

SHOTGUN SIMULATOR (SGS) RATIONALIZATION

To: Members of the Field Committee

RE: Use of Thunder Shotgun Simulators at Licensed AKC events

We would like to address some of the issues related to this equipment and also with regard to the field events in general.

- **Safety** – As someone who has had a child airlifted out of a test for blowing away his kneecap from a popper load, I have to reiterate the safety factor of using the SGS versus popper guns period. The fact that we can have kids loading popper loads (hopefully they will know the difference between a live load that may get slipped into the mix) in and out of guns behind a holding blind is something that needs to be addressed. If you forget that a shell is in a gun could have repercussions, as would a stuck shell or ill maintained gun. The SGS can be attached to a gun stand easily just as a popper gun would be.
- **Cost Effectiveness** – This item is a no brainer when you factor in the cost of popper loads at today's prices versus cans of MAP gas. We have been given a donation of several cases of MAP gas from Thunder Equipment for use during our events, and we will secure the SGS from our own members. I would say that over a weekend of using 4 SGS, they would be fired around 500-600 times between them with an equivalent cost of \$10 worth of MAP gas. Shooting the same amount of poppers would cost more than \$200.
- **Learning Curve for Use** – Usually takes about 5 minutes. We have had ROTC kids as well as adult inmates use them and prior to each event, have a demo and teaching segment. Like any piece of equipment that is new to an operator, user training and experience goes a long way. There is no more lack of consistency than popper guns that jam or popper loads that are bad and misfire.
- **Sound** – I would venture to say that there is not a whole lot of difference from where the sound would be coming from. The sound of the SGS carries further and in adverse conditions (rain, wind, snow) this is a big plus, as the SGS was specifically designed to mimic a shotgun sound. It was engineered to obtain similar decibels of a shotgun load and carry sounds like a shotgun shot (hence the name). To the uninformed, there is a misconception that these are just “noise makers” when they actually simulate a shotgun sound. Many dogs cannot discern the difference unless they are avid hunters, such as a hunting guide dog, and even then these dogs are keen to the sound. The argument that folks need to have dogs exposed to them should be used with popper guns as well as many novice field trainers use starter pistols instead of poppers in training. SGS carry sounds better than poppers, making the marks MORE identifiable, not less.
- **Weather/Storage Advantages** – There is a big plus, especially for the time period we will be having our field events, to use the SGS versus popper guns. Weather could be very wet and most of us know what that can do to the operation of popper guns and the lack of effectiveness of wet poppers. Given the quality of popper guns and poppers that have been stored over time, reliability of the SGS in these situations should also be given credence.
- **AKC** – AKC has embraced the idea of using SGS at FT and HT and a good number of clubs in TN, AR, AL, MS, GA, NY, PA, OH, IL, TX, UT etc. are already using them in most, if not all,

stakes. The rules on who operates them are currently the same as popper guns; i.e, only those 16 years of age and older are able to shoot them. The AKC is working to develop new verbiage to be adopted into the rulebook. They recognize (and support) simulator use due to liability factors and understand the positive financial impact they have for the clubs.

- **Competitive Use** - It is a similar equipment argument as was the use of wingers many years ago. To some people, there is still nothing like a hand thrown bird, and it took a while for the majority to come around for the use of wingers in HT and FT. Some say it is a more consistent way to get birds thrown in the same area; but the mechanical function still provides for some amount of inconsistency and there can still be time associated with having to get another winger or repair the one already out in the field.
- **Individual Club Issues** – Not everyone is able to train on the type of terrain, birds, and equipment used at local weekend events and then go to a competitive event. Just as we do when we decide to use Pheasants in any of the stakes, it is listed in the Premium List, and if people are smart, they will train with these birds prior. Some people cannot train on hills or technical water if not available to them. Some cannot train on lily pads with white flowers on them if not in their geographic area or stick ponds, etc. In the case of early April field events, the northern dogs will not have been in water as much as the southern dogs or dogs that travel south during the winter. These are all issues surrounding the overall general training and competitiveness of the dogs being entered rather than specific pieces of equipment or concepts. We will also confer with the judges as to our expectations for any confusion or “no bird” situations with regards to the handlers.
- **From a personal perspective** – We have run over 30 events this season and were involved with/in numerous events including Field Trials, Hunt Tests, CCR WC/WCX tests, and several seminars. In addition, one individual recently was the Co-Chair of the Toller National Specialty field events. In several of these cases SGS were used with no issues. We are out there working and running events where they are used and would not consider them unless we believed in them for such diverse events taking place as part of our National.
- **SGS Use around the country** –sampling of some of the clubs utilizing SGS as part of their HT and/or FT:

Atlanta Retriever Club, GA	Black Warrior Retriever Club, AL	Blue Grass Retriever Club, IL
Central NY Retriever Club, NY	Coastal Bend Retriever Club, TX	East TN Retriever Club, TN
Empire Retriever Club, NY	Great Salt Lake City Retriever Club, UT	Idaho Retriever Club, ID
Middle Tennessee Amateur Retriever Club, TN	North Alabama Retriever Club, AL	Ohio Valley Retriever Club, OH
Port Arthur Retriever Club, TX	Presque Isle Retriever Club, PA	Shreveport-Bossier Retriever Club, LA
Super Retriever Series, AR	Waterloo Amateur Retriever Club, TX	Weber Retriever Club, UT
Western NY Retriever Club, NY		