tracking collars at Pointing Breed field events limits usage to those units that weigh less than 5 ounces, excluding the strap itself. This weight limitation has been in effect since the introduction of tracking collars fifteen years ago. At the time the limitation was developed there was wide-spread debate whether a dog would believe the tracking collar was a correction collar and therefore act differently than it would without the collar. Since 5 ounces was less than correction collars at the time, this limitation was adopted with the thought the dog would be able to tell the difference.

Current Situation

The first GPS unit mounted on a collar (the Garmin DC30) became available in the summer of 2008. For those not familiar this collar, the Performance Events Department has field tested the unit and believes it is simple to use in its most basic mode and will result in faster recovery of wayward dogs. However, the collar exceeds the 5 ounce limitation. AKC's current position is to enforce the existing policy and therefore has denied the use of the Garmin unit at AKC field events. There will be additional GPS tracking collars available from other manufacturers in the near future. As best as AKC can determine, all of these units will exceed the 5 ounce limitation. While their exact weights are still uncertain, it is reasonable to assume they will be in the range of 6 to 8 ounces.

What To Do?

The Performance Events Department feels it is appropriate to reexamine the policies regulating the use of tracking collars at field events. The department has received input both for and against the use of GPS tracking collars. Comments have centered on two issues – the weight of the collar and the potential for misuse of the unit.

The Weight Issue

A discussion on weight should consider whether the 5 ounce limitation is still relevant. Over the past fifteen years, correction collars have become smaller - the most recent Tri-tronics unit weighs 4 ounces. There is still some debate whether a dog will act differently when wearing a tracking collar. AKC data has not shown a noticeable change in the success of dogs earning field titles over the time that the use of tracking collars became common.

Possible recommendations regarding the current weight limitation span a range of possibilities:

- A. Stick with the 5 ounce limitation. The current policy has worked well for a long time. AKC should not change its policies due to new products. GPS collars in the future will most likely meet the current weight limitation.
- B. Modify the weight limitation to include the current generation of GPS units. The technology is too valuable to forego. The safety factor for the dog is more important than maintaining a policy that was somewhat arbitrary to begin with and is now outdated. Establish a higher weight limitation.
- C. Using weight as a determinant for collar usage is irrelevant. AKC should still approve collars in order to maintain order and reasonableness, but any AKC approved collar that is used as it is received from the manufacturer should be allowed. This approach has the advantage of allowing for the quick adoption of new technologies.
- D. Allow any collar except correction collars and those with objects that protrude into the dog's neck.

The Issue of Misuse

There has been concern raised over the potential misuse of the GPS units. The receivers are relatively small (easily concealed) and are not collar specific. This raises the possibility of a number of people tracking the dog and somehow signaling its location to the handler or scout. While 99+% of the participants in field events are honest, unfortunately there will be a few that will attempt to misuse the unit. Is the potential for misuse of the GPS units significant enough that their use should be denied? Are there restrictions that can be implemented that would minimize the opportunity for misuse? The department would appreciate thoughts on this issue.

Seeking Input from Parent Clubs

The opinions of the Pointing Breed parent clubs will be valuable as the Department develops its recommendations. The Department is requesting that parent clubs seek the guidance of their field advisory committees in order to involve the breed's most knowledgeable participants.

Please respond to the following questions:

- 1. Should the weight limitation policy pertaining to the use of tracking collars at Pointing Breed field events be modified?**
- 2. Is the potential for misuse so significant that the use of GPS tracking collars should be denied? If not, are there reasonable restrictions that should be implemented in order to minimize the opportunity to misuse the unit?**

Answers with regard to the weight issue can be A, B, C or D as explained above, or any variation. A club does not have to select a single answer. A difference of opinion can be acknowledged by providing percentages for each position.

All parent club responses must be received no later than April 16, 2009 (3 months). Responses should be e-mailed to Lisa Carroll, Manager of Performance Events, at LAC@akc.org or mailed to:

Lisa Carroll
AKC Performance Events
8051 Arco Corporate Drive, Suite 100
Raleigh, NC 27617

Questions that arise during the process of developing the club's response should be directed to AKC Field Representative Tom Maneely at TAM2@akc.org or (402) 606-9936 (Nebraska).

Thank you in advance for your consideration and response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Doug Ljungren".

Doug Ljungren