

15 September 2024

To NZGTA Clubs and membership

I'd like to start off by addressing the on-going fighting that is going on in the sport. No one likes fighting – but sometimes we need to stand up for what we believe is important.

Here is a reminder of how we have ended up where we are. This is all documented facts.

At the 2021 AGM, in General Business, there was discussion on the public perception of firearms. I'm not going to repeat it here – the minutes are on the website.

A motion was put to the people present *“Motion proposed that the NZGTA Executive will look at alternative options to use instead of firearms at gun dog trials”* It was carried.

What is significant here is that it wasn't a “Remit”, or a “Recommendation” It was a request that the Exec investigate something.

We have the Exec minutes of the 2021/22 year and there are some interesting things to note. In a number of minutes the problems of using starter pistols are noted – It was stated that the alternative device needed to be something other than a shot gun or starting pistol.

So two separate executives have considered the starter pistol and came to the same conclusion - that it is not a not fit for purpose alternative blank shot firing device.

The Dec 2021 minutes note that the Exec wasn't going to communicate the investigations with clubs until they decided the best way forward. Other meeting minutes across that term note they should communicate something, and the 20th September 2022 minutes admit that they had not communicated their intention or reasoning to clubs but just 1 week later – on September 27th 2022 they met to formulate the communication to the clubs advising them that guns would be banned from January 2023.

They went ahead and sent that Guns in Field Trials document.

Remember that?

Quote of page 5 from that document – *“Based on the mandate at the 2021 AGM and the extensive experience that has developed over a number of years of the running of trials without guns, the Executive now plan to remove guns from all simulated trials commencing in January for the 2023 trialling year.”*

There was no mandate at the 2021 AGM

Their “extensive experience” did not include spaniel trials or pointer & setter trials.

The only thing that 2021 AGM asked them to do was to investigate the options. It is clear from their meeting minutes across the year they did not find any suitable alternative blank shot firing device. And yet they still planned to remove guns from trials.

The backlash feedback from clubs and members was strong – and yet the agenda of removing guns is still being pushed.

By the time I was on the Exec at the end of the 2022/2023 year it was clear that there was an agenda at play here to remove guns from our sport – without consultation with the membership. There was even branding styled on DogsNZ branding – with the word “gun” removed from “gundog”

This is what we are fighting.

If you look at the names – it is the same small group of retriever handlers that are trying to push this agenda. And they are attempting to affect the whole sport.

Make no mistake – if they are allowed to succeed and have guns removed from retriever trials, it will be a slippery slope and next will be the spaniels and pointer & setter.

We are fighting to be able to retain the integrity and history of our sport, AND move it forward for situations when shotguns are not suitable. And not be dictated to by a small group of retriever handlers.

The current 2023/24 Executive Committee believe that shot guns should be used where possible. We believe that where using a shot gun in a trial is not possible, the blank firing device needs to be fit for purpose – and currently there is no device that is fit for purpose.

The second part of this correspondence is to address some recent comments.

Re: Grant Samkin's Facebook post accusing the Executive of intellectual dishonesty and Warren Jellyman's follow up email(s).

Firstly, our initial response was to ignore both items. However, we are also mindful that members of our community do not want correspondence such as this to go unanswered and have questioned us in the past as to why we do not respond.

In this case a line has been crossed. To have our President and the extended Executive accused of intellectual dishonesty is unjust and uncalled for.

Grant Samkin is only aware of the contents of his own 17 page submission and may have had input into the submission from his club. That the overall results did not reflect his own opinions as being the majority opinion does not justify him smearing the reputations of everyone on the Executive.

The Executive made the decision to keep the terms of reference for the survey very simple. The Executive also decided to keep the presentation of the results very simple, this included advising the overall sample size and then presenting the clear, identifiable findings from within this sample. If Grant Samkin is perhaps offended that his submission was not published for all to see then the Executive suggest that he publish the document himself to those who express an interest in reading it. However, the Executive stand by the overall results as presented.

Secondly, the Executive has had some feedback regarding the use of Starter Pistols as being a suitable device in our Heel Retrieve trials. The membership is possibly unaware that the Starter Pistol was excluded as being a suitable device by a previous Executive as well. Minutes from the **January 2022 Executive Meeting** state:

"We agreed that we still want a shot sounded in some form, so we need to find a solution to making a shot **that is not a gun or a starter pistol.**"

So it is disingenuous for those same people to now advocate for the use of this device when they had excluded it over 2 years ago.

Thirdly, probably the most contemptible example of intellectual dishonesty that we have come across. When former sitting Executive members, despite knowing the procedure, decide that the rules around re-election do not apply to them. Members were not given the opportunity to vote on several Executive positions at the 2022 AGM despite nominations not being received for those positions as per our rules.

Finally, this 2023/24 Executive has ensured that we adhere to our organisation's rules and regulations. We have undertaken due diligence on the issue of firearms and alternative blank shot devices within our sport. This process may have seemed a bit slow for some, however we received independent, expert opinions which we felt was important for any policy to be enduring.

The fact remains that currently there is not a suitable device that can take the place of a shotgun in our current tests.

However, one thing that was evident to the Executive from the recent survey results is that there is an appetite among some of our members to develop an alternative event. It is this Executive's intention to put that to the membership at the AGM and allow the membership to determine whether this is a way forward.

Regards

Helen M. Grant – President NZGTA
NZGTA Executive