



# KC Field Trial

by Jane Sutherland

**We had another excellent turn out for our 2025 Field Trial, with representation across the minor breed spaniels.**

The location was Stubton Estate in Lincolnshire, and grateful thanks go to Malcolm Partridge and Jim Briggs for providing such excellent ground with a steady supply of game.

The day dawned cold, with frozen ground and snow promised. Nevertheless, the competitors were undaunted and were well prepared to brave the weather. I arrived early and was fortunate that a close group of friends, joining the day as either



competitors, judges, game carriers or guns, all pitched in and turned out early to help me blank in strips of cover, set up the banners and put up tables before the trial, I am indebted to my helpers and volunteers without whom it would prove impossible to run the trials.

Once the competitors were assembled, provided with their



armband with number and a running order, I gave the welcome and safety briefs, thanked the landowner and keepers, introduced the judges and the guns and declared the trial open.

The ground consisted of broad strips of woodland, groundcover within to hold game, with brambles and ditches and fields of either plough or white grass. Ideal spaniel ground.

Right on cue the snow started, and blizzards continued for most of the morning, the challenging conditions meant game was seeking cover and sitting tight. As always, the superb ground at Stubton produced birds, with flushes coming regularly, and being brought down smartly, by the excellent team of guns who shot consistently throughout the day.

As the day unfolded it was clear to see where experience was lacking and dogwork fell short. Dogs needed to hunt close and tight, ground treatment was paramount as game was tucked in very tight, so those dogs and handlers who lacked experience here, and didn't work in close communication came unstuck with dogs pulling on ahead of the guns, failing to produce game in range.

With game sitting tight in thick cover, steadiness was key and this proved too much for some who failed to stop on flush, underlining again how experience and training are key in trials where the standard is necessarily high, but it's important to keep in mind the purpose of field



trials: to demonstrate the working ability of our spaniels at the highest level, and for our minority breeds this is even more crucial, where working ability is often disregarded in favour of appearance.

It was lovely to welcome newcomers to the trialling community this year, and clearly being bitten by the bug, vowing to come back and run in more trials next season.



Photos by Kenny Drew of  
**eventfaces.co.uk**

Visit his website to view all the splendid photos of the day – also available to buy as prints





*Huw Gruffydd of Marsden's Dog Foods presents prizes to: (left to right) Roy Ellershaw, Kevan Hawkes, Rachel Capllie*



Following the Trial I ran a separate training event. Giving people an opportunity to have their dog tested, under trial conditions, before running them in a field trial. Both my judges gave their time and expertise generously, and it proved very popular, with the judges providing feedback. It also allowed those running Minority Breeds to closely observe springers and cockers bred for working and trialling. Whilst the spaniel breeds have differing styles of working, they are all expected to do the same job – to hunt for game, flush it for the gun demonstrating steadiness to flush and shot, then retrieve it tenderly to hand. In a trial, the judges will be looking for those

dogs that most please their notions of an ideal hunting spaniel.

Trial and training completed, everyone was happy to head back to the meeting point for the hot drinks and lunch I had provided.

We were fortunate, this year, to be sponsored by Marsdens Feeds, with generous donations of both vouchers and sacks of premium dog food and Huw Gruffydd very kindly drove up from their Carmarthenshire HQ to join us for the day and present the awards.

Earlier in the year I ran a training day in the Midlands to see if there was an appetite to pursue gundog

training amongst WSS owners. The uptake was excellent, and the day oversubscribed. Aimed at an introductory level, it was extremely successful with all that attended keen to continue with training and eager for more days to be laid on. I will be running a series of events over the coming year. Details of dates and location will be posted on our website, so keep an eye out for them.

I look forward to welcoming you and keeping our beautiful dogs working as they are intended.

*Jane Sutherland  
Field Trial & Working Secretary*





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