

Summary

When the Airedale Terrier Club of America's Hunting/Working Committee was established in 1985, none of those involved had any idea of the work, time, and expense that would result from the AKC's negative response to the initial request that Airedales be allowed to participate in AKC Hunt Tests.

However, there was a "silver lining" because the AKC's initial refusal conveyed the qualifying message that if the ATCA H/W Committee would meet certain requirements outlined over time by the AKC, then the AKC would reconsider the request for admitting Airedales at a future date. Thus the Committee was forced to raise the performance standards of Airedale owner/handlers and their dogs.

To that end, the H/W Committee set about meeting all the requirements suggested by any and all AKC representatives who entered into the discussion. It has taken nearly fourteen years of volunteer effort to do so, but much was required, and much has been accomplished.

Among the requirements first set by the AKC was the establishment of prototype Hunt Tests sponsored by the Parent Club. By 1989, the H/W Committee had done that and published their Guidelines for Experimental Hunt Tests.

Following the development of the prototype Hunt Tests, members of the ATCA H/W Committee met with AKC officials to work out rules for AKC-approved Hunt Tests which the Parent Club would subsequently approve in order to issue official Hunt Tests and ATCA Hunt Titles. That was accomplished in 1993.

The AKC requested verification that there was sufficient interest and activity among Airedale owners to warrant changing the AKC position on admitting Airedales to AKC Hunt Tests. Records from all the ATCA annual H/W Nationals show that the entry grew from an initial 36 participants in 1986 to over 70 Airedales in 1998. Thus the H/W National hunting events consistently drew a larger Airedale entry than do most AKC conformation shows and certainly more than obedience trials.

Following the AKC model, Airedale Hunt Tests have expanded with regional ATCA Hunt Tests which give more dogs more opportunities to participate. Tests to be held in 1999 include:

- March 26-28, ATCA Nationals, Columbus, OH. Hosted by Ohio River Valley Airedale Terrier Club.
- May 15, ATCA Upland Game and Retriever Tests, Bong Conservation Area, Wisconsin. Hosted by Wisconsin Airedale Terrier Club.
- July 17, ATCA Retriever Test, Louisville, Kentucky. Hosted by Derby City Airedale Club
- Sept. 11, ATCA Upland Game Test, LaPeer, Michigan. Hosted by Mid-Michigan Airedale Terrier Club.

- Nov. 19, ATCA Upland Game Test, Columbus, Ohio. Held in conjunction with ATCA Centennial Kick-Off Specialty. Hosted by Ohio River Valley Airedale Terrier Club.

In addition to the Upland Game and Retriever Tests, regional ATCA Fur Tests will be offered. The Illinois Airedale Terrier Club will host a fur test on November 6, 1999. There are also tentative plans for an ATCA Fur Test to be held in northern California.

AKC officials asked to be kept in touch with progress being made in the ATCA efforts to meet AKC requirements. As noted in various sections of this report, H/W committee members complied with that request in several ways. They met personally with AKC officials from Performance Events. In addition, the Committee sent correspondence that included invitations to AKC officials or observers to attend the ATCA Hunting Nationals.

When staff changes occurred at the AKC, the Committee understood that an extra effort would be needed to apprise whomever was in charge of Performance Events of the ATCA's continuing efforts to have Airedales admitted to AKC hunt tests. Examples of correspondence dated January, 1998 and April, 1998 from Steve Gilbert, H/W Chairman, to William Speck, Assistant Vice-President of AKC Performance Events, is included as Appendices A3 and A4. In these letters Steve sends Mr. Speck information and reports on the ATCA Hunt Test program, invites Mr. Speck to join in an informal morning of hunting on March 25, 1999, and asks Mr. Speck for suggestions on anything further that could be done "to prepare and position our breed for entry into the AKC Hunt Test Program."

In addition, as has been pointed out in Section 5 on "Hunting Airedales in Print," the AKC's own official publication, *The AKC Gazette*, has on several occasions published reports on the ATCA's Hunt Tests, so those reports should have easily available for AKC officials who were interested in performance events.

In short, the ATCA H/W Committee did everything possible to meet AKC requirements for admission to AKC Hunt Tests.

Airedales themselves have proven that the breed still maintains the hunting instincts for which the breed founders were known. Airedales have further shown that if trained with the methods used for other gun dogs, they can perform capably in advanced test situations.

Airedale owners have shown through their support of the H/W Committee's efforts that there is enormous interest in preserving the Airedale as a hunting breed. The consensus is that there is not one or two strains of "hunting Airedales," but rather an entire breed that remains faithful to the AKC Standard and to its "hunter's heart."

Therefore, the Airedale Terrier Club of America respectfully requests that the American Kennel Club approve the admission of Airedales to AKC Hunt Tests for Retrievers and AKC Hunt Tests for Spaniels.

The Airedale Terrier Club of America celebrates its Centennial Anniversary in the year 2000. Many club events are planned for that year, however the kick-off event for the Centennial will be an Airedale Specialty Weekend to be held on November 18-20, 1999. The first event of that weekend will be ATCA Upland Game Hunt Test and Dinner to be held on the grounds of Buckeye Game Club, the site of the Nationals, on Friday, November 19, 1999.

We feel that to be able to announce at that event that the AKC has opened its Hunt Tests to Airedales would fulfill the destiny of this breed in a most fitting time and place.

If that were to come about, we cordially invite members of the AKC to join us in raising a glass of champagne. We will be celebrating our versatile Airedales.

